THE ROLE OF INTIMATE IDENTITIES AND ACCOMMODATION STYLES IN COUPLE FUNCTIONING

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Abstract

The goal of the present investigation was to examine patterns of responding to sexual and general dilemmas within intimate relationships, and to assess how the relative importance of these domains interacted with behavioral responses to determine satisfaction. The current research focused on accommodation styles (exit, voice, loyalty and neglect) (Rusbult, Johnson & Morrow, 1986a) as a measure of interpersonal communication. Although, there may be some consistency in the accommodation styles employed across relationship dilemmas, it was argued that responses to sexual and general dilemmas would differ based on an individual's identities. According to Identity Control Theory (Burke, 1991), behavioral responses may be determined by the importance of an identity evoked in a relationship dilemma. Furthermore, cultural, interpersonal, and intrapsychic scripts (Simon & Gagnon, 1986) may determine the meaning of these identities. Two studies were conducted to assess the effects of accommodation styles on relationship and sexual satisfaction. Study 1 examined the relations between accommodation styles and sexual and relationship satisfaction. Regression analyses of the responses of 59 couples indicated that although general accommodation styles predicted relationship satisfaction, they were not predictive of sexual satisfaction, and this latter relation was not moderated by sexual compatibility. Therefore, Study 2 suggested that accommodation styles would differ depending on the nature of the dilemma (sexual or general), and the relative importance of these domains to the individual. Analyses of the responses of 96 participants in intimate relationships indicated that lower levels of destructive responses were used in sexual dilemmas than in general relationship dilemmas. Although the

relative importance of identities did not impact directly accommodation styles, it did moderate the relation between accommodation styles and satisfaction. Specifically, for individuals with salient intimate partner identities accommodation styles in general relationship dilemmas were related to sexual and relationship satisfaction. However, for individuals with salient sexual partner identities, accommodation styles in general dilemmas were related only to sexual satisfaction. These results suggested that satisfaction in intimate relationships is related to partners' ability to suppress destructive accommodation styles, but this is dependent on the nature of the dilemma they are dealing with and the relative importance of the domain to the individuals.

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I would like to thank my grandmother, Marion Heppell, who from an early age taught me about love, life and the birds and the bees. Granny, thank-you for all you have done to make me who I am today.

I would also like to thank my husband who loved and supported me, no matter how hard the task, through all of the drafts and revisions. Shane you have taught me the importance of being a partner and have helped me to be a better person. Thank-you for helping me to achieve this great accomplishment.

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Close relationships (e.g., parent-child, siblings and romantic partners) are defined by the interdependence of each individual's life, with each affecting the other in important ways (Huston & Robins, 1982). Specifically, Stets and Tsushima (2001) state that close relationships consist of, "interactions between intimates who have strong ties, ... exemplify a primary association . . . rooted in an evaluation of oneself as worthy" (p. 284). These relationships are seen as differing from other relationships in that they are, " . . . more enduring, involve frequent interactions, span a greater range of activities . . ." (Huston & Robins, 1982, p. 903). In addition, close relationships are expected to fulfill some of the primary needs in our lives, including sexual needs (Krauss-Whitbourne & Ebmeyer, 1990). The opportunity for, or participation in sexual behavior between individuals defines them as intimate partners rather than another type of close interpersonal relationship (Metts & Spitzberg, 1996). However, the ability to meet this need may be highly dependent on other aspects of the relationship, including the couple's ability to accommodate when faced with relationship dilemmas. In this thesis, relationship functioning was examined in relation to the behavioral responses of individuals in intimate relationships when faced with sexual and non-sexual dilemmas.

As intimate partners deal with continuous interactions with one another, they inevitably face relationship dilemmas. How couples respond to these dilemmas likely affects future dilemmas, and the success of the intimate relationship (Rusbult, Johnson, & Morrow, 1986a). For the present research, four types of behavioral responses to relationship dilemmas were the focus: exit, voice, loyalty and neglect, better known as 'accommodation' styles. When couples try to work through dilemmas by discussing them

(voice) and/or being supportive (loyalty), they are employing constructive accommodative styles (Scharfe & Bartholomew, 1995). These styles are most likely to lead to a mutually gratifying resolution and relationship satisfaction (Berry & Willingham, 1997). Employing styles such as being spiteful, uncooperative (exit), or neglectful (neglect), are more likely to lead to problems in the relationship and decreased satisfaction (Berry & Willingham, 1997).

While there may be some consistency in the accommodation styles employed across situations, responses to dilemmas may vary across interactions (Rusbult, Yovetich & Verette, 1996). Sexual dilemmas were of interest to the current study as it was believed that they would be qualitatively different from other relationship dilemmas (e.g., money, families or religion) because different types of dilemmas are guided by different social standards of behavior (what we will refer to later as scripts). While sexuality forms a primary basis for the intimate relationship, it also provides a basis for self-definition, and in this society, an aspect of the self that is rarely discussed openly. Thus, combined with its centrality in defining the intimate relationship, the ability to resolve sexual dilemmas may serve a unique role in contributing to overall relationship functioning .

According to Identity Control Theory (Burke, 1991; Burke & Reitzes, 1981; Burke & Tully, 1977; Cast, Stets & Burke, 1999), how individuals respond to challenges to an identity will be determined by the importance individuals places on the identity that is being evoked in the challenge situation (Burke & Cast, 1997; Stets & Tsushima, 2001; Stryker, 1968). As individuals make the transition into an intimate relationship, they

undergo a process of realigning how they view themselves in relation to a new identity, namely, the 'intimate partner identity' (Kerpelman & Lamke, 1997). Although individuals may retain much of their previous identity characteristics (e.g., gender, work, racial, cultural), the addition of this new identity may entail a reorganization of the previous identity structure (Burke & Caste, 1997). As the relationship develops, the individual's sense of self becomes increasingly tied to being a member of the couple (Burke & Stets, 1999), that is, the intimate partner identity. Given that sexual behavior is a marker of an intimate relationship (Metts & Spitzberg, 1996), we suggest that the individual's "sexual partner identity" will also become salient in the context of the intimate relationship. The differential importance each member of the couple places on the intimate partner and sexual partner identities was expected to affect their choice of accommodation styles when challenged in a relationship dilemma.

Although Identity Control Theory is useful for predicting responses to an identity challenge, Script Theory (Gagnon, 1973; Gagnon, 1990; Metts & Spitzberg, 1996; Simon & Gagnon, 1986) provides a basis for identifying the content of the identity that is evoked in the dilemma. Additionally, Sexual Script Theory helps to account for the sensitive nature of sexuality in our society, which may determine the ease with which different accommodative styles are employed in non-sexual, relative to sexual, dilemmas. Script Theory considers the processes by which individuals develop the content of their identities. Identities are formed from past experiences, and individuals bring personal characteristics, attitudes, and past learning experiences to the current relationship (Gagnon, 1990). Scripts, and their resulting behaviors, are more or less evident

depending on their social acceptance in the given situation and the individual's past experiences with the success or failure of a given script. As the intimate relationship develops, past experiences with common and satisfactory scripts may ease the process of negotiating functioning in the relationship. Couples who experience an incongruency of scripts, sexual or otherwise, may have more challenges and experience an increase in relationship dilemmas than those couples with similar scripts.

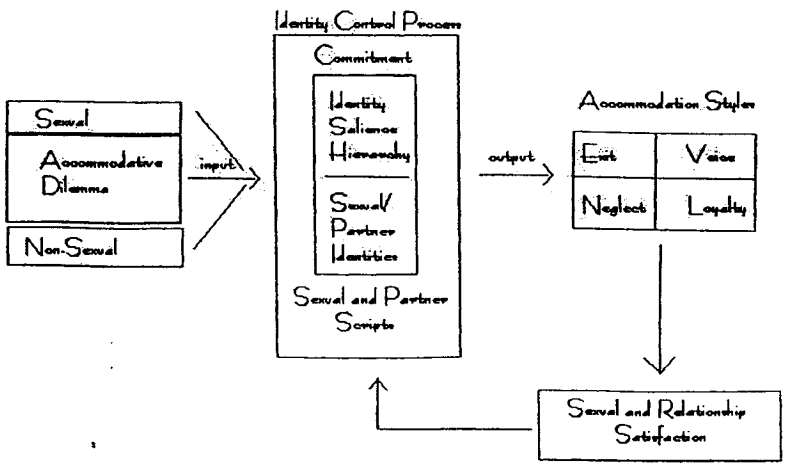
When challenges arise, couples may have to use interpersonal communication to overcome these differences (Metts & Spitzberg, 1996). Gottman and colleagues (1979, 1980, 1992, 1998, 1999) have written extensively on this topic and have formed the basis of how the field understands how couples' patterns of behavioral responses predict marital success. Specifically, Gottman and colleagues assess affective nonverbal cues to characterize emotions displayed while couples discuss conflict and non-conflict situations. Gottman and Levenson (1999) found that the lower ratio of constructive to destructive cues conveyed, and greater use of verbal behaviors reflecting criticism, defensiveness, contempt were predictive of divorce. While these different affective responses may predict long-term couple functioning, these patterns assume general behavioral responses across relationship dilemmas with comparable effects on satisfaction in the intimate relationship.

Communication has been shown to be an important variable in sexual satisfaction (Cupach & Comstock, 1990; Ferroni & Taffe, 1997; MacNeil & Byers, 1997). However, little research exists on how sexual communication differs from non-sexual communication. Indeed, communication in sexual and nonsexual situations has been

found to be qualitatively different (Banmen & Vogel, 1985; Cupach & Comstock, 1990; Wheeless, Wheeless & Baus, 1984). Therefore, if communication is important to satisfaction in relationships, and styles of communication differ based on the relationship domain, then it may be that levels of satisfaction in different areas of the relationship are dependent on the domain-specific communication styles used to negotiate dilemmas in these areas of functioning.

The research in this thesis focused on the accommodation styles used in intimate relationships when partners were in sexual versus non-sexual dilemmas. Figure 1 illustrates the theoretical model explored. We suggested that how couples accommodate in sexual dilemmas would differ from how they accommodated in non-sexual dilemmas. Additionally, we suggested that partners would use different patterns of accommodation depending on the relative importance of the identities challenged, and the behavioral scripts that partners bring to the relationship based on past experiences. Finally, we proposed that the accommodation styles used in sexual and non-sexual dilemmas would be associated with relationship and sexual satisfaction.

Figure 1. Theoretical model for the relationship between accommodation styles, identity control processes and satisfaction in intimate relationships.



Accommodation Styles

Accommodation styles are forms of behavioral responses that define the pattern of interdependent responding to dilemmas between partners in intimate relationships (Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovik & Lipkus, 1991). According to Rusbult and her colleagues (Rusbult et al., 1986a, 1991; Rusbult, Johnson & Morrow, 1986b; Rusbult, Zembrodt & Gunn, 1982), intimate partners can respond to dilemmas using one of four types of responses: exit, voice, loyalty or neglect. These responses are viewed as existing along two dimensions: active/passive and constructive/destructive. The active/passive dimension delineates the response to the accommodative dilemma, in that, active responses deal directly with the problem, whereas passive responses refer to any behavior that relates to the problem but does not deal with it directly. The constructive/destructive dimension refers to the impact the behavior may have on the relationship, such that constructive responses maintain and/or revive the relationship, whereas destructive ones tend to harm or bring about the end of a relationship.

The responses delineated by Rusbult and colleagues can be placed at the poles of these two dimensions. Specifically, voice is defined as active and constructive, and is typified by discussing problems, compromising and suggesting solutions. Loyalty is passive and constructive, and is demonstrated when partners wait and hope that things improve and show support for their partner. Exit reflects an active and destructive response, and is demonstrated in separating from the partner, being abusive, or moving out. Finally, neglect is a passive and destructive response, and occurs when individuals choose to spend less time with their partners, treats their partners badly, refuses to discuss

problems or lets things fall apart. The accommodation styles model provides a typology for classifying the range of possible reactions when faced with an accommodative dilemma (Rusbult & Zembrodt, 1983).

Research on accommodative dilemmas and response styles has been conducted in the context of examining attachment between intimate partners (Scharfe & Bartholomew, 1995), relationship distress and non-distress (Rusbult et al., 1986ab), self-esteem and problem-solving behavior (Rusbult, Morrow & Johnson, 1987), and the affective traits (Berry & Willingham, 1997) and motivations (Yovetich & Rusbult, 1994) of the individuals involved. This research has supported the link between the four accommodation styles and their connection to relationship functioning. On the whole, this research indicates that self-reported use of voice is a predictor of positive relationship functioning, whereas the self-reported use of exit behaviors is predictive of lower quality relationships (Berry & Willingham, 1997; Rusbult et al., 1982,1986a, b, 1991).

The efforts made by both partners to overcome a dilemma often involve both destructive and constructive accommodation styles. Interestingly, it has been found that the most important efforts made by partners involve the suppression of destructive responses, not the use of constructive responses in the face of an accommodative dilemma. This pattern of response is more predictive of relationship functioning than other possible patterns, and is described as the "good manners" model (Rusbult, 1993; Rusbult et al., 1991). The good manners model may be most important to couples who are in distress. Repeated challenges or mismatches of the identity results in negative emotion (Stryker & Burke, 2000), which has greater potential to lead to increases in

neglectful or exit behaviors in the face of an accommodative dilemma; thus, suppressing destructive responses may be important in preventing exacerbated distress.

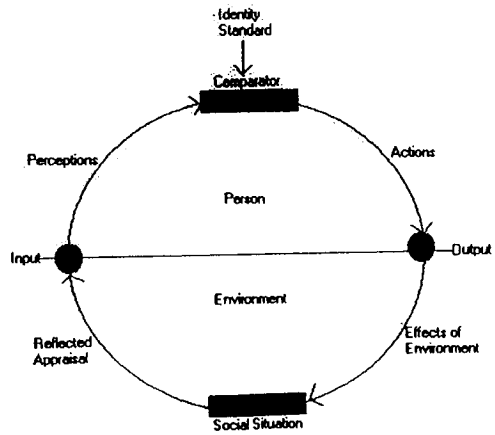
Rusbult (1983, 1987) has suggested that relationship commitment may be key to determining the type of accommodation styles employed in a dilemma, as it may provide the motivational basis for making the effort to suppress destructive reactions. Commitment is defined as the desire to maintain a relationship and to feel psychologically attached to it. Commitment to the relationship is determined by (a) the degree of satisfaction with the relationship before the dilemma, (b) the magnitude of the individual's investment of resources in the relationship, and (c) the quality of the individual's best alternative to the current relationship (Rusbult, 1983, 1987; Rusbult et al., 1982). Although Rusbult (1983, 1987) suggests that commitment to the relationship mediates the relation between accommodation dilemmas and accommodation styles, she does not discuss how commitment relative to other areas of the individual's life may influence the accommodation process. However, Identity Control Theory (Burke & Reitzes, 1991) suggests that individuals may hold different levels of commitment to a variety of aspects of their lives, which they define as identities. Thus, the relative importance of individuals' commitment to their intimate partner identity in comparison to other aspects of their intimate relationship, the most relevant of which may be their sexual partner identity, may moderate the accommodative style adopted in response to a sexual dilemma.

Identity Control Theory

Identity Control Theory (Burke, 1991; Burke & Reitzes, 1981; Burke & Tully, 1977; Cast et al., 1999) provides a framework for understanding how identities develop and change, depending on their relative salience and importance to an individual. Identity Control Theory argues that the variety of identities held by individuals form a hierarchy, and that placement in the hierarchy determines specific behaviors cued by that identity. Of particular interest in the present study was the placement of the sexual partner and intimate partner identities in an individual's identity hierarchy, and how this placement predicts accommodative responses in sexual compared to non-sexual dilemmas.

According to Identity Control Theory, identities are regulated to maintain a balance between the identity and the identity-relevant information individuals take in from others (Burke, 1991). Identity Control Theory identifies four components to the control process: the identity standard, outputs, inputs and the comparator. Figure 2 illustrates the four main components and their interrelationships.

Figure 2. Identity Control Process model illustrating the relationship between identity standards, the comparator, input and behavioral output in a social situation.



The identity standard provides a basis to define the meaning of who one is and how to behave in a given situation (Stets & Burke, 2000). Identity standards are stable, established characteristics and processes within individuals (Burke & Cast, 1997). For example, the intimate partner identity standard contains all of the relevant information regarding what it means for individuals to be intimate partners, such as someone who is caring, sympathetic, wants to do a lot of things together, and so on. Each individual has a set of identities, which can include racial, cultural, gender, economic, and educational identities. All of an individual's identities are organized into what is known as a salience hierarchy. Within this hierarchy, the central identities are at the top, and less important identities are at the bottom (Stryker, 1968). The salience of an identity can also be viewed as the extent of commitment one has to a particular identity, which is directly related to the cost that one would face if they gave up that identity (Stryker, 1968). Commitment to an identity is the, " . . . binding tie between an individual and some other social entity whether an identity, another individual, a group or organization, or an exchange relationship" (Burke & Stets, 1999, p. 348). Furthermore, the commitment to an identity may affect an individual's behavior in response to dilemmas that evoke the identity. Stryker (1968) states, "one may postulate that the discreet identities which comprise the self exist in a hierarchy of salience, such that other things being equal, one can expect behavioral products to the degree that a given identity ranks high in this hierarchy" (p. 560).

During an interaction, the internalized identity standard is compared to input about this dimension of the self received from others, including one's partner. In the case

of the intimate partner identity, an example of input is individuals reinforcing their partner's self-perception of being caring (e.g., thanks them for being thoughtful). In this system, input is evaluated against the identity standard by a hypothetical "comparator". If the comparator detects differences between the standard and the input (e.g., the individuals believed they were very caring toward the partner, but the partner describes the individuals as being selfish), output behaviors are then produced to compensate for these differences (e.g., attempts to convince the partner s/he is a caring individual). How strongly individuals react (output) to partner feedback is a function of the degree of discrepancy between the identity standard and input meanings (Stets & Burke, 1994), and the importance of that identity as compared to others challenged during the dilemma (Stryker, 1968). When faced with incongruent feedback from partners, individuals can choose to define the situation as non-threatening (if the identity standard and input difference is small, or the identity is unimportant), or they may define the situation as threatening and choose to act to bring input meanings closer to the identity standard (if the discrepancies are large or the identity is important) (Stets &Tsushima, 2001).

In some cases, changes to the behavior may be relatively superficial, and the identity standard stays intact, whereas at other times, behavior may signal an actual change in the identity standard (Burke & Cast, 1997). Alternatively, when the accommodative dilemma is seen as threatening to an identity individuals are highly committed to, individuals may attempt to negate the input from partners, therefore removing the discrepancy, or they may choose to find another partner that provides more identity consistent feedback. In support of this, Swann (1992) found that individuals seek

partners who appraise them in ways that are congruent with their own identity standards, whether or not the appraisals were positive or negative.

Ultimately, the goal of interpersonal behaviors is to maintain congruency between internal identity standards and external feedback, whether this means staying in or leaving an intimate relationship. Unfortunately, little research has been conducted on the implication of multiple identities relevant to the intimate relationship (e.g., sexual partner and intimate partner identities), and their differential effects on behavior when they are evoked in a given situation (Stryker & Burke, 2000). In a relationship dilemma, it is possible that for each of the identities involved, differential levels of discrepancy between the standard and the input, or different expectations of appropriate responses in the face of the dilemma are present. For example, while each partner may have an identity associated with their sexual being, this is both independent of and subsumed under their intimate partner identity, allowing for both identities to be evoked in one situation. If individuals value their sexual partner identity more than their intimate partner identity they may abandon their intimate partner identity in order to maintain their sexual partner identity standard when both are evoked in a relationship dilemma. Stryker and Burke (2000) suggest that when one or more identities are evoked it can result in competition between identity commitments, identity salience, identity standards, and self-relevant information.

Core Identities within Intimate Relationships

The intimate partner identity. When individuals enter into intimate relationships, by definition, the intimate partner identity becomes salient. The intimate partner identity

is central to the hierarchy when it consists of a strong attraction and commitment to the relationship, and a sense of self-worth is derived from it. The intimate partner identity is not a mutually constructed and shared identity for both members of the intimate relationship, but rather, represents separate identities that individuals possess with respect to the relationship, that is their "self-in-a-relationship" perceptions (Krauss-Whitbourne & Ebmeyer, 1990). How individuals perceive the self-in-a-relationship is defined by, and defines their intimate partner identity standard.

Although research has been conducted on close relationships using the Identity Control Theory model (Burke & Cast, 1997; Burke & Stets, 1999; Gudykunst & Hammer, 1988; Hyde, DeLamater & Durik, 2001; Stets & Burke, 1994), very few of these studies focused directly on intimate partner identities (Burke & Stets, 1999; Hyde et al., 2001). Such research is often framed within the context of a 'family' identity (e.g., Stets & Tsushima, 2001) and in other types of close relationships. Although, an intimate relationship may represent a component of a family identity, they are not interchangeable equivalents. As mentioned earlier, one factor that defines uniquely the intimate partner identity is the expected presence of a sexual relationship (Metts & Sptizberg, 1996). As well, unlike other familial relationships such as parent or sibling, the intimate partner identity can be seen as chosen (Stets & Tsushima, 2001). The elective nature of the relationship may have different implications for how individuals respond to dilemmas within the relationship, in comparison to relationships that cannot be terminated easily. Hence, styles of accommodation may be particularly central to the success of an intimate relationship.

The sexual partner identity. The sexual partner identity, like the intimate partner identity, comprises an identity standard that consists of the meaning that individuals attach to their sexual sense of self, which in turn determines its placement in the identity salience hierarchy. An individual's sexual partner identity in the context of the intimate relationship will be based on sexual self-cognitions, " . . . derived from past experience, manifest in current experience, influential in the processing of sexually relevant social information, and they guide sexual behavior" (Andersen & Cyranowski, 1994, p. 1079). Sexual self-cognitions inform the identity standard of the extent to which the self is, " . . . sexual, in part, by evidencing romantic, passionate, arousable, compassionate, and loving qualities" (Anderson, Cyranowski & Espindle, 1999, p. 657). Moser (2001) captures the erotic aspect of the sexual partner identity when he states, "Each individual has a specific, sexual pattern as unique as a fingerprint, this is the mix of various cues to which one responds erotically" (p. 93). This "sexual fingerprint" will be one of the determinants of an individual's sexual partner identity.

Surprisingly little research exists on the functioning of the sexual partner identity within intimate relationships, and how it relates to the intimate partner identity. The sexual partner identity can exist independent of the intimate partner identity (e.g., casual sexual relationships) and the intimate partner identity can exist without the sexual partner identity (e.g., non-sexual intimate relationships), but they are most often thought of as coexisting. Sexual scripts in our society define heterosexual pairings as the site of sexual behavior, with sexual activity defining the intimate couple, and the intimate couple creating the arena for socially acceptable sexual activity (Metts & Spitzberg, 1996).

Clearly, sexual events that occur in the context of intimate relationships are also interpersonal events that influence the inferences we make about our sexual selves (Andersen & Cyranowski, 1994).

When couples are faced with a sexual dilemma, behavioral responses are evoked. Metts and Spitzberg (1996) suggest that this process does not occur effortlessly but that, ". . . the achievement of mutually endorsed goals and expectations, the enactment of coordinated sexual actions, and the realization of mutually satisfying sexual experiences are not likely to be accomplished without some degree of effort on the part of the individuals involved in actual sexual encounters" (p. 50). By studying sexual behavioral responses that occur in the intimate relationship we can focus on how intimate partners serve as a source of feedback for one another, and evaluate the role intimate identities play in the overall relationship.

Identity Commitment as a Moderator Between Accommodation Dilemmas and Accommodation Styles

In Identity Control Theory terms, commitment to an identity represents the cost that one would face if they gave up that identity (Burke & Reitzes, 1991). Because dilemmas can lead to relationship problems and possibly relationship termination, the extent of commitment to the intimate partner identity may determine an individual's willingness to resolve a dilemma within the relationship. Additionally, the commitment one has to a sexual partner identity may determine how they respond in a sexual dilemma. In support of this, research has found that the identities evoked in situations determine the type of response elicited by the situation, and that different identities evoke

different responses (Stets & Tsushima, 2001). Therefore, we suggested that the individual's relative commitment to their intimate partner or sexual partner identity would determine how they chose to respond to dilemmas in the intimate relationship when faced with sexual as compared to general accommodative dilemmas.

Sexual partner identities may, in part, evolve out of interactions within the relationship, and potentially reflect other elements of the relationship, such as partner commitment. However, because sexual partner identities also derive from past experiences, relationships, and personal needs, the identities the partners bring to the relationship may not, in fact, be entirely compatible. They may differ substantively, in terms of needs and expression, or in terms of the relative importance of sexuality within the individual's hierarchy of identities, with the latter affecting the importance of resolving differences and how those differences are resolved.

However, the sexual partner identity might also differ in its relation to the intimate partner identity. Specifically, it might be viewed as entirely subsumed under this identity, and hence accommodation styles may correspond to those adopted in other dilemmas within the relationship, reflecting each individual's overall commitment to the relationship as a whole. Indeed, individuals who are highly committed to the relationship and have much to lose by abandoning the related identity may be more likely to adopt constructive styles of accommodation and suppress destructive responses that may be destructive to the relationship, in sexual and general dilemmas. In order to maintain the relationship, achieving harmony with various identities that may be important to each individual but are subsumed within the relationship, such as sexual partner identity, may

particularly motivate the enactment of constructive responses (i.e., voice and loyalty) when in a dilemma relating to these identities.

Even when partners are responding constructively in an accommodative dilemma they may often be tempted to respond destructively, but this response is suppressed in favor of a more constructive response (the good manners model), suggesting an internal weighing of the importance of the issue, and the consequences of a given response (Rusbult et al., 1986a; Yovetich & Rusbult, 1994), based on learned scripts. Individual may balance the immediate meaning and rewards of behaviors against the overall reward-cost balance of maintaining the identity (Burke & Reitzes, 1981). For example, if an individual's sexual partner identity is challenged in the relationship, the individual may choose to accommodate at that moment, swallow their sexual pride, and work out the problem in order to maintain a positive relationship that will be rewarding in the long run. Identity Control Theory defines this as the "cognitive basis of commitment" and can be seen as the expectation of long-term satisfaction in the relationship at the cost of short-term costs to the identity (Burke & Reitzes, 1991).

In contrast, the sexual partner identity may be viewed as mostly independent of the intimate partner identity, and itself may be of greater or lesser importance, such that the individual is more or less committed to maintaining or expressing this identity. Because higher levels of commitment are associated with higher levels of active responses (exit and voice) and lower levels of loyalty (Rusbult et al., 1986b), the importance of sexual partner identities to individuals may be reflected in their choice to be destructive toward aspects of their identity that they hold less commitment to and

directly threaten the sexual partner identity, namely their relationship with a specific partner. For example, when an individual's sexual partner identity is challenged, they may choose to react destructively toward their partner in an effort to negate the partner's challenge and maintain their sexual identity, in spite of the cost to their intimate relationship and subsequently the intimate partner identity.

In contrast, even if independent of the intimate partner identity, if the sexual partner identity is less important than the intimate partner identity, responses that allow for remaining in the intimate relationship (i.e., suppressing destructive behaviors) are likely to be evident, and may not coincide with constructive responses to resolve directly the dilemma in relation to the sexual partner identity.

Behavioral responses are more likely to be evoked with increasing problem severity, making relationship responses more marked in dilemmas than in non-dilemmas situations (Rusbult et al., 1986b). Level of commitment to an identity will determine the type and strength of a behavior evoked when the identity is challenged (Burke & Reitzes, 1991). Therefore, it is important to study relationship functioning in the context of dilemmas to determine the link between commitment to an identity and accommodation styles. In support of this, Lydon and colleagues (Lydon, 1996; Lydon, Meana, Sepinwall, Richards & Mayman, 1999; Lydon & Zanna, 1990) argued that commitment tested under adversity was a more reliable indicator of commitment than when tested under more favorable conditions. For the present research, we were interested in how commitment to the intimate partner or sexual partner identity predicted accommodative behaviors and relationship functioning. More specifically, it was assumed that only during relationship

dilemmas would the incongruency between identity standards and interpersonal feedback be large enough to evoke behaviors to restore congruency. Therefore, the success of relationship functioning is most accurately depicted within the context of accommodative dilemmas.

Script Theory

Identity Control Theory provides a framework for understanding how identities play a role in interpersonal processes (i.e., accommodative dilemmas), but does not provide much understanding of the meaning or content of the elements involved. Yet, it is likely this very meaning that is challenged in a dilemma. In this respect, the notion of 'scripts' may be useful. Scripts, are described by Simon and Gagnon (1986) as, ". . .essentially a metaphor for conceptualizing the production of behavior within social life" (p. 98). Scripts can be thought of as the underlying instructions for how we should think and behave in a given situation. Given that identity standards are a set of meanings held by individuals that define their identity in a situation (Stryker & Burke, 2000), Script Theory can provide a basis for understanding how individuals acquire the content of their intimate partner and sexual partner identities by focusing on the cultural, interpersonal and intrapsychic levels of script production.

Cultural scenarios provide us with a model for identifying behaviors as culturally appropriate in a given context. They are the instructions for specific roles that allow us to enter the roles, act in these roles, and exit these roles. Cultural scenarios are abstract and generic so that members of the culture are able to enact them in a variety of situations. Examples of cultural scenarios that are applicable to the proposed study include

distinctions such as who we should and should not be engaging in sexual behavior with (e.g., adults as opposed to children), and who we should and should not be involved with in an intimate relationship (e.g., siblings or close relatives).

At the cultural level, sexual scripts are presented to us in the media, folklore and mythology and instruct us on how to engage in appropriate sexual behaviors (Metts & Spitzberg, 1996). These scenarios cover all areas of sexuality including, but not limited to, sexual arousal, pleasure and climax (Gagnon, 1990). Although cultural level sexual scenarios are transmitted to all members of a given culture, their implications may not be the same for all individuals. In effect, sexual conduct has individual and social meanings that depend on the attributes of the individual and the relationships in which they are involved (Gagnon, 1990). Therefore, the meanings that individuals constructs from their cultural scenario may be different, in turn, leading to differences in what it means for individuals to be sexual beings. As a result, although intimate partners may be under the influence of the same cultural scenarios, they may each have differing sexual scripts and sexual partner identities that must be negotiated within the intimate relationship.

As couples interact in intimate relationships, cultural scenarios must be refined in order for individuals to use them to guide interpersonal scripts. As individuals become involved in intimate relationships, they attend to the cultural scenarios that determine acceptable sexual and partner behaviors. Individuals then rewrite parts of the cultural script to fit with the influences of the immediate interpersonal situation. For example, an individual may take the cultural scenario of who is an acceptable sexual partner, and begin to interact directly with a person in a way that will bring them closer to a sexual

encounter. It is at the interpersonal level that individuals act out scripts in a process of acquiring and maintaining a set of sexual or partner behaviors. Thus, interpersonal scripts define the content of the interaction between intimate partners as they are challenged by dilemmas to work through sexual and partner scripts in a way that is congruent with their respective identities.

According to Simon and Gagnon (1986), sexual scripts are formulated within individuals, and stabilize when individuals achieve the intended response from the behavior. Interpersonal scripting can be seen as the process under which individuals co-ordinate their sexual partner and intimate partner identities, and how they will choose to behave with their partner based on cultural sanctions and the interpersonal dynamics that have been defined in the intimate relationship. When there is a shift in context (e.g., moving into a new relationship), there is also a shift in the self-process and the production of scripts. As individuals bring their own sexual scripts to the relationships, individuals in new relationships may find that they have incompatible sexual scripts. Intimate partners must then interact to negotiate the sexual scripts for their intimate relationship (Metts & Cupach, 1989). According to Identity Control Theory (Burke & Reitzes, 1991) challenges made to identities, which may result during negotiation, will affect the strength and type of behavior elicited in this new interpersonal setting. If scripts are highly incompatible we would expect more challenges to the sexual partner identity standard and subsequently an increase in sexual dilemmas and the need for accommodative responses to maintain sexual functioning. However, if sexual scripts are similar and compatibility is increased, we would expect fewer challenges and a decrease

in dilemmas. Indeed, research has found that for couples in non-distressed relationships, sexual communication is not as highly associated with satisfaction, whereas for couples who are distressed, sexual communication is highly associated with satisfaction (Banmen & Vogel, 1985).

The final level of scripting occurs at the intrapsychic level. At this level, the script can be seen as a self-process, or internal dialogue. It is at the level of intrapsychic scripting that individuals internalize and create their identity standards based on the content of cultural scenarios and the demands of interpersonal interactions. Intrapsychic scripting may not always be discernable. As individuals engage in behavior that is congruent with their scripting they may not be aware of the intrapsychic scripting taking place. For example, if an individual is engaging in sexual intercourse with a new partner, and the partner acts in ways that are consistent with the individual's expectations based on their own sexual script, s/he will not be conscious of intrapsychic scripting being used. When the behaviors are divergent from the individual's sexual script, the intrapsychic scripting becomes more apparent, as the individual asks, " Who am I in this situation and what outcome would I like?"

Metts and Spitzberg (1996) describe the intrapsychic sexual script as representing the sexual "I" that determines sexual desires, motives, and actions than sustain sexual arousal during the enactment of the interpersonal script. At the level of intrapsychic scripting, a change in interpersonal scripting can result in a modification of how one thinks about the self as a consequence of this change (Gagnon, 1990). In effect,

intrapsychic scripts represent part of the identity standard that remains relatively stable across time, situations, and partners.

Although Sexual Script Theory provides a useful and intuitively appealing theoretical framework for imputing meaning to sexual and intimate partner identities, empirical validation is lacking (Gagnon, 1990). Nonetheless, empirical research on the general foundations of Script Theory may be insightful. For example, research on dating scripts (Rose & Frieze, 1993) and anger in close relationships (Fehr, Baldwin, Collins, Patterson & Benditt, 1999) has empirically validated the use of scripts in interpersonal interactions. What is less well understood is the role of sexual scripts in intimate relationships, and how they may differ from other scripts employed within intimate relationships. More specifically, one aspect of the cultural script is that sexual needs are extremely private and less likely to be discussed at the personal level. Internalizing this aspect of the script may compromise individuals' ability to rewrite the script at the interpersonal level. Thus, even though a sexual partner identity may be important, adopting active and constructive accommodation responses to dilemmas may be undermined.

Sexual and Relationship Satisfaction

Research has found that the use of constructive accommodation styles when faced with an accommodative dilemma is predictive of satisfaction in the relationship (Berry & Willingham, 1997; Rusbult, 1983; Rusbult et al., 1982,1986a,b, 1991; Scharfe & Bartholomew, 1995). While past research has found that sexual satisfaction in intimate relationships relates to how well couples communicate sexually (Cupach & Comstock,

1990; Ferroni & Taffe, 1997; MacNeil & Byers, 1997), research to date has not distinguished between the accommodation styles that are general to the relationship, or are differentially evoked by sexual dilemmas. In the research, we assessed sexual and relationship satisfaction in the intimate relationship as outcome measures in order to determine how accommodation styles in sexual and general dilemmas affected relationship and sexual functioning. We suggested that our assessment of satisfaction would reflect an individual's ability to adopt constructive and suppress destructive accommodation styles in response to dilemmas in the intimate relationship. However, we further predicted that the effectiveness of accommodation styles may differ for sexual and nonsexual dilemmas based on the importance individual place on their sexual partner and intimate partner identities.

A Comment on Gender Differences

An extensive amount of research in the field of human sexuality has been dedicated to researching the similarities and differences that exist between male and female sexual behavior (e.g., Carroll, Volk, & Hyde, 1985; Garcia, 1982; Geer, & Manguno-Mire,1996; Hatfield, Sprecher, Pillemer, Greenberger, & Wexler, 1988; Hicks, & Leitenberg, 2001). Within this literature it has been argued that much of what we learn about sexuality is dictated by our gender, and the social appropriateness of different sexual behaviors is determined by our gender (Crawford & Unger, 2000). Therefore, given that human sexuality was the focus of the research, it was important that we acknowledge gender in the present research. While the author was aware of the social implications that the research literature discusses regarding gender and sexuality, it was

argued that an individual's intimate partner-sexual partner identity hierarchy would be a more important determinant of sexual functioning than gender per se.

Traditionally, according to the cultural scripts for sexuality, women's sexuality is defined by chastity while men have the opportunity to engage in sexual behavior (Gagnon, 1990). This is known as the sexual double standard, and in the past has defined male and female sexual identities. This bias was first described in Reiss's (1964) work on attitudes toward sexual permissiveness which revealed that there was a social bias showing acceptance of males engaging in premarital sexual intercourse, whereas it was unacceptable for women. Fortunately, the sexual climate has changed for women since Reiss's work and women have gained a sexual identity that expands beyond chastity, and under the influence of social determinants, men and women have become more sexually similar (Bancroft, 2002). Tiefer (2002) states that values and behaviors have become more permissive of female sexuality, creating a dramatic change in female sexuality over the last four decades. Evidence for this change in the sexual research is now pointing to an increase in sexual partners, premarital sex and widening sexual attitudes among women (Gagnon, 1990). Although much change has occurred, society is still in the process of equalizing gender roles, including those pertaining to sexuality. Nonetheless, we suggested that the changes that have occurred have created a large enough shift in the sexual scripts for women to be manifest in the research, such that we did not expect differences in the patterns of relations between identities, accommodation styles and satisfaction for men and women.

The Present Thesis

Communication is regarded as an important factor in determining satisfaction in an intimate relationship (Banmen & Vogel, 1985). Indeed, individuals in intimate relationships need to navigate interpersonal sexual and relationship scripts that serve to coordinate behavior within the relationship (Metts & Spitzberg, 1996). However, the ability to negotiate scripts may be complicated by the identities that partners bring to the relationship, and how these identities become salient during different types of relationship dilemmas. The meaning and importance of the identities evoked, and the extent to which they are challenged during this process will likely affect the nature of the individuals' response, which may be more or less likely to promote relationship functioning. Given the unique role sexuality plays in an intimate relationship, behavioral responses to dilemmas in this domain may be of particular importance to the success of the relationship. Therefore, the goal of the present investigation was to examine how sexual and general relationship dilemmas are negotiated in intimate relationships, and whether the accommodation styles adopted were associated with sexual and relationship satisfaction.

Two studies were conducted to assess the accommodation styles employed in response to sexual and nonsexual dilemmas and their impact on both relationship and sexual satisfaction. Study 1 evaluated whether general accommodation styles were differentially predictive of satisfaction in the general and sexual domains of the relationship. While we expected accommodation styles to be related to satisfaction in the relationship, this relation would be qualified by the dilemmas experienced in the intimate

relationship, as it was argued that appropriate accommodation styles would be essential to relationship functioning in the presence of relationship dilemmas.

In Study 2, it was argued that individuals would likely adopt different styles of accommodation in response to sexual versus general dilemmas. Given the sensitive nature of sexuality in our society, it was believed that interpersonal sexual scripts would promote more passive forms of accommodation during sexual dilemmas negotiation than in other dilemma areas. However, given this sensitivity, combined with the centrality of sexuality to the intimate relationship, individuals' willingness to accommodate in this domain was expected to depend on the strength of their sexual versus intimate partner identities. Taken together, these studies were intended to provide an understanding of the role of sexual and general behavioral responses to interpersonal dilemmas in the successful functioning of intimate relationships.

Study One: The Relationship Between Accommodation Styles, Sexual Satisfaction and Relationship Satisfaction

The suppression of destructive accommodation styles and to a lesser degree the adoption of constructive accommodation styles when in an accommodative dilemma appears to serve an important function in a couple's experiences of relationship satisfaction. Rusbult (1983,1987) further suggests that commitment (as determined by prior relationship satisfaction, the presence of attractive alternatives, and overall investment in the relationship) determines how individuals will respond to accommodative dilemmas. However, although such contextual factors are important in relation to partners' responses to dilemmas, these factors are likely modified by more

stable aspects of individuals. In particular, Identity Theory (Burke & Stets, 1999; Stryker, 1968) suggests that the level of commitment individuals have to the personal identities that are evoked in an interpersonal dilemmas will determine how they respond to the dilemma. Furthermore, lack of compatibility is thought to be an indicator of relationship dilemmas as it is assumed that low compatibility would lead to an increased need to negotiate scripts and subsequently an increase in the experience of relationship dilemmas and challenges to the intimate identities. Therefore, it was believed that during dilemmas, such as those that may occur during the negotiation of incompatible sexual scripts, that accommodation styles would be predictive of relationship functioning.

However, both the Accommodation Styles Model and Identity Control Theory fall short in providing an understanding of how varying situations are resolved when the identity dimensions brought into conflict with one another are simultaneously and integrally linked, as is the case of the sexual and intimate partner identities in the context of an intimate relationship. Specifically, neither model provides an understanding of how responses to dilemmas vary across relationship dilemmas, how competing identities salient to the dilemma determine behavioral responses, and how identities and accommodation responses work together to affect relationship functioning. Therefore, it was of interest in Study 1 to assess the relation between general accommodation styles and an individual's satisfaction within different aspects of the relationship, namely relationship and sexual satisfaction. Specifically, we were interested in determining if general accommodation styles were predictive of both sexual and relationship satisfaction. Additionally, we were interested in the relation between accommodation

processes and sexual functioning when sexual compatibility was considered, as it was believed that the sexual compatibility would qualify the relation between accommodation styles and sexual satisfaction.

Hypotheses

(H1) It was expected that the adoption of constructive accommodation styles (voice and loyalty) and the suppression of destructive accommodation styles (exit and neglect) in an intimate relationship would be associated with greater dyadic satisfaction and to a lesser degree, sexual satisfaction.

(H2) It was expected that the relation between accommodation styles and the specific domain of sexual satisfaction would be moderated by the presence of sexual dilemmas, in that, accommodation styles would only be associated with sexual satisfaction there were lower levels of sexual compatibility.

Method

Participants

Participants were Carleton University students and their intimate partners (N = 141). The sample consisted of 79 women and 62 men. Both members of 59 couples participated in the study; 20 female partners and 3 male partners completed the questionnaire packages, although their partners did not. Given that this study was concerned with how the combined contributions of each member of the couple influenced relationship functioning, these latter participants were not included in the analyses. Thus, the final sample comprised the 59 couples from which both partners completed the measures. It was noted that effect sizes of .10 for the relations between key variables

were found to be significant using the smaller sample, suggesting that there was sufficient power to evaluate the hypotheses of interest.

The age of male and female participants did not differ, ranging from 18 to 44 (M = 21.8 years, SD = 4.98). Participants who were only dating casually comprised only a small percentage of the sample (n = 3; 3.6%), with the majority indicating that they were in a serious relationship but not cohabitating (n = 53; 63.9 %). The second largest group was comprised of those indicating that they were in a serious relationship and cohabitating (n = 13; 15.7%). The remainder were engaged (n = 5; 6.0%) or married (n = 5; 6.0 %). Participants' length of involvement in their current intimate relationship ranged from 9 months to 18 years (M = 31.09, SD = 29.78 months), although this distribution was fairly highly positively skewed.

The length of involvement in sexual activity in the current intimate relationship ranged from 2 months to 18 years (M = 23.39, SD = 33.07 months). The majority of the couples indicated being sexually active and engaging in sexual intercourse (n = 74; 89.6%), while the remainder of the sample indicated that they were sexually active but did not engage in sexual intercourse (n = 3; 3.6%), or that they were not currently sexually active (n = 3; 3.6%). All participants were included in the analyses, as even the choice not to be sexually active may or may not reflect relationship dilemmas.

Measures

All measures used in the study can be found in Appendix A including general background information.

General background information. Data was collected on participants' gender and age. Additionally, the status of their current relationship (i.e., casually dating, cohabitating, engaged, married), the length of the current relationship, the sexual status of the relationship (i.e., not sexually active, sexually active but not engaging in sexual intercourse, sexually active and engaging in sexual intercourse), and how long they have been engaging in sexual activity in the current intimate relationship were assessed.

Accommodation styles. This 28-item self-report questionnaire was developed by Rusbult and Zembrodt (1983) to measure the manner in which individuals in a couple react to periodic declines in relationship quality (Rusbult, 1987). The questionnaire consists of four subscales measuring tendencies to engage in exit, voice, loyalty and neglect in response to interpersonal conflict. Behaviors that represent ending the relationship or behaving in an actively destructive manner are measured on the exit subscale (e.g., when we have problems I discuss ending the relationship). The voice subscale includes items that measure active and constructive behaviors that attempt to improve relationship conditions (e.g., when my partner and I have problems, I discuss things with him/her). Loyalty is measured through items that demonstrate passive devotion and waiting for the relationship to improve (e.g., when we have problems in our relationship, I patiently wait for things to improve). Finally, the neglect items measure responses that allow the relationship to atrophy (e.g., when I'm upset with my partner, I ignore him/her for a while).

The accommodation style questionnaire has been tested in various forms that have consisted of between 20 to 28 items measured on 5 to 9-point rating scales, with five or

more items for each subscale (Rusbult, 1987). In the current study, the accommodation style questionnaire consisted of 28 items (7 items per subscale), measured on 9-point scales ranging from 1 (I never to this) to 9 (I always do this) (Rusbult et al., 1986a). The longer version of the questionnaire was chosen because it has been shown to have acceptable internal reliability and the length of the questionnaire was not deemed prohibitive.

In the present study, the 28-item version of the accommodation styles questionnaire showed sufficient internal reliabilities, demonstrating acceptable Cronbach alphas for each of the summed (with missing values replaced by individuals' mean response) subscale scores of exit (α = .91), voice (α =.63), loyalty (α =.53) and neglect (α =.76). Although the small reliability coefficient found for the loyalty subscale was disappointing, it is comparable with past research that has found the loyalty subscale reliability to be lower than the other three subscales (Rusbult et al., 1986a, 1982). The scale has also been found to demonstrate convergent and discriminant validity, and to be unrelated to measures of social desirability (Rusbult, 1987). Self-reports have been found to be convergent with partner reports of the individual's accommodation styles (Rusbult et al., 1982). Finally, Rusbult et al. (1986b) established that the questionnaire was valid across a wide variety of demographic variables (e.g., age, gender, length and type of relationship, education level and income).

Although, exit, voice, loyalty and neglect are considered discrete categories of responses, Rusbult (1987) notes that the categories are, in fact, continuous and overlapping. Past research (Rusbult, Bissonnette, Arriaga & Cox, 1998) has also found

acceptable internal reliabilities for combining the constructive (voice and loyalty) (α = .64 to .70) and destructive (exit and neglect) (α = .78 to .79) subscales. Therefore, for Study 1 measures of voice and loyalty (r = .20) were combined to create a constructive scale and exit and neglect (r= .38) were combined to create a destructive scale. Given that we were interested in establishing a general link between accommodation styles (constructive conflict negotiation) and dyad satisfaction and sexual satisfaction, and not in how specific sets of behaviors (i.e., exit, voice, neglect or loyalty) related to satisfaction we felt justified in using these two indices to assess the hypotheses.

Hurlbert Index of Sexual Compatibility. The scale consists of 25 items, and was developed for use in a clinical setting to evaluate the sexual compatibility of intimate partners. The scale was tested for research purposes by Hurlbert, White, Powell and Apt (1993) and was found to have test-retest stability over one week (r = .87). Additionally, the scale showed an acceptable level of split-half reliability (r = .84) and good internal consistency (α = .81). Items are scored on 5-point rating scales ranging from 0 (representing compatibility all of the time) to 4 (representing compatibility never). Responses on all of the items were summed (with relevant items reversed scored, and missing values replaced by mean responses) with possible scores ranging between 0 to 100 (α =.86). Higher scores indicated greater sexual compatibility.

Dyadic Adjustment Scale. Relationship satisfaction was assessed using the dyadic satisfaction subscale from the self-report scale designed by Spanier (1976) to measure the severity of relationship discord in intimate relationships. Spanier (1976) states that the

satisfaction scale, consisting of 10 items, may be used to measure satisfaction when the needs of the researchers are limited, without loss of validity or reliability.

The dyadic satisfaction scale includes three types of questions. The first seven questions are measured on 6-point rating scales that ask the individual to indicate how often they engage in specific behaviors with their partner. Ratings can range from 0 (All of the time) to 5 (Never). The second type of question asked them to indicate on 7-point scales how happy they are with their current relationship from 0 (extremely unhappy) to 6 (perfect). The final question asked individuals to indicate how they would describe their feelings about the future of their relationship on the basis of six possible response options, ranging from 5 (I want desperately for my relationship to succeed, and would go to almost and length to see that it does) to 0 (My relationship can never succeed, and there is no more that I can do to keep the relationship going). Given that the use of weighted scores has not been justified by past research (Spanier, 1976), z-scores for the responses on each item were determined, and then summed (with relevant items reversed scored, and missing values replaced by mean responses) to create an unweighted total score (α = .85). Scores on the unweighted scale ranged from -22 to 18.2.

Item responses for the DAS are typically normally distributed, and found to discriminate between intact and dissolved dyads, and loaded onto one of the four subscales (Spanier, 1976). Reports of internal reliability of the complete scale have proven to be high, with the dyadic satisfaction scale reporting the highest level (α = .94) (Spanier, 1976). Similarly, James and Hunsley (1995) reported high levels of internal consistency (α =.90) and retest reliability (r =.89) for the scale.

Index of Sexual Satisfaction. A global measure of an individual's sexual satisfaction was derived from a self-report measure consisting of 25 items reflecting the degree of sexual discord with one's relationship. The scale was constructed by Hudson, Harrison and Crosscup (1981) to be used in a variety of settings (e.g., clinical or research) and with individuals from heterogeneous backgrounds.

All items were developed on the basis of the clinical and personal experiences of the authors to reflect common complaints expressed by individuals when expressing satisfaction with the sexual component of the intimate relationship. Half of the items included in the scale are positively structured statements, while the remainder are negatively structured.

Participants indicate how often they feel that each statement is indicative of their relationship with their partner. Scores range between 1 (rarely or none of the time) and 5 (most or all of the time). Although typically when scoring the ISS all positively worded statements are reversed scored, for the current study we reverse scored all of the negatively worded questions to create a measure of sexual satisfaction rather than dissatisfaction (so that measures of satisfaction are evaluated in the same direction). The total score for the scale was computed as: $ISS = (\sum Y\text{-}N)(100)/[(N)(4)]$ where Y is an item score and N is the total number of items completed by the responded. Omitted items, or items scored outside of the 1 to 5 range, were given a score of 0. This method produces a minimum score of 0 and maximum score of 100 even when items have been omitted. The internal consistency of the ISS has been found to be reliable. Across three heterogeneous samples the alpha coefficients were found to be .92, .90 and .91. (Hudson

et al., 1981). In the present study, the item-total reliability was high (Cronbach's α = .91). Additionally, Hudson et al. (1981) reported acceptable levels of test-retest reliability (α =.93) and discriminant validity between dyads with and without sexual problems.

Procedure

Participants involved in an intimate relationship were identified through a premeasure (Appendix B) determining relationship and sexual status that was administered in Introductory Psychology classes. Eligible participants were contacted through e-mail inviting them to participate in the study (Appendix C). The initial e-mail explained that the purpose of the study, which was to assess how communication styles between intimate partners affect their relationship and sexual satisfaction, the requirements, and the compensation given for participation. Additionally, the study was announced through advertisements posted in Carleton University buildings (Appendix D).

Couples interested in participating in the study were able to complete the questionnaire package that took approximately 45 minutes on campus (at the lab) together, or to take the packages home. After signing the informed consent (Appendix E), partners were separated to complete the questionnaires in different rooms to ensure that they felt free and comfortable to report their answers without influence from one another. Upon completion, participants were debriefed.

For the couples not participating on campus, one partner was asked to come into the lab to pick up both packages. At this time, the informed consent was explained and

they were asked to convey this information to the absent partner. Each questionnaire package also contained a one-page debriefing on the last page of the package (Appendix F). The participant was then given two questionnaire packages in separate sealed envelopes. Participants were asked not to share their responses with their partner, and to fill out the packages in separate rooms. They were then instructed to return the packages in separate, sealed envelopes. Participants returned the packages to the researcher, at which time they were debriefed again to ensure that there were no comments or concerns in regard to the study.

Results

Descriptives

The current study showed comparable means on the Study 1 measures (see Table 1), relative to those found among normative samples in previous research (e.g., Apt, Hurlbert, Sarmiento, Hurlbert, 1996; Hudson et al., 1981; Spanier, 1976; Rusbult et al. 1986a), suggesting a relatively normal sample.

Table 1

Means and standard deviations for Study 1 measures from previous research.

	Study 1			Previous research		
Measure	n	Mean	SD	n	Mean	SD
Dyadic Satisfaction (married sample)	118	40.93	5.95	312	40.5	7.2
Sexual Satisfaction	118	16.87	12.93	100	15.2	11.2
Accommodation Styles (females only)						
Exit	59	15.92	10.11	68	18.86	
Voice	59	48.08	7.89	68	45.22	
Loyalty	59	35.78	6.77	68	37.13	
Neglect	59	22.44	8.75	68	22.63	
Sexual compatibility (females only)	118	74.19	10.04	40	69.18	8.72

Note: Scores on the sexual satisfaction scale were scores as a measure of sexual discord in order to be consistent with the normative data. Study 1 and normative data for accommodation styles were based on responses from female participants alone. The normative data did not report standard deviations for accommodation subscales.

It was of further interest to evaluate whether those participants who completed the questionnaire but their partners did not (and hence were excluded from the final analyses) differed from participants from couples in which both members of the couple participated. We were unable to perform an analysis to determine whether there was a gender difference between these two groups, due to the low number of men who

participated without their partners ($n = 3$). Thus, the following comparisons were based on the responses of the female participants only. Women who participated in the study with or without their partners did not differ in any of their reported levels of constructive or destructive accommodation styles, sexual compatibility, dyadic satisfaction, or sexual satisfaction. Given that there were no significant differences between the two groups we concluded that they represented the same population. Based on this assumption we decided that although the subsequent analyses were based on data from only those individuals who participated with their partners, these findings were likely generalizable.

Data from intact couples were likely interdependent (Rusbult et al., 1986a). [1] Indeed, as seen in Table 2 moderate positive correlations were found between the measures of dyadic (r and sexual satisfaction, and sexual compatibility for male and female participants. Therefore, in subsequent regression analyses, the outcome (sexual and relationship satisfaction scores) and moderating variables (sexual compatibility scores) were represented by the average score for both partners, and both partners' accommodative responses were included simultaneously in relevant regression analyses. This approach to the analyses was utilized, rather than removing the variance due to

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[1] According to Rusbult et al (1998) non-independence of couple observations may be a problem when dealing with multiple responses from a given couple. The authors suggest that researchers can account for the non-independence of couple responses by employing *couple number* as a categorical variable. Therefore, group differences as a function of couple were examined in order to evaluate the effects of non-independence between partner responses. When Study 1 measures were regressed on the couple variable, variability due to couple was found to be significant for the measures of accommodation styles and satisfaction, suggesting non-independence between partner responses. Given the non-independence of these measures all Study 1 analyses were rerun using a nested design with the mean squares regression for couple employed as the error term. Analyses with this more conservative approach (the error term dfs were 58) found similar results to that of the nonnested design prompting the reporting of only the nonnested results.

couple and using individual scores, as we were interested in the couple as a unit of analysis and therefore each member's contribution to the average level of functioning in the relationship.

Table 2

Correlations between Study 1 measures

	Female Scores				
	Constructive Accommodation	Destructive Accommodation	Sexual Compatibility	Sexual Satisfaction	Relationship Satisfaction
Male Scores					
Constructive Accommodation	.17	.01	.02	.01	-.01
Destructive Accommodation	-.28*	.26*	-.24	-.17	-.45***
Sexual Compatibility	.35***	-.35***	.68***	.63***	.35***
Sexual Satisfaction	.17	-.23	.65***	.65***	.24
Relationship Satisfaction	.21	-.38***	.26*	.31*	.50***

Note. *$p<.05$, ***$p<.001$

As seen in Table 3, analyses of gender differences (matched groups) showed significant differences between males and females on several measures. Females reported higher levels of voice, while males reported higher levels of loyalty. No significant gender differences were found on measures of exit, neglect, and overall relationship satisfaction. In the sexual domain, women reported lower perceptions of sexual compatibility, but there were no gender differences on the measure of sexual satisfaction.[2]

[2] Analyses examining the relations among variables were rerun using gender as a predictor. While main effects for gender continued to be evident, there were no significant interactions with gender . Therefore, we concluded that the findings were not moderated by gender.

Table 3

Means and standard deviations for accommodation styles, sexual compatibility, relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction by gender.

	Male		Female		
Measure	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	η^2
Voice	43.27	8.46	48.05	7.85	.159*
Loyalty	38.69	7.85	35.77	6.73	.104*
Exit	16.45	10.95	15.96	10.05	.003
Neglect	22.03	10.31	22.48	8.70	.009
Dyadic satisfaction scale^{+}	-0.11	5.77	-0.11	6.20	.027
Sexual Compatibility	72.61	8.49	69.36	9.61	.122*
Sexual satisfaction	83.69	11.21	82.23	14.49	.027

*$p < .05$

Note, $^{+}$standardized score

In order to determine if length of relationship affected responses, couples were divided into two groups with couples who had been together for 21 months or less comprising the shorter duration group and couples who had been together for over 21 months comprising the longer duration group. The cut-off point of 21 months was chosen based on a median split, and was assessed as such given the highly positively skewed distribution. As seen in Table 4, on the whole there were no significant

differences between shorter and longer duration couples' accommodation styles, sexual compatibility or satisfaction ratings.[3]

Table 4

Means and standard deviations for accommodation styles, sexual compatibility, relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction by length of relationship.

	Relationships over 21 months		Relationships under 21 months		
Measure	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	η^2
Exit	16.51	9.42	15.36	10.7	.00
Voice	47.13	8.69	48.93	7.10	.01
Loyalty	34.72	6.62	36.78	6.81	.02
Neglect	24.35	9.04	20.72	8.23	.04
Sexual Compatibility	72.26	10.84	72.81	9.52	.01
Dyadic Adjustment	40.83	6.72	41.47	4.54	.00
Sexual Satisfaction	81.74	14.73	83.08	12.91	.00

The Relations Between Accommodation Styles and Sexual and Relationship Satisfaction

It was expected that higher scores on each partner's use of the constructive accommodation subscales (voice and loyalty), would be associated with greater relationship and sexual satisfaction, and conversely, destructive accommodation styles

[3] Analyses examining the relations among variables were rerun using length of relationship as a predictor. There were no significant interactions with length of relationship. Therefore, we concluded that the findings were not moderated by length of relationship.

(exit and neglect) would be associated with lower levels of satisfaction. A moderate positive correlation was found between the measures of dyadic and sexual satisfaction (r = .51, p<.001), such that, reporting high levels of relationship satisfaction was associated with high levels sexual satisfaction. While there was overlap in satisfaction in these domains, only 26.0% of their variance was shared, suggesting that they also reflected unique properties, meriting their separate consideration in the subsequent analyses.

In order to test whether general accommodation styles predicted relationship and sexual satisfaction, two hierarchical regressions were conducted in which each of the indices of average couple satisfaction was regressed onto partners' constructive accommodation styles on the first step, followed by the destructive accommodation styles of both partners on the second. Constructive accommodation styles were entered first, as past research has indicated that although these styles are generally related to satisfaction, destructive accommodation styles are more effective predictor of relationship functioning.

Contrary to expectations, as seen in Table 5, the use of constructive accommodation styles on the part of either partner was not related to higher levels of relationship, R^2_{cha} = .08, $F(2,54) = 2.38$, *ns*, nor sexual R^2_{cha} = .08, $F(2,54) = 2.28$, *ns*, satisfaction. However, when the destructive accommodation styles indices were entered, they were found to explain significant variance in relationship satisfaction, R^2_{cha} = .50, $F(2,54) = 31.37$, p<.001, but not sexual satisfaction, R^2_{cha} = .09, $F(2,54) = 2.10$, *ns*. Thus, relationship satisfaction is likely affected by the suppression of destructive accommodation styles on the part of both partners in the relationship, rather than use of

constructive accommodation styles. However, the relation between general accommodation styles and perceived satisfaction was not evident when it pertained specifically to the sexual aspects of the intimate relationship.

Table 5

Hierarchical regressions for the relationship between accommodation styles and sexual and relationship satisfaction.

	r	B^a	R^2_{cha}
Relationship Satisfaction			
Constructive Accommodation Styles			.08
Male	.04	-.03	
Female	.28*	-.01	
Destructive Accommodation Styles			.50***
Male	-.65***	–.58*	
Female	-.46*	-.37*	
Sexual Satisfaction			
Constructive Accommodation Styles			.08
Male	.08	.04	
Female	.27*	.27	
Destructive Accommodation Styles			.09
Male	-.34***	-.26	
Female	-.27*	-.15	

* $p<.05$; *** $p<.001$

[a]. Standardized coefficients are from the final step of the regression analysis

The Relation Between Accommodation Styles and Satisfaction as Moderated by Compatibility

To assess whether the relationship between accommodations styles and sexual satisfaction was not evident because it was moderated by sexual compatibility, a hierarchical regression analysis was conducted in which couples' average sexual satisfaction scores were regressed first onto the main effect of their average reported sexual compatibility, followed by constructive and destructive accommodation styles. Finally, the interaction between the standardized scores on these variables was entered. Consistent with expectations, as seen in Table 6, there was a significant relationship between sexual compatibility and perceived couple sexual satisfaction, $R^2_{cha} = .795$, $F(1,57) = 221.63$, $p<.001$, such that high levels of sexual compatibility were related to higher levels of sexual satisfaction. As noted previously, the relation between sexual satisfaction and accommodation styles was not significant. Perhaps given the strong relation between compatibility and satisfaction, it was perhaps not surprising that the unique effect of the interaction between sexual compatibility and accommodation styles were not significant predictors of sexual satisfaction either, $R^2_{cha} = .015$, $F_{cha}(4, 49) = 1.02$, *ns*.

Table 6

Hierarchical regression analysis assessing sexual compatibility moderated relationship between accommodation styles and sexual satisfaction

	r	*B*[a]	R^2_{cha}
Dyad HISC	.89***	.89	.78***
Accommodation Styles			.01
Female Constructive	.27*	-.01	
Male Constructive	.08	.06	
Female Destructive	-.27*	.00	
Male Destructive	-.34***	.05	
Accommodation Styles * HISC			.02
Female Constructive Interaction	-.06	-.03	
Male Constructive Interaction	.10	.05	
Female Destructive Interaction	-.03	-.02	
Male Destructive Interaction	-.20	-.14	

***$p < .001$

[a]. Standardized coefficients are from the final step of the regression analysis

Discussion

The results of Study 1 indicated partial support for the hypothesis that accommodation styles were associated with satisfaction in the intimate relationship. While the destructive accommodation styles adopted by both members of the couple were predictive of lower levels of average relationship satisfaction, the use of constructive accommodation styles was not related to higher levels of relationship satisfaction. This response pattern has been noted in previous research (Rusbult, 1993; Rusbult et al., 1991), and has been termed the good manners model, reflecting the notion that it is not the presence of constructive accommodation styles, but the suppression of destructive accommodation styles that predicts relationship satisfaction (Rusbult, 1993; Rusbult et al., 1991). The findings of Study 1 provide further support for the good manner's model as important to relationship satisfaction. Moreover, given the additive effects of both women and men's endorsement (or lack thereof) of destructive accommodation styles, the findings of the present study further pointed to the need for both partners to adopt this response pattern.

Unlike general relationship satisfaction, destructive accommodation styles were not predictive of sexual satisfaction. Based on the Identity Control Theory, this finding should not be surprising. Indeed, it was argued that different identity domains ought to evoke different dimensions of individuals' personal identity, and that the salience and importance of particular identities would determine how individuals reacts in a given situation (Stets & Tsushima, 2001), including the adoption and effectiveness of different accommodation styles. Indeed, a qualitative difference between sexual and non-sexual

communication in intimate relationships has been found in previous research (Banmen & Vogel, 1985; Cupach & Comstock, 1990; Wheeless et al., 1984). Thus, it would appear that accommodation styles may not necessarily have ubiquitous effects across domains of the relationship, even those domains that are typically thought of as highly integrated. Indeed, relationship and sexual satisfaction were found to be moderately associated with one another, a finding consistent with previous research (Apt et al., 1996; McCabe, 1999). Thus, it is likely that different underlying factors are associated with various domains of satisfaction.

It was also possible that the lack of a relation between accommodation styles and sexual satisfaction was not evident because it was moderated by sexual compatibility. However, this hypothesis was not borne out in the present study. It may be that the relation between compatibility and sexual satisfaction was so high that there was very little variance left to be explained by the compatibility/accommodation interaction. It may be that compatibility and satisfaction are, in fact, one and the same in a given relationship. However, this would suggest that incompatibilities could not be negotiated to achieve satisfaction, and that communication was unnecessary. This runs contrary to other research that has shown that for non-distressed couples, sexual communication was not an important predictor of dyadic satisfaction, while for distressed couples sexual communication was highly correlated with dyadic satisfaction (Banmen & Vogel, 1985). More likely, in responding to these questions, individuals' self-reported perceptions involved an integration of compatibility, ability to negotiate successfully, and satisfaction. If so, Study 1 may have been limited by a reliance on self-reported

perceptions of the presence of dilemmas and outcomes, and hence an inability to sufficiently disentangle these factors.

Additionally, results for Study 1 were likely limited by the use of a university sample. Specifically, despite the fact that a minority of couples were involved in relationships of a longer duration, the majority consisted of individuals in relatively short dating relationships. When combined with the relatively young age of participants, our sample was likely positively skewed toward early relationship experiences, suggesting limits in both the variability and generalizability of the findings. It is likely that the relations between accommodation styles and satisfaction in intimate relationships would be better assessed within a community sample which varies in both age and length of relationship.

Study Two: The Role of Intimate Identities and Accommodation Styles in Couple Functioning

As noted, accommodation styles, and in particular the suppression of destructive accommodation styles, appeared to be an indicator of overall satisfaction in an intimate relationship, but the relation between accommodation styles and couples' sexual satisfaction was not evident. In part, this was expected, as sexual satisfaction represents a specific identity domain that may entail different styles of accommodation to successfully negotiate dilemmas than are required in other domains of the relationship (Banmen & Vogel, 1985; Cupach & Comstock, 1990; Wheeless et al.,1984). Thus, in Study 2, general and sexual accommodation styles were assessed as distinct constructs to assess their unique relations to sexual and non-sexual relationship functioning.

In Study 1, it was further noted that the relation between accommodation styles and sexual satisfaction was not moderated by sexual compatibility. However, because sexual satisfaction and sexual compatibility were so highly related, our ability to discern how accommodation styles affected sexual satisfaction when dilemmas arose, was clearly limited. Identity Control Theory suggests that individuals' behavior will be moderated by the specific identities evoked in a situation (Stets & Tsushima, 2001), in that, the value individuals place on one identity relative to another will determine how they respond to challenges to the identity. Therefore, in Study 2, conflict situations were raised that made salient different dimensions of individuals' identity, namely the dimensions reflecting the self as a sexual partner and the self as an intimate partner. In this way, the importance that individuals placed on their sexual partner and intimate partner identities relative to one another could be assessed. It was argued that the placement of the intimate partner and sexual partner identity in the individual's identity hierarchy would determine how they accommodated when faced with sexual or non-sexual accommodative dilemmas in the intimate relationship.

Hypotheses

(H1) It was expected that different styles of accommodation would be used in sexual versus non-sexual dilemmas, in that, given cultural scripts relating to sexuality, individuals would endorse greater use of passive accommodation styles (i.e., neglect and loyalty) when faced with sexual compared to non-sexual accommodative dilemmas.

(H2) It was expected that when the intimate partner identity was more central within the individual's identity hierarchy than their sexual partner identity, they would be

more likely to adopt constructive accommodation styles (loyalty and voice) and suppress destructive ones (neglect and exit) when faced with a sexual accommodative dilemma. We expected no relationship between identity hierarchy and the endorsement of general accommodation styles, as the relative importance of the intimate and sexual partner identities was not expected to impact the non-sexual domains of the relationship. However, the absolute importance of the intimate partner identity, but not necessarily the sexual partner identity, should predict accommodation styles in general.

(H3) It was expected that the relation between accommodation styles and relationship functioning would be moderated by individuals' identity hierarchy. Specifically, when individuals placed their intimate partner identity above their sexual partner identity, general accommodation styles would be predictive of both relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction. If, however, individuals valued their sexual identity more highly, general accommodation styles would uniquely predict relationship satisfaction, whereas, sexual accommodation styles would uniquely predict sexual satisfaction.

Method

Participants

Participants consisted of individuals in intimate relationships ($N = 168$). The majority of participants ($n = 157$) were from the community, along with an additional 11 who were students from Carleton University. Questionnaire packages were sent out to 120 couples (for one partner or both to complete) and 104 were returned.

While in Study 1 we were interested in how the responses of each partner within a couple influenced their combined perceptions of relationship functioning, in Study 2 we were interested in individual differences in identity, and how they were related to individuals' functioning within the relationship. Therefore, unlike in Study 1, in Study 2 individuals who participated without their partners were included in the analyses. Moreover, in instances where both members of a given couple participated, to ensure independence of observations, only one member of each couple was randomly selected to be included in the final sample. Both members of 72 couples participated in the study. In addition, 10 women and 14 men completed the questionnaire packages, although their partners did not. Thus, the final sample consisted of 46 women and 50 men.

The age of the final sample of participants ranged from 18 to 57 ($M = 27.0$, $SD =$ 7.2 years). Participants who were casually dating comprised only a small percentage of the sample ($n = 8$; 8.3%), with the majority indicating that they were dating seriously but not cohabitating ($n = 32$; 33.3 %). The remainder were in a serious relationship and cohabitating ($n = 19$; 19.8%), engaged ($n = 8$; 8.3%), or married ($n = 29$; 30.2%). The length of involvement in their current intimate relationships ranged from 10 months to 32 years ($M = 45.24$, $SD = 45.6$ months). However, this distribution was positively skewed; the majority of participants (70.3%) were involved in their current relationships from 1 to 5 years.

The length of involvement in sexual activity in the current intimate relationship ranged from 10 months to 32 years ($M = 50.4$, $SD = 50.2$ months), and was similarly positively skewed. The majority of the couples indicated being sexually active and

engaging in sexual intercourse (n = 95; 99%), while the remainder of the sample indicated that they were not currently sexually active (n = 1; 1%). Once again, all participants were included in the analyses, as even the choice not to be sexually active may or may not reflect a relationship dilemma.

Measures

All measures used in the study can be found in Appendix G.

Conflict scenarios. Prior to filling out the accommodative styles measures, participants read a series of general and sexual relationship conflict scenarios. These scenarios were included in order to facilitate participants' perceptions that they experienced dilemmas in their intimate relationships. After reading each scenario, participants indicated how often they were involved in similar scenarios in their own relationships in the last month on 5-point scales ranging from 1 (never happens) to 5 (always happens). By having participants rate how often they were engaged in similar scenarios we hoped to enhance the level of identification with the common relationship scenarios increasing the participant's recognition of the presence of dilemmas in their relationship. The scenarios were derived from descriptions of common conflict situations given by participants from Study 1 on an additional open-ended measure. Although, it might seem preferable for participants to describe personally relevant conflict scenarios when indicating how they accommodated to them, Murray and Holmes (1993) indicated that when individuals construct stories regarding their intimate partners, the construction process masks negative responses, and positive pre-existing stories become the focus. Given that the study was particularly interested in how couples resolve relationship

dilemmas, such a bias would have clearly undermined the sensitivity of our measures to tap into this process. A pilot study indicated that providing participants with a predetermined set of scenarios did, in fact, prime conflict scenarios within the intimate relationship, presumably increasing the validity of their responses to the accommodation styles measures (see Appendix H for details).

Accommodation styles. The 28-item self-report questionnaire used in Study 1 to measure how individuals in a couple reacted to periodic declines in relationship quality was employed as an indicator of general accommodation styles (Rusbult & Zembrodt, 1983). Similar to Study 1, general accommodation styles showed acceptable reliability coefficients for the exit (α = .89), voice (α =.79), loyalty (α =.67) and neglect (α = 76) subscales. As seen in Table 7, significant correlations were found between constructive subscales (voice and loyalty) as well as for destructive subscales (exit and neglect).

In addition, sexual accommodation styles were assessed by modifying items to focus on how sexual conflicts in the current relationship were dealt with (e.g., "When I'm unhappy with my partner because of sex, I consider breaking up"). Similar to general accommodation styles, the sexual accommodation styles questionnaire consisted of four subscales: exit, voice, loyalty and neglect, with seven items per subscale, measured on 9-point rating scales ranging from 1 (I never to this) to 9 (I always do this). Responses to items for each subscale were summed (with missing values replaced by individuals' mean response), with possible scores for each subscale ranging from 7 to 63. The questionnaire showed sufficient internal reliabilities for the subscales of exit (α = .86), voice (α = .88), loyalty (α = .66) and neglect (α = .75). Once again, the reliability coefficient found for

the loyalty subscale was relatively low, but as noted in Study 1, was comparable to past research using general accommodation styles (Rusbult et al., 1982,1986a). As seen in Table 7, significant correlations were found between constructive subscales (voice and loyalty) as well as for destructive subscales (exit and neglect).

Table 7

Correlations between Study 2 Measures

	Sexual Measures						General Measures					
	Exit	Voice	Loyalty	Neglect	Identity	Satisfaction	Exit	Voice	Loyalty	Neglect	Identity	Satisfaction
Sexual exit	1.00	-.14	-.06	-.58***	-.03	-.26*	.48***	.07	.10	.34***	.00	-.30***
Sexual voice	-.14	1.00	-.20*	-.32***	.19	.35***	-.07	.48***	-.26***	-.28***	.12	-.18
Sexual loyalty	-.06	-.20*	1.00	.40***	-.12	-.31***	.17	-.06	.49***	.25*	-.16	.03
Sexual neglect	.58***	-.32***	.40***	1.00	.01	-.34***	.36***	-.10	.24*	.39***	-.04	-.00
Sexual identity	.-.03	.19	-.12	.01	1.00	.31***	-.15	.07	-.05	.07	.47***	.07
Sexual satisfaction	-.26*	.35***	-.31***	-.34***	.31***	1.00	-.38***	.30***	-.07	-.45***	.41***	.42***
General exit	.48***	-.07	.17	.36***	-.15	-.38***	1.00	.21*	.02	.39***	-.23*	-.40*
General voice	.07	.48***	-.06	-.10	.07	.30***	.21*	1.00	-.27***	-.35***	.10	-.07
General loyalty	.10	-.26*	.49***	.24*	-.05	-.07	.02	-.27***	1.00	.25*	.01	.03
General neglect	.34***	-.28***	.25*	.39***	.07	-.45***	.39***	-.35***	.25*	1.00	-.02	-.25
General identity	.00	.12	-.16	-.04	.47***	.41***	-.23*	.10	.01	-.02	1.00	.16
General satisfaction	-.30***	-.18	.03	-.00	.07	.42***	-.40***	-.07	.03	-.25*	.16	1.00

Note. *p,.05, ***p<.001

Sexual Partner/Intimate Partner Identity Hierarchy. A Sexual Partner/Intimate Partner Identity Hierarchy Inventory was developed for the purposes of the present study based on a modified version of the Personal Dimensions of Difference Scale (PDD) (Dunbar, 1997). Prior to employing this measure, it was pilot tested to evaluate its ability to assess the identities of interest and their placement in an identity hierarchy (see Appendix H).

This measure provides a direct relative comparison of the importance individuals place on the identities being assessed (i.e., sexual partner and intimate partner identities). The salience of these identity standards to individuals were assessed by including three questions pertaining to identification (how important the identity is them), support (perceived positive reinforcement from others with respect to their identity on this dimension), and empowerment (perceptions that their identity in this domain provides positive results). Taken together, these three dimensions of identity reflect the individual's investment in the identity and the perceived cost of giving it up, both of which determine commitment to the identity and its placement in the identity hierarchy.

The PDD (Dunbar, 1997) was originally developed to measure multiple ethnic and social group identities. The current measure focused on four identities, including the intimate partner identity and the sexual partner identity. Two other identities (gender and ethnicity) were also included as filler items to provide a context for the two identities of interest.

Before participants evaluated their *sexual partner identity*, they were provided with a definition of the sexual partner identity, based on the subscales from the

Multidimensional Sexuality Questionnaire (Snell, Fisher & Walters, 1993). Participants were told, "When defining who you are sexually, please consider how you think and feel about all of the sexual aspects of your sexual life (either alone or with a partner). This may include how satisfying you find sexual contact, how much you enjoy sexual contact, your sexual self-esteem, how in control of your sexuality your feel and how sexually confident or anxious you feel. While sexual orientation (being heterosexual, bisexual or homosexual) will affect your being sexual partner identity it is only one aspect of your whole sexual partner identity and should not be considered more or less important than any other aspect of this identity." Participants then chose between the following response alternatives: "Sexuality is very important to who I am", "Sexuality is important to who I am", "Sexuality is somewhat important to who I am", "Sexuality is not an important part of who I am" and "Sexuality is not a part of who I am", with higher importance being scored 5, and low importance scored 1.

In reference to the *intimate partner identity* participants were told "When defining who you are as an intimate partner, please consider how you think and feel about all of the aspects of who you are as an intimate partner (across all intimate relationships). Your intimate partner identity may include, but is not limited to, a strong attraction and commitment to being an intimate partner and a sense of self-worth which is derived from being an intimate partner." This definition was based on the concept of the "self-in-a-relationship" described by Krauss-Whitbourne and Ebmeyer (1990). After reading the definition, individuals chose between the same five response options as they did with

their sexual partner identity, but in this case, in reference to their intimate partner identity.

For each identity, participants also responded to three further questions on 5-point scales ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very), assessing "how strongly do you identify yourself as the following", "how much do you derive a sense of personal power and energy being identified with the following" and "how much approval or support do you receive for this identity". Scores for each identity were summed across the four items with possible scores ranging from 4 to 20, with higher scores reflecting higher identity salience. Internal reliability coefficients for both the intimate ($\alpha = .77$) and sexual partner identity ($\alpha = .75$) subscales were adequate.

In order to establish the relative centrality of the sexual and intimate partner identities within individuals' identity hierarchy, difference scores were calculated by subtracting sexual partner identity scores from intimate partner identity scores. This resulted in a continuous score, ranging from -20 to 20, such that positive scores reflected placement of the intimate partner identity above the sexual partner identity.

A final question was included to assess directly participants' subjective perceptions of the relative placement of their sexual partner and intimate partner identities. In response to the statement "My intimate identity is _____ than my sexual partner identity" participants chose between five responses ranging from 1 (Is way more important) to 5 (Is way more unimportant). This direct assessment item was positively correlated with the identity hierarchy assessment tool ($r = .31, p<.05$), suggesting that the identity hierarchy measure was consistent with subjective ratings of the relative

importance of these two identities. This moderate correlation was expected as it was believed that the subjective perceptions rating would not capture all aspects of the identity hierarchy assessed by the measure of identification, support and empowerment.

Outcome variables. As in Study 1, the *Index of Sexual Satisfaction* (Hudson et al., 1981) and the *Dyadic Adjustment Scale* (Spanier, 1976) were used to assess the degree of satisfaction within participants' relationships. Totals for each scale were summed and scale scores for each sexual ($\alpha = .89$) and relationship ($\alpha = .92$) satisfaction represented the outcome measures.

Procedure

Members of 120 couples volunteered for the study in response to newspaper advertisements, list-serve postings and posters placed in community agencies and local university campuses (Appendix I). The study was described as concerning how intimate identities and communication styles between intimate partners affect functioning in various facets of their relationship. One or both members of the intimate relationship were invited to participate in the research. Volunteers who e-mailed or phoned the researcher were provided with an explanation of the purpose of the study, so that they could make a decision concerning their desire to participate further. Those who were interested were mailed questionnaire packages with return envelopes enclosed.

Past research has noted a self-selection bias in research focused on sexuality issues, in that, there is a tendency for people not to want to share information about such personal, sensitive and private aspects of their lives (Crooks & Baur, 1993). Individuals who volunteer for this type of research tend to be more sexually experienced and hold

more positive attitudes toward sexuality than those who do not volunteer (Morokoff, 1986). This may lead to a bias in the data, masking the difficulties and discomfort people experience, which are the very topic of this thesis. One way that Study 2 attempted to overcome this bias was by advertising the research study as focusing on intimate relationships and not just sexuality in intimate relationships. While the researcher informed all prospective participants that sexuality would be included in the assessment, it was mentioned as only one aspect of the study.

The majority (91%) of the questionnaire packages were completed off campus and returned through the mail. Therefore, further contributing to self-selection biases, response rates were also expected to pose a problem. Attempts were made to enhance response rates by providing participants with a clear statement of the purpose and requirements of the study prior to mailing out the package, and following-up those who agreed to participate with an e-mail message 14 days after the package had been sent out. Additionally, to encourage questionnaire returns, upon receipt of their completed packages, participants' names were placed in a draw for a dinner for two at a local restaurant. Packages from 24 volunteers either were not returned or were returned not completed. Therefore, the final sample consisted of 96 couples with one or both members participating, representing a response rate of 80% of those contacted.

The measures for the study were administered in three sections, with the order within each section counter balanced (1) identity measures (sexual, partner and the sexual partner hierarchy), (2) conflict scenarios and accommodation styles measures (general and sexual), and (3) outcome measures (sexual and relationship satisfaction). Each

questionnaire package contained an informed consent sheet (Appendix J), detailed instructions on how to complete the package (Appendix K) and a one-page debriefing on the last page of the package (Appendix L).

In the event that both members of the couple were interested in participating, they were mailed two questionnaire packages in separate sealed envelopes along with return envelopes. Participants were asked to fill out the packages in separate rooms, and not to share their responses with their partner prior to returning their packages. They were instructed to return the packages in the separate, sealed envelopes.

Results

Descriptives

In order to compare participants randomly selected for the purposes of the final analyses with those couple members of who were not selected, a series of t-tests was conducted on the key variables of interest. As seen in Table 8, no differences on measures of identity hierarchy, relationship satisfaction, or sexual satisfaction, were found. Nor were there any significant differences on sexual or general accommodation styles. Thus, there do not appear to be any systematic differences between the samples that were randomly selected or not from the respondents in the present study.

As seen in Table 9, analyses of gender differences on these same variables indicated that, as in Study 1 females reported higher tendencies to use voice, and less use of loyalty as general styles of accommodation. However, females were also more likely to endorse the use of exit in Study 2, both as a general style and in response to sexual dilemmas. Females were also less likely to use loyalty in response to sexual conflicts.

No significant gender differences were found on the remaining accommodations styles or on self-reported sexual or general relationship satisfaction. Finally, there were no gender differences on the measure of identity hierarchy.[4]

[4]Analyses examining the relations among variables were conducted using gender and length of relationship as predictors. While main effects for gender continued to be evident, there were no significant interactions with gender or length of relationship. Therefore, we concluded that the findings were not moderated by gender or length of relationship.

Table 8

Means and standard deviations for accommodation styles, identity hierarchy, relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction for couples selected and not selected.

	Couples selected		Couples not selected		
Measure	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t(71)
Identity Hierarchy	.56	2.37	.49	2.22	.83
Relationship satisfaction	42.57	6.86	42.13	6.72	.38
Sexual satisfaction	74.66	3.32	74.13	3.13	-1.33
Sexual accommodation					
Exit	13.88	9.13	13.53	8.67	.26
Voice	40.91	9.87	41.43	10.08	-.58
Loyalty	36.65	8.95	35.87	8.99	.80
Neglect	17.21	7.52	16.79	7.59	.64
General accommodation					
Exit	15.98	8.87	13.88	9.13	-.85
Voice	44.29	7.73	45.18	8.45	-1.04
Loyalty	36.43	9.39	36.07	8.95	.62
Neglect	25.38	8.31	23.92	9.17	1.30

Table 9

Means and standard deviations for accommodation styles, identity hierarchy, relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction by gender.

	Male		Female		
Measure	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	η^2
General accommodation					
Exit	12.83***	5.97	19.43***	11.74	.10
Voice	43.73***	9.54	47.64***	7.66	.16
Loyalty	38.87*	9.18	34.14*	8.14	.07
Neglect	23.36	9.01	24.95	9.51	.00
Sexual accommodation					
Exit	11.31*	5.79	14.73*	9.02	.05
Loyalty	39.72***	10.55	32.84***	8.82	.12
Voice	42.32	9.20	43.19	9.59	.02
Neglect	17.16	7.94	16.76	8.01	.00
Sexual satisfaction	73.77	11.05	74.63	14.17	.02
Relationship satisfaction	43.14	4.01	41.01	8.18	.03
Identity Hierarchy	0.79	1.72	0.00	2.34	.03

Note. *$p < .05$, ***$p < .001$

To evaluate whether length of relationship affected responses, participants who had been together for three years or less with their current partner were compared to those who had been together for over 3 years. This dichotomization was conducted given the skewness of the distribution reflecting time in the relationship, and three years represented the sample median. As seen in Table 10, on the whole, there were no significant differences as a function of the duration of the relationship on participants' accommodation styles, identity hierarchy or satisfaction ratings.

As seen in Table 7, a moderate positive correlation was found between the measures of dyadic and sexual satisfaction, such that, high levels of relationship satisfaction were associated with high levels of sexual satisfaction. Additionally, all four accommodation subscales (exit, voice, loyalty, and neglect) showed moderate positive correlations with their general counterparts. Finally, the sexual and intimate partner identities were found to be moderately correlated. While there was overlap between the two identities, only 21.0% of their variance was shared, suggesting that they also reflected unique properties.

Table 10

Means and standard deviations for accommodation styles, identity hierarchy, relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction by length of relationship.

	Relationships under 3 years		Relationships over 3 years		
Measure	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	η^2
Sexual accommodation					
Exit	15.73	11.53	13.49	7.73	.01
Voice	44.72	10.38	43.07	6.95	.00
Loyalty	30.66	9.09	32.43	8.73	.01
Neglect	16.04	7.94	15.84	6.64	.00
General accommodation					
Exit	17.80	10.84	19.81	12.18	.00
Voice	47.08	8.25	46.52	7.10	.00
Loyalty	32.32	9.17	34.62	7.14	.02
Neglect	21.71	8.27	25.05	8.33	.03
Identity Hierarchy	.35	3.07	.00	2.34	.00
Relationship Satisfaction	42.32	8.48	39.83	5.37	.03
Sexual Satisfaction	73.26	12.53	73.89	13.37	.00

Sexual Versus Non-Sexual Dilemmas

It was expected that individuals would exhibit different accommodation styles when faced with sexual versus non-sexual accommodative dilemmas, and in particular, individuals were expected to show higher levels of passive accommodation styles (i.e., loyalty and neglect) in sexual as compared to non-sexual accommodative dilemmas, and lower levels of the active styles, namely voice and exit. In order to test this hypothesis, a 2 (sexual vs. non-sexual dilemmas) X 4 (accommodation styles: exit, voice, loyalty and neglect) repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted[5]. Significant main effects were evident for type of dilemma, $F(1, 95) = 87.77, p < .001, \eta^2 = .48$, and style of accommodation, $F(3, 237) = 314.02, p < .001, \eta^2 = .77$. However, these effects were qualified by a significant interaction between type of dilemma and accommodation styles, $F(3, 257) = 6.45, p < .05, \eta^2 = .06$.

Simple effects analyses were conducted assessing whether participants' use of each of the accommodation styles differed depending on the domain. As seen in Table 11, contrary to predictions, neglect was less likely to be used in response to sexual dilemmas, and there was no difference in the expression of loyalty as a function of domain. However, consistent with expectations, lower levels of the active strategies of exit and voice were found in response to the sexual dilemmas. While levels of exit, voice and neglect were all lower for the sexual dilemmas, this difference was greatest for the

[5]All four accommodation subscales were employed for this analysis as we expected that both the passive (loyalty and neglect) and active (exit and voice) domains would be significant in determining the unique patter of differences between sexual and general accommodation styles.

exit and neglect accommodation styles suggesting that individuals were least likely to adopt destructive strategies for responding to sexual dilemmas.

Table 11

Means and standard deviations for sexual and non-sexual accommodation styles

	Accommodation Style				
	Sexual		Non-Sexual		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	F (1,95)
Neglect	15.93***	7.23	23.50***	8.42	72.95
Loyalty	31.60	8.77	33.59	8.19	5.12
Exit	14.54*	9.71	18.88*	11.56	14.92
Voice	43.85***	8.72	46.81***	7.63	11.84

*p <.05, ***p<.001

The Relation Between Identity Hierarchy and Accommodation Styles

It was expected that when the intimate partner identity was more central within the individual's identity hierarchy than their sexual partner identity, they would be more willing to adopt constructive accommodation styles and suppress destructive ones when faced with a sexual accommodative dilemma, relative to those individuals who placed their sexual partner identity above their intimate partner identity. We expected no relations between identity hierarchy and general accommodation styles since the relative

importance of the intimate and sexual partner identities was not expected to impact the non-sexual domains of the relationship.

In order to test whether identity hierarchy predicted sexual accommodation styles, a standard multiple regression was conducted, wherein identity hierarchy was regressed onto the four indices of accommodation styles (exit, voice, loyalty and neglect). As seen in Table 12, contrary to predictions, there was no relationship between identity hierarchy scores and sexual accommodation styles, $F<1$. Similarly, the relationship between identity hierarchy and scores on general accommodation styles was not significant (see Table 12).

This latter finding was not, however, surprising, as it was anticipated that general accommodation styles would be more likely to reflect the absolute, rather than relative importance of the identity as an intimate partner. To assess this possibility, participant's intimate identity score was regressed onto both general and sexual accommodation styles. However, as seen in Table 13, this expectation was not supported; on the whole accommodation styles were not related to the importance of the intimate partner identity, although there was tendency for exit to be less likely when this identity was important.

Table 12

Hierarchical regression assessing relations between identity hierarchy and sexual and general accommodation styles when accommodation styles are employed as the independent variable.

	r	*B*[a]	*R2change*
Accommodation domain			
Sexual			.01
Exit	.06	.09	
Voice	-.11	-.13	
Loyalty	-.05	-.46	
Neglect	-.01	-.00	
General			.04
Exit	-.13	-.10	
Voice	.12	.16	
Loyalty	.06	.08	
Neglect	-.05	-.07	

[a] Standardized coefficients are from the final step of the regression analysis

Table 13

Regression analysis assessing relations between intimate identity and accommodation styles when accommodation styles are employed as the independent variable

	r	B^a	R^2_{change}
Accommodation subscale			
General			.11
Exit	-.23*	-.34*	
Voice	.10	.23	
Loyalty	.01	.05	
Neglect	-.02	.18	
Sexual			.16
Exit	.00	.04	
Voice	.12	.04	
Loyalty	-.16	-.26	
Neglect	-.04	.16	

Note. *$p<.05$

[a]. Standardized coefficients are from the final step of the regression analysis

The Moderating Effect of Identity Hierarchy on the Relation Between Accommodation Styles and Satisfaction

To assess whether the relation between accommodation styles and sexual and relationship satisfaction were moderated by identity hierarchy, two sets of hierarchical regression analyses were conducted, one set for each of relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction as the outcome variables. Within each set, an analysis was conducted to assess the relation between sexual accommodation measures and satisfaction, and a second assessed the predictive utility of the general accommodation measures. Scores on each of the predictors were standardized for these analyses. For each regression, indices of satisfaction were regressed onto the main effect of identity hierarchy, followed by constructive and destructive accommodation styles. Finally, the interaction between the standardized scores on these variables were entered.

In order to maximize power to detect the interaction effects and to reduce capitalization of chance effects, and given that hypotheses regarding the interaction were in reference to the use of constructive and destructive accommodation styles, we attempted to create two combined scales, respectively[6]. Scores on the exit and neglect subscales were combined (sexual $r = .58$; general $r = .39$) to reflect the use of destructive accommodation styles. However, due to the low negative correlation between the loyalty and voice subscales (sexual $r = -.20$, general $r = -.27$), these indices could not be combined to create an index of constructive accommodation styles. While the weakness

[6] While it would have been ideal to evaluate the four accommodation subscales separately, analyses revealed that when the four subscales were entered into the regression equation as separate indices, the moderating effects were lost. This lack of findings is likely due to insufficient power when all four indices were considered together.

of these relations may suggest that these scales do not share a common basis, this runs contrary to previous work that suggests they both represent a constructive approach to conflict (Rusbult et al., 1982, 1986ab,1991). Alternatively, the low correlations may be due to the insufficient internal reliabilities of the loyalty subscales, suggesting that the psychometric properties of these subscales are problematic. Therefore, the voice subscale alone was used as an indicator of constructive accommodation and exit and neglect were combined to create a measure of destructive responding.

In predicting general relationship satisfaction, as seen in Table 14, neither identity hierarchy, sexual accommodation styles, nor their interactions were significant predictors. As expected, however, general accommodation styles were predictive of general relationship satisfaction (see Table 15). Specifically, as in Study 1, although the use of voice was not significant, lower levels of destructive accommodation styles were related to higher relationship satisfaction. However, the interaction between general accommodation styles and identity hierarchy was marginally significant in predicting relationship satisfaction. Given a priori hypotheses about the nature of this relation, simple slope analysis examining the relation between general accommodation styles and relationship satisfaction at one standard deviation below and above the mean on the identity hierarchy was conducted. When the identity as intimate partner was highly valued over sexual partner, relationship satisfaction was related to lower levels of voice ($B = -.48, p < .001$), as well as lower endorsements of destructive general accommodation styles ($B = -.52, p < .001$). However, when the identity hierarchy was reversed (sexual partner was more important than the intimate partner identity), neither voice, ($B = -.01$,

ns), nor destructive accommodation styles ($B = .26$, *ns*) were related to relationship satisfaction.

Table 14

Hierarchical regression analysis assessing identity hierarchy moderated relationship between sexual accommodation styles and relationship satisfaction.

	r	*B*[a]	*R2change*
Identity Hierarchy	.18	.15	.02
Accommodation Styles			.05
Voice	-.18	-.15	
Destructive	-.08*	-.10	
Accommodation Styles * Identity Hierarchy			.00
Voice	-.03	-.05	
Destructive	-.03	-.04	

Note. *$p.<.05$

[a]. Standardized coefficients are from the final step of the regression analysis

Table 15

Hierarchical regression analysis assessing identity hierarchy moderated relationship between general accommodation styles and relationship satisfaction

	r	*B*[a]	*R2change*
Identity Hierarchy	.18	.10	.02
Accommodation Styles			.15***
Voice	-.07	-.01	
Destructive	-.28***	-.36*	
Accommodation Styles * Identity Hierarchy			.05^{+}
Voice Interaction	-.20*	-.25*	
Destructive Interaction	-.03	.03	

Note. *p<.05; ***p <.001; ^{+}p<.07

[a]. Standardized coefficients are from the final step of the regression analysis

As with general relationship satisfaction, sexual satisfaction was not significantly predicted by identity hierarchy (see Table 16). However, there was a significant relation between sexual satisfaction and sexual accommodation styles, such that lower use of destructive accommodation styles was predictive of higher levels of sexual satisfaction. Once again, the interaction between identity hierarchy and accommodation styles was significant. Simple slope analyses examining the relation between sexual satisfaction and sexual accommodation styles at one standard deviation below and above the mean on the identity hierarchy indicated that when identity hierarchy scores were high, sexual satisfaction was not associated with sexual voice ($B = .08$, *ns*), but was associated with lower use of destructive sexual accommodation styles ($B = -.34$, $p<.05$). Similarly, when the identity hierarchy was reversed, sexual satisfaction was not significantly related to the use of sexual voice ($B = .29$, $p<.05$, *ns*), but continued to be associated with lower levels of destructive sexual accommodation ($B = -.33$, $p<.05$). This suggests that as sexual partner identity becomes more valued over the intimate partner identity, the more important voice becomes as a predictor of sexual satisfaction, in that the more voice was expressed, the higher the level of sexual satisfaction.

Table 16

Hierarchical regression analysis assessing identity hierarchy moderated relationship between sexual accommodation styles and sexual satisfaction

	r	*B*[a]	*R2change*
Identity Hierarchy	.15	.05	.02
Accommodation Styles			.11*
Voice	.35***	.09	
Destructive	-.34***	-.41***	
Accommodation Styles * Identity Hierarchy			.08*
Voice Interaction	.30*	.53*	
Destructive Interaction	-.26***	-.43*	

Note. $*p<.05$, $***p<.001$

[a]. Standardized coefficients are from the final step of the regression analysis

As seen in Table 17, there was also a significant relationship between general accommodation styles and sexual satisfaction, such that high levels of voice and low levels of destructive styles predicted higher levels of sexual satisfaction. As well, the interaction of sexual accommodation styles and identity hierarchy was significant in predicting sexual satisfaction. Simple slope analyses indicated that when identity hierarchy scores were high, sexual satisfaction was related to higher levels of general voice ($B = .40, p<.05$), and less use of destructive general accommodation styles ($B = -.52, p<.001$). However, when the identity hierarchy was low, greater sexual satisfaction was not related to general voice ($B = .10, p<.001$), but was related to lower levels of destructive general accommodation styles ($B = -.43, p<.05$).

Table 17

Hierarchical regression analysis assessing identity hierarchy moderated relationship between general accommodation styles and sexual satisfaction

	r	*B*[a]	*R2change*
Identity Hierarchy	.15	.05	.02
Accommodation Styles			.24***
Voice	.30***	.18*	
Destructive	-.49***	-.45***	
Accommodation Styles * Identity Hierarchy			.07*
Voice Interaction	.31*	.36*	
Destructive Interaction	.14	-.16	

Note. *$p < .05$, ***$p < .001$

[a]. Standardized coefficients are from the final step of the regression analysis

In sum, these analyses indicated that when the intimate identity was more salient than the sexual partner identity, general accommodation styles were predictive of both general and sexual satisfaction suggesting some common impact of general accommodation styles across areas of relationship functioning. However, when sexual partner identities were more important, both general and sexual accommodation styles were singularly related to sexual satisfaction, and were not predictive of relationship satisfaction. This suggests that although the relative importance of sexual and intimate partner identities is important in how accommodation styles impact satisfaction, the greater importance of the sexual identity appears to have its impact not so much through the specificity of using sexual accommodation styles, as through the lack of any consistent relations between accommodation styles and general relationship satisfaction.

Discussion

Consistent with previous research (Banmen & Vogel, 1985; Cupach & Comstock, 1990; Wheeless et al., 1984), Study 2 found support for the hypothesis that individuals used different styles of communication when dealing with sexual versus non-sexual areas of relationship functioning. As predicted, lower levels of active accommodation styles (exit and voice) were associated with sexual dilemmas, in comparison to general dilemmas. However, contrary to predictions, lower levels of neglect were also associated with sexual dilemmas, and levels of loyalty were not significantly different. Thus, the idea that individuals would use more passive forms of accommodation in sexual dilemmas was not supported directly. Of additional interest was the finding that the difference in the use of accommodation styles in sexual dilemmas was greatest in terms

of exit and neglect, suggesting that individuals adopted considerably lower levels of destructive responding in sexual dilemmas. Taken together, these findings may reflect an overall reluctance in communicating about sexual areas of a relationship, but in particular a propensity to avoid destructive styles of interaction within this context. It may be that sexual scripts provide strong cultural expectancies and practices that make discussing sexual aspects of the relationship difficult. In fact, Metts and Spitzberg (1996) suggest that the enactment of coordinated sexual actions is likely accomplished only with some degree of effort by both sexual partners to avoid dilemmas within this domain, which is perhaps why the suppression of destructive styles is especially imperative for successful sexual functioning (Yovetich & Rusbult, 1994).

While we expected that individuals would use different accommodation styles in different types of dilemmas, the importance individuals placed on their sexual and intimate partner identities ought to have further influenced these responses. According to Identity Control Theory, an individual's behavior will be moderated by the specific identities evoked in a conflict situation and the relative importance individuals place on the identities evoked (Stets & Tsushima, 2001). Thus, it was surprising to find that the hierarchy of intimate relative to sexual partner identities was not predictive of either sexual or general accommodation styles. This lack of relations may reflect reality; it may be that situationally salient identities do not affect styles of responding to dilemma in close relationships, in that response styles may involve more stable, trait-based characteristics of the individual. However, this conclusion would be contrary to previous research that has found that reactions of anger were stronger when identities pertaining to

close relationships were activated, in comparison to when alternative less relevant identities were salient (Stets & Tsushima, 2001). In the present study, both of the identities that were made salient were, however, integral to the intimate relationship itself, and so perhaps their impacts were less distinguishable.

Alternatively, it is possible that the relation between identity salience and accommodation styles was influenced by a host of other factors that moderate the relation, but were not assessed in the present study. For example, Rusbult et al. (1982) suggested that the use of different accommodation styles depends on satisfaction in the relationship domain prior to the dilemma, overall investment in the relationship, and alternatives to the current relationship. However, Rusbult et al. (1982) also suggested that these three factors determine commitment to the relationship. Given that commitment to the relationship is a prime determinant of the salience of the intimate partner identity, it was surprising that even the absolute importance participants attributed to their intimate partner identity did not predict the accommodation styles that were endorsed by the individual.

Previous work in Identity Control Theory has noted the difficulty in measuring identities (Burke & Tully, 1977; Burke, 1980, 1981; Stryker & Burke, 2000), and the effects of identity salience on behavior (Burke, 1980; Callero, 1985; Stryker & Burke, 2000). Therefore, it is clearly possible that our operationalization of the identity salience measure may have undermined our ability to tap into the effects of this variable. Indeed, Dunbar (1997) suggests that the Personal Dimensions of Difference Scale, the measurement tool our assessment was derived from, is not a comprehensive measure of

identity. Rather, the scale assesses identity salience by evaluating the level of support, identification and power related to the identities of interest. By limiting the evaluation of identity salience to only three dimensions, participants may have been limited in their ability to define and express the identities of interest relative to one another. This may be especially the case, given that the measure was used to assess identities that it was not originally intended to measure, and hence may have been more strongly comprised of alternative dimensions, such as levels of interdependence with significant others. Further limiting the scope participants were given to define these identities may have been the definitions we provided them with. Although the pilot research confirmed that participants accurately understood the definitions provided of the sexual and intimate partner identities, these definitions may not, in fact, have captured the full meaning of these identities. For example, participants were asked to consider generally their enjoyment of sexual contact, sexual self-esteem, feelings of sexual control, sexual confidence, sexual anxiety and sexual orientation, however, this general approach may not have captured individuals' intrapsychic sexual scripts that define the sexual identity. While a moderate correlation was found between the measure of identity hierarchy and subjective ratings of the relative importance of these two identities, suggesting that our measure indeed evaluated identity salience, future research may benefit from considering and measuring identities along dimensions that are both demonstrated to be common to all identities, and reflect factors that may be idiosyncratic, yet central, to a given identity. This said, although identity salience was not predictive of accommodation styles, it did serve to moderate the relations between accommodation styles and satisfaction in a

predictable pattern. Thus, it is unlikely that the findings were a simply function of this measure's psychometric properties.

The ability to detect differences in the impacts of identity salience and accommodation styles may also have been limited by the context in which these identities were made salient. Although the majority of participants completed the questionnaire in their home environments, as opposed to the laboratory setting, the capacity for a questionnaire to evoke strongly a sexual or intimate partner identity may have been constrained, thereby attenuating their impacts on responses. Indeed, Burke and Franzoi (1988), state that, "Due to the complex nature of some social phenomena, research methods often fail to adequately quantify data and test hypotheses and fail to capture the essential nature of the phenomena. One of these problematic areas involves the study of *identities* or, more specifically, the relationship between identities and the transitory situations in which they are enacted" (p.559). Given the sensitive nature of sexuality, especially when relating to relationship dilemmas, it would not be surprising if our ability to make this identity salient was limited. Future research needs to address the use of techniques that might better prime relationship dilemmas in order to assess identity salience, especially in the sensitive areas of sexuality and intimate relationship functioning.

Despite the finding that accommodation styles were not linked directly to identity hierarchy, these two processes were found to operate interactively to affect relationship satisfaction. This interaction was expected, as previous research has found that both accommodation styles (Berry & Willingham, 1997; Rusbult, 1983; Rusbult et al., 1982,

1986a, b, 1991; Scharfe & Bartholomew, 1995) and commitment to the relationship (Rusbult, 1983, 1987) were related to relationship satisfaction. Moreover, our research findings suggest that levels of commitment to the relationship (i.e., commitment to the intimate partner identity) relative to commitment to the sexual partner identity played a role in how accommodation styles affected sexual and relationship satisfaction.

We argued that among individuals with salient intimate partner identities, the sexual partner identity was likely subsumed under the intimate partner identity. Therefore, general accommodation styles ought to influence other areas of the relationship, including sexual domains, reflecting an overall desire to accommodate when faced with relationship dilemmas. Consistent with our predictions, the greater the relative importance of individuals' intimate partner identities, the stronger the relation between their accommodation styles and both relationship and sexual satisfaction. Lower levels of destructive general accommodation styles were consistently predictive of higher levels of both sexual and relationship satisfaction, a pattern consistent with both Study 1, and the good manners model (Rusbult, 1993; Rusbult et al., 1991). In addition, greater use of voice was associated with greater sexual satisfaction. Indeed, past research has shown that good sexual communication is important to sexual satisfaction (Cupach & Comstock, 1990; Ferroni & Taffe, 1997; MacNeil & Byers, 1997). For individuals committed to their intimate identity, actively working through sexual problems in order to increase sexual satisfaction may be seen as a way to increase overall relationship functioning. However, somewhat unexpectedly, relationship satisfaction was associated with lower levels of voice. It may be that within the general domain of relationship

functioning, individuals committed to their intimate identity may reduce active responses to dilemmas as a means of minimizing the dilemma and possible challenges to the intimate identity standard.

Among individuals whose intimate partner identities were less central than their sexual identity, we expected that functioning in the relationship would not necessarily be predictive of sexual functioning. Interestingly, among these individuals, relationship satisfaction was not predicted by accommodation styles. However, sexual satisfaction was related to the use of the good manners model in both general and sexual dilemmas, suggesting a need to avoid destructive responses in all dilemmas in order to maintain sexual satisfaction. It may be that, given the centrality of the sexual dimension of their identity, accommodative efforts were primarily targeted to satisfying these needs, so the general styles were one and the same as styles of accommodating to sexual dilemmas. Indeed, how individuals negotiate a general relationship conflict has an effect on the quality of sexual functioning (Metz & Epstein, 2002), which was likely of primary concern among these individuals.

Overall, it appears that sexual and non-sexual accommodation styles served qualitatively different functions, depending on individuals' identity hierarchy. Not only were different styles of accommodation used in relation to sexual and non-sexual dilemmas, identity hierarchies appeared to moderate these relations in these two domains, and the impacts on domain specific satisfaction. However, it ought to be noted that the use of only intact couples may have decreased the variability of responses on our measures, in that they were functioning at a higher level and/or were more invested in

their current relationship. Therefore, to understand more fully the impact of identity hierarchies on relationship functioning future research should focus on individuals within whom the intimate and sexual partner identities are not so closely linked (i.e., dating relationships, casual sexual experiences, and dissolved couples).

General Discussion

How individuals respond to dilemmas in an intimate relationship is integrally linked to the nature of the dilemma under discussion and the level of interpersonal conflict related to the dilemma. Of particular interest to the current research were the accommodation patterns of individuals in intimate relationships when faced with sexual versus general relationship dilemmas. Furthermore, we were interested in understanding the factors associated with individuals' identification with specific relationship domains, as the relative importance of these identities was expected to influence accommodation styles and their relation to satisfaction in the intimate relationship. Relationship dilemmas were viewed as an important venue for assessing the role of accommodation in couple functioning, as it was believed that both accommodation styles and intimate identities would be more salient during relationship dilemmas.

Although Rusbult et al. (1986b) suggested that accommodation styles used in a dilemma would depend on commitment to the relationship (as determined by existing levels of relationship satisfaction, investment in the relationship and availability of an alternative), the current findings suggest that the accommodation styles employed also depend on the nature of the dilemma under discussion. Moreover, consistent with Identity Control Theory (Burke, 1991), the level of commitment to intimate identities

also played an important moderating role in the relation between responses to accommodation dilemmas and satisfaction in the relationship.

The Consistency of Accommodation Styles Across Relationship Domains

Clearly there was some consistency in the accommodation styles employed across situations. Indeed, there were moderate correlations between general accommodation styles, and those endorsed in reference to a sexual dilemma. This is consistent with past research that suggests communication is important to both relationship and sexual functioning, and that the styles of communication and their impacts are interrelated (Metz & Epstein, 2002). There is likely some stability in the styles adopted by intimate partners, irrespective of the situation, and indeed there are common patterns of accommodation that are more likely to promote successful relationship functioning. Specifically, we found that accommodation styles were most predictive of high levels of satisfaction, when the good manners pattern of responding to dilemmas was endorsed. This was not surprising, as the good manners model has been found consistently to be an indicator of positive relationship functioning (Rusbult, 1993; Rusbult et al., 1986a, 1991; Yovetich & Rusbult, 1994). Yovetich and Rusbult (1993) suggest that this pattern reflects a transformation of motivation, in that, individuals have inhibited an impulse to react destructively in favor of a more constructive response. This motivated effort toward the suppression of destructive responses, and to a lesser degree the use of constructive responses to resolve dilemmas predicts satisfaction in the intimate relationship (Yovetich & Rusbult, 1994).

Given that the current research was based on the responses of partners within intact intimate relationships, and hence likely to feel some degree of attraction and commitment to the relationship, and to derive a sense of self-worth from it (Stets & Tsushima, 2001), it was not surprising that our results reflected a pattern of responding that involved a concerted attempt to maintain the relationship across domains. Indeed, Rusbult et al., (1986a), have suggested that the good manners model is powerful in determining couple functioning as "...the constructive responses may be more congruent with individuals' schemata for close relationships. If individuals expect their partners will behave well, the constructive responses may be taken for granted; constructive behavior, being the norm, gains one no benefit" (p. 750). The commonality in styles adopted to maintain functional relationships suggests that the good manners model may reflect a cultural or interpersonal script for dealing with dilemmas in the intimate relationship. This would be consistent with Simon and Gagnon's (1986) assertion that interpersonal scripts are internalized within an individual, and stabilize when s/he achieves the intended response from the behavior. At the intrapsychic level the good manners script may represent a transformation of motivation that is played out interpersonally as an attempt to respond to a partners behavior by suppressing destructive responses in favor of future and overall relationship functioning.

While the good manners model was observed across the sexual and non-sexual domains of dilemmas in the current research, it was also noted that accommodation styles varied somewhat as a function of the nature of the dilemma. Specifically, the pattern of accommodation styles individuals endorsed in sexual dilemmas were different from the

ones they used in response to a non-sexual dilemma, in that, less evidence of destructive accommodation scripts was found during sexual dilemmas as compared to non-sexual dilemmas. These findings support the notion that sexual communication is dissimilar from other areas of communication (Banmen & Vogel, 1985; Cupach & Comstock, 1990; Wheeless et al., 1984).

This difference was expected given that varying social and interpersonal scripts likely determine how individuals respond to sexual versus non-sexual dilemmas. Moreover, given the complex and sensitive nature of sexuality in our society, it is not surprising that responses to sexual dilemmas were marked by reduced propensities to adopt the potentially destructive accommodation styles. Indeed, the tendency to use lower levels of destructive accommodation styles during sexual dilemmas may reflect reduced confidence in the types of responses appropriate for effective sexual functioning.

Given that there was no evidence that individuals were more likely to endorse constructive styles (indeed, they reported being less likely to use voice in response to sexual conflicts) during sexual dilemmas, the question becomes, "How do couple's negotiate their sexuality?" In fact, negotiating sexuality in relationships may be difficult as, "at any given moment, partners may not understand their own sexual and relational goals, may not be able to communicate these goals, and may not have any efficient or coherent plan to accomplish these goals" (Metts & Spitzberg, 1996, p. 62). If so, differences in sexual needs and scripts may present a particularly potent domain for the disruption of effective relationship functioning if these differences are not successfully negotiated. Indeed, satisfaction with sexual communication has been identified as an

important indicator of sexual satisfaction (Cupach & Comstock, 1990) and relationship satisfaction (Banmen & Vogel, 1985). However, sexual communication is often difficult (Metz & Spitzberg, 1996). Indeed, the reduced tendency to act destructively may indicate an attempt to diffuse the dilemma in order to reduce the need for further communication about this sensitive area.

However, we have to note that although the accommodation styles assessed in the present study are regarded as fairly comprehensive, it is possible that partners use qualitatively different strategies for negotiating sexual dilemmas that were not tapped into using this framework. For example, individuals may attempt to overcome sexual dilemmas by engaging in sexual behaviors that have not led to dilemmas in the past. While this represents a constructive approach to a sexual dilemma, it is not indicative of a voice response (i.e., the individual did not address directly the sexual dilemma), nor is it a passive response (i.e., the individual did not just wait and hope for things to improve). These general categories of response styles likely subsume multiple behaviors that may be enacted in response to sexual dilemmas, but their use is masked when integrated with the numerous other behaviors included within each of the four categories of response. For example, although couples may not voice their needs verbally, they may be 'voiced' through nonverbal guidance. Indeed, Gottman and colleagues (1979, 1980, 1992, 1998, 1999) noted that affective nonverbal behavioral cues are highly predictive of relationship functioning. Future work in the area of understanding how sexual accommodation styles affect sexual satisfaction would likely benefit from a more explicit consideration of these kinds of affective nonverbal efforts.

Clearly, the accommodation styles framework may be limited in its focus. However, the present study also noted some difficulties with respect to the psychometric properties of the accommodation subscales. In particular, internal reliabilities on the loyalty subscale were disappointing and may have may have attenuated several effects. For example, the loyalty subscale was the only accommodation scale that did not show differences between sexual and general accommodation styles. While this may reflect the true nature of the role loyalty plays, it may also reflect a limitation in the conceptualization and construction of the subscale.

Specifically, it is important to note that, conceptually, the destructive/constructive nature of accommodation responses are related to how the responses impact the relationship and not individuals (Rusbult et al., 1982, 1986a,b, 1991). Loyalty is defined by behaviors such as a "... waiting and hoping that things will improve, supporting the partner in the face of criticism, praying for improvement... (Rusbult et al., 1998, p. 28). So while loyalty responses may not be affirmative for the individual, they can still be deemed constructive for the relationship. This lack of explicit consideration of the multiple impacts of the accommodation behaviors may be problematic. While it may be true in some instances that what is good for the relationship is good for the individual, such as "when my partner and I are angry with each other, I give things some time to cool off on their own rather than take action", responses such as "When my partner hurts me, I say nothing and simply forgive them" may be constructive for the relationship, but could clearly have detrimental impacts on the individual. The conceptual assumption of a

congruence in the impacts may therefore be problematic in the measurement of loyalty. Hence, future research may need to more adequately consider the meaning of loyalty.

The Role of Identity Salience in Dilemma Resolution

While differences between accommodation styles used in sexual versus general relationship dilemmas may be the result of different scripts guiding behaviors, they are likely also affected by the negotiation of these scripts and the underlying identities made salient during the negotiation (Burke & Cast, 1997; Stets & Tsushima, 2001). In line with this, we expected that the accommodation styles employed in response to a dilemma would be related to the centrality of the identity evoked. However, within the intimate relationship multiple identities may be relevant, and of particular interest were the identities evoked by a sexual dilemma wherein both a sexual partner and intimate partner identity may become salient. Indeed, Identity Control Theory suggests that it is not only the salience of an identity that is important, but the relative importance of that identity to the other identities evoked in a given situation (Stryker, 1968; Stets & Tsushima, 2001). Therefore, if multiple identities are evoked during a sexual dilemma in the intimate relationship, the accommodation responses would be a function of the relative importance of these identities to the individual.

While we expected that there would be a direct relation between the relative salience of the intimate partner and sexual partner identities and the accommodation styles used during sexual and non-sexual dilemmas, this prediction was not supported. While this may indicate that there is no relation between accommodation styles and the relative importance of these intimate identities, analyses focusing on the interaction

between accommodation styles and intimate identities, to be discussed shortly, suggested otherwise. Alternatively, it is possible that the relations among measures were attenuated by the level of challenge made salient by the dilemmas in the research. As noted at the outset, the importance of accommodation styles is best assessed under conditions of adversity. In Study 1 sexual compatibility was used as a possible indicator of dilemmas in the intimate relationship. Unfortunately, self-reported perceptions of compatibility were highly related to the outcome measure of sexual satisfaction, likely due to characteristics of both the measure itself, and to the nature of our sample, in that it comprised intact couples who may have already resolved incompatibilities in order to maintain a satisfactory relationship. Thus, to assess the moderating effects of dilemmas, in Study 2 we recognized that it would be more propitious to make the presence of dilemmas contextually salient by having couples read conflict scenarios. Nonetheless, although the majority of participants indicated that they had experienced such conflicts in the past month, reading about them may not have been sufficient to arouse a reaction, or a particular identity challenge. Given the tendency for positive pre-existing stories to mask negative responses during conflict (Murray & Holmes, 1993) and the belief that conflict is best tested under adversity (Lydon, 1996; Lydon et al., 1999; Lydon & Zanna, 1990), an inability to make conflict relevant during the assessment may have lowered the sensitivity of our measures to assess the relations between differing levels of identity salience and accommodation styles. A more effective way of priming dilemmas might have entailed having partners actually discuss a conflict within their relationship. Indeed,

Gottman and colleagues (1979, 1980, 1992, 1998, 1999) have successfully used this approach in previous research.

Although the present research did not find a direct relation between accommodation styles and either the relative or absolute importance of sexual or intimate partner identities, past research within Identity Control Theory suggests that identity salience ought to affect responses to identity challenges (Burke, 1991; Burke & Reitzes, 1981; Burke & Tully, 1977; Cast et al., 1999) and these responses will in turn impact the intimate relationship. Along similar lines, past work suggests that sexual functioning is determined by communication surrounding sexual activity (Apt et al., 1996; MacNeil & Byers, 1997). However, little is known about whether responses to sexual and non-sexual dilemmas differ, and how these differences affect functioning in the relationship. In the present research, we attempted to examine these differences by looking at the distinct patterns of accommodation used in response to sexual and non-sexual dilemmas, and how underlying factors in the relationship affected satisfaction in the relationship.

Indeed, as Identity Control Theory suggests, responses to identity challenges and the outcome of these responses were dependent on the relative centrality of the sexual and intimate partner identities. Consistent with Identity Control Theory, we found that the relative placement of the intimate partner identity over the sexual partner identity, rather than the level of the dilemma experienced by incompatible sexual scripts, moderated the relations between how the dilemma was dealt with and relationship functioning. Specifically, among individuals with more salient intimate partner identities, general accommodation styles were predictive of both sexual and relationship

satisfaction, whereas among individuals with relatively salient sexual partner identities, accommodation styles were predictive only of sexual satisfaction.

This interaction was not surprising and likely reflected the relation between the relative commitment to the intimate identities and an attempt to maintain these identities (Burke & Reitzes, 1991). Specifically, the extent of commitment to the intimate partner identity ought to determine an individual's willingness to resolve dilemmas within the relationship, irrespective of the domain, in a manner that increases relationship satisfaction. Indeed, Identity Control Theory defines this as the "cognitive basis of commitment" and can be seen as the expectation of long-term satisfaction at the cost of short-term costs to the identity (Burke & Reitzes, 1991). For individuals with salient intimate partner identities, negative responses to challenges to the sexual partner identity may have been suppressed (short-term cost) in order to maintain overall satisfaction within the intimate relationship (long-term satisfaction).

However, among individuals whose intimate partner identities were less central than their sexual identity, there was no relation between general accommodation styles and relationship satisfaction, and sexual satisfaction was predicted by both general and sexual accommodation styles. This may reflect a tendency to resolve dilemmas in a manner that increases sexual satisfaction with less consideration for how it may impact on the relationship in general. While past research has shown an interrelationship between sexual and relationship communication and relationship functioning (Metz & Epstein, 2002), for these individuals this relationship may be skewed more toward their sexual needs.

While this interpretation of our findings seems reasonable, some caution is merited concerning the causal directions we infer. Rusbult and her colleagues (Rusbult et al., 1982,1986a, b, 1991) suggest that satisfaction within the relationship determines *a priori* how individuals react when faced with accommodative dilemmas. Therefore, while we have argued that individuals may accommodate in order to increase satisfaction, it is also possible that prior satisfaction determines the individual's commitment to the identity and therefore, their choice to accommodate when faced with a dilemma (Rusbult, 1983, 1987). In fact, this relationship is likely reciprocal, with satisfaction determining accommodation responses and accommodation responses determining levels of satisfaction. Such a conclusion is likely obvious, but less obvious are the factors and processes that operate in this exchange between relationship satisfaction and responses to dilemmas. For example, under some conditions satisfaction might be very low, and yet a couple may make a conscious choice for various reasons (e.g., the presence of children) to adopt a more effective pattern of accommodating to dilemmas, and these efforts may or may not succeed. Obviously, the assessment of causality that might afforded by random assignment is not possible. However, insight into these relations could be derived from longitudinal methodologies, using a greater range of participants in terms of characteristics of their relationships.

Applied Implications

Understanding how individuals respond to dilemmas in differing domains may be critical to the therapy process for couples presenting with conflict-resolution problems in the sexual and non-sexual domains of the relationship. Indeed, Metz and Epstein (2002)

suggest that "Couples who lack the ability to accommodate and negotiate about such differences (in needs, preferences or personality styles) constructively are likely to develop distressing levels of conflict" (p. 148). However, the literature that informs interpersonal therapy has paid little attention to how the ability to accommodate in the sexual domain of the relationship differs from accommodation in the general domain. Although there is evidence that the two spheres are interrelated (Apt et al., 1996; McCabe, 1999; Young, Denny, Luquis & Young, 1998) and that communication in these spheres affects functioning (Cupach & Comstock, 1990; MacNeil & Byers, 1997; Metz & Epstein, 2002), the qualitative differences between accommodative responses to dilemmas in these areas have been less researched. The current study provides some insight into some of the qualitative differences between sexual and general accommodation that may be at the basis for why some couples are successful in communicating one area of the relationship, but may not be successful in communicating in others.

Not only the nature of the dilemmas being negotiated is important to consider, but the centrality of the identity that is challenged by the dilemma may alter the individual's response, and the outcome achieved. While compatibility may reduce experiences of dilemmas in the sexual domain, and as well appears to be highly related to sexual satisfaction, compatibility, or a lack of it, did not predict how dilemmas were negotiated and their impact on satisfaction. Therefore, in cases in which therapy is attempting to address a couple's conflict-management patterns, therapists may want to evaluate how individuals define themselves in the relationship, and what they want to derive from it

(i.e., meeting sexual and/or intimate partner needs), rather than simply focusing the similarities or differences in their sexual/relationship scripts. This, in turn, may facilitate identification of appropriate relationship goals, or might even provide insight into the issues that need to be dealt with. For example, if the sexual identity is central to both individuals, the mutual agreement of sexual goals (i.e., frequency and nature of sexual activities) may need to be the primary focus, as it likely affects sexual satisfaction (Snyder & Berg, 1983), which is a primary basis for the relationship in these couples. To the extent that intimate partner identities are most central, resolving relationship conflicts may be primary and their resolution may facilitate sexual function. However, when couples experience conflict that affects both relationship and sexual satisfaction they may benefit most from learning constructive conflict negotiation skills (Epstein & Metz, 2002).

However, the implications of the current findings for interpersonal therapy should be interpreted carefully. The level of couple distress was not measured in the current research, but, given that levels of satisfaction were consistent with nondistressed normative samples, the findings and their implications may only be applicable to this population. Furthermore, the present studies indicate that sexual and general relationship functioning are interdependent. However, the accommodation scripts that related to satisfaction in one area of the relationship were not necessarily associated with satisfaction in another. Although in Study 2 this pattern of relations appeared to depend on the importance of the domain to the individuals' identity, similar conclusions could not be drawn in Study 1, as identity hierarchy was not assessed. Therefore, we were

unable to determine why in Study 1 general accommodation styles were not related to sexual satisfaction, whereas in Study 2 this relation existed. This inconsistency across studies may reflect a qualitative difference in the characteristics of participants in Study 1 and Study 2, with individuals from Study 1 reflecting shorter-term relationships with lower levels of experience. Therefore, the implications of the research may be further limited to intact couples of longer durations, with experience in negotiating the continuation of their intimate relationships.

Finally, it also needs to be noted that the present research included only members of heterosexual relationships. The extent to which these findings and their implications are generalizable to individuals in gay and lesbian relationships is not clear. Very little research has focused on how sexual and intimate partner identities may be similar or different for heterosexual and gay and lesbian individuals, or even whether predictors of relationship functioning would be comparable (Kurdek, 1998). In terms of sexuality, sexual scripting theory suggests that gender defines sexual conduct, and that sexual orientation defines sexual scripts (Gagnon, 1990). Therefore, given that gays and lesbians may define their sexual partner identity through scripts that are different from those of heterosexuals, it is likely that although gays and lesbians also establish salience hierarchies for their sexual and intimate partner identities, the content of these identities may be qualitatively different from those of heterosexual couples. These differences are of interest in their own right, and so future research may benefit from explicitly assessing gay and lesbian couples in the research on relationship dilemma negotiation.

Within our society intimate relationships are expected to fulfill some of the primary needs in our lives, including sexual needs (Krauss-Whitbourne & Ebmeyer, 1990). However, as our research has shown the ability to meet general and sexual needs may be highly dependent on the couple's ability to accommodate when faced with relationship dilemmas. Specifically, an individual's ability to suppress destructive responses to a dilemma and to a lesser degree endorse constructive ones, was important in determining the level of satisfaction experienced in the relationship. However, this relation was not straightforward, as sexual dilemmas represented a qualitatively different domain of functioning than general dilemmas, with different levels of accommodation styles reported for each domain. This finding may reflect differing social scripts that guide sexual and general behavior in on our intimate relationships. Furthermore, while sexuality forms a primary basis for the intimate relationship (Metts & Spitzberg, 1996), it also provides a basis for self-definition. Our research found that how much individuals value being an intimate partner relative to being a sexual partner will determine the role that accommodation styles play in attaining satisfaction in the intimate relationship. Overall our research suggests that satisfaction in the sexual and general domains of the intimate relationship are associated with an interrelated system of accommodation styles, intimate identities and social scripts that determine the success with which couples negotiate dilemmas in the intimate relationship.

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Appendix A

Study 1 Measures

For use by researcher:
Code:_____
Date:_____
Time:_____

Background Information

Gender: Female / Male (please circle one)

Age: _____

What is the status of your current relationship? (please check the one that best applies to you)

_____ we are casually dating

_____ we are in a serious relationship but not co-habitating

_____ we are in a serious relationship and co-habitating

_____ we are engaged

_____ we are married

How long have you been in your current relationship _____ years and _____months.

What is the status of your current sexual relationship with your partner? (please check the one that best applies to you)

_____ we are not currently sexually active

_____ we are sexually active but do not engage in sexual intercourse (vaginal or anal)

_____ we are sexually active and engage in sexual intercourse (vaginal or anal)

How long have you been sexually active with your current partner _____ years and months.

Accommodation Styles

This questionnaire is designed to measure the accommodation style you use when relating with your intimate partner. Please read the questions carefully and place a number, using the rating system below, which best describes how you communicate with your partner on the line beside each question.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

* * *

I never do this — I sometimes do this — I always do this

1._____ When I'm unhappy with my partner, I consider breaking up
2._____ When my partner says something I don't like, I talk to them about what's upsetting me.
3._____ When we have problems in our relationship, I patiently wait for things to improve.
4._____ When I'm upset with my partner I sulk rather than confront the issue.
5._____ When I'm angry at my partner, I talk to them about breaking up.
6._____ When my partner and I have problems, I discuss things with them.
7._____ When I'm upset about something in our relationship, I wait awhile before saying anything to see if things improve on their own.
8._____ When I'm really bothered about something my partner has done, I criticize them for the things that are unrelated to the real problem.
9._____ When we have serious problems in our relationship, I take action to end the relationship.
10.____ When I am unhappy with my partner, I tell them what's bothering me.
11.____ When my partner hurts me, I say nothing and simply forgive them.
12.____ When I'm upset with my partner, I ignore them for awhile.
13.____ When I'm irritated with my partner, I think about ending our relationship.
14. ___ When things aren't going well between us, I suggest changing things in the relationship in order to solve the problem.
15.____ When my partner and I are angry with each other, I give things some time to cool off on their own rather than take action.
16.____ When I'm really angry, I treat my partner badly (for example, by ignoring him/her or saying cruel things).
17.____ When we have problems I discuss ending our relationship.
18.____ When my partner and I are angry with one another, I suggest a compromise solution.
19.____ When there are things about my partner that I don't like, I accept their faults and weaknesses and don't try to change them.
20.____ When we have a problem in our relationship, I ignore the whole thing and forget about it.
21.____ When things are going really poorly between us, I do things to drive my partner away.
22.____ When we've had an argument, I work things out with my partner right away.
23.____ When my partner is inconsiderate I give them the benefit of the doubt and forget it.
24.____ When I'm angry at my partner, I spend less time with them (for example, I spend more time with my friends, watch a lot of television, work longer hours, etc.)
25.____ When I'm dissatisfied with our relationship, I consider dating other people.
26.____ When we have serious problems in our relationship I consider getting advice from

someone else (friends, parents, or counselor).

27.____ When we have troubles, no matter how bad things get I am loyal to my partner.

28.____ When my partner and I have problems, I refuse to talk to them about it.

Hurlbert Index of Sexual Compatibility

The following questions pertain to the level of sexual satisfaction in your current relationship. Please read the questions carefully and place a number, using the rating system below, on the line beside each question which corresponds to how you feel at this point in your relationship.

0	1	2	3	4
all of the time	most of the time	some of the time	rarely	never

1. My sexual beliefs are similar to those of my partner. _____
2. I think my partner understands me sexually. _____
3. My partner and I share the same sexual likes and dislikes. _____
4. My partner desires too much sex. _____
5. My partner is willing to do certain sexual things for me that I would like to experience. _____
6. I feel comfortable during sex with my partner. _____
7. I am sexually attracted to my partner. _____
8. My partner sexually pleases me. _____
9. My partner and I argue about the sexual aspects of our relationship. _____
10. My partner and I share the same level of interest in sex. _____
11. I feel comfortable in engaging in some of the sexual activities that my partner desires. _____
12. When it comes to sex, my ideas and values are different from those of my partner. _____
13. I do not think I meet me partner's sexual needs. _____
14. My partner and I enjoy the same sexual activities. _____
15. When it comes to sex, my partner and I get along well. _____
16. I think my partner is sexually attracted to me. _____
17. My partner enjoys doing certain sexual things that I dislike. _____
18. It is hard for me to accept my partner's views on sex. _____
19. In our relationship, my partner places too much importance on sex. _____
20. My partner and I disagree over the frequency in which we should have sex. _____
21. I have the same sexual values as my partner. _____
22. My partner and I share similar sexual fantasies. _____
23. When it comes to sex, my partner is unwilling to do certain things that I would like to experience. _____
24. I think I sexually satisfy my partner. _____
25. My partner and I share the same level of sexual desire. _____

Dyadic Adjustment Scale

Most partners have disagreements in their relationships. Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the list. Please read the questions carefully and place a number, using the rating system below, on the line beside each question.

0	1	2	3	4	5
All of the Time	Most of the time	More often than not	Occasionally	Rarely	Never

1. _____ How often do you discuss or have you considered ending the relationship?
2. _____ How often do you or your partner leave the house after a fight?
3. _____ In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?
4. _____ Do you confide in your partner?
5. _____ Do you ever regret that you are together?
6. _____ How often do you and your partner quarrel?
7. _____ How often do you and your partner "get on each other's nerves?"
8. _____ Do you kiss your partner?

9. The numbers on the following line represent different degrees of happiness in your relationship. The dot above "happy" represents the degree of happiness of most relationships. Please circle the dot which best describes the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship.

*	*	*	*	*	*	*
extremely unhappy	fairly unhappy	a little unhappy	happy	very happy	extremely happy	perfect

Which of the following statement best describes how you feel about your current relationship? Choose one and place a check mark beside the question that best describes your current relationship.

10. _____I want desperately for my relationship to succeed, and I would go to almost any lengths to see that it does.
11. _____I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and will do all I can to see that it does.
12. _____I want very much for my relationship to succeed, I will do my fair share to see that it does.
13. _____It would be nice if my relationship succeeded, but I can't do much more than I am doing now to help it succeed.
14. _____It would be nice if it succeeded, but I refuse to do any more that I am doing now to keep the relationship going.

15. _____My relationship can never succeed, and there is no more that I can do to keep the relationship going.

Index of Sexual Satisfaction (ISS)

This questionnaire is designed to measure the degree of satisfaction you have in the sexual relationship with your partner. It is not a test, so there are no right or wrong answers. Answer each item as carefully and accurately as you can by placing a number beside each one as follows:

1 Rarely or none of the time
2 A little of the time
3 Some of the time
4 Good part of the time
5 Most or all of the time

Please begin:

1. I feel that my partner enjoys our sex life _____
2. My sex life is very exciting _____
3. Sex is fun for my partner and I _____
4. I feel that my partner sees little in me except for the sex I can give _____
5. I feel that sex is dirty and disgusting _____
6. My sex life is monotonous _____
7. When we have sex it is too rushed and hurriedly completed _____
8. I feel that my sex life is lacking in quality _____
9. My partner is sexually very exciting _____
10. I enjoy the sex techniques that my partner likes or uses _____
11. I feel that my partners wants too much sex from me _____
12. I think that sex is wonderful _____
13. My partners dwells on sex too much _____
14. I feel that sex is something that has to be endured in our relationship _____
15. My partner is too rough when we have sex _____
16. My partner observes good personal hygiene _____
17. I feel that sex is a normal function of our relationship _____
18. My partner does not want sex when I do _____
19. I feel that our sex life really adds a lot to our relationship _____
20. I would like to have sexual contact with someone other than my partner _____
21. It is easy for me to get sexually excited by my partner _____
22. I feel that my partner is sexually pleased with me _____
23. My partner is very sensitive to my sexual needs and desires _____
24. I feel that I should have sex more often _____
25. I feel that my sex life is boring _____

COPING STRATEGIES SCALE

We are interested in how you dealt with a specific problem, disagreement or fight between you and your partner. Please decide between you on a problem, disagreement or fight that you have had in the past month that you found the most troublesome. Please describe below:

_____

_____

Please read each of the following responses that you personally may have had in relation to this disagreement. Indicate the extent to which you used each strategy to deal with the stress associated with this disagreement.

When did the last problem, disagreement or fight happen with your partner? _____ days ago **OR** _____ weeks ago.

Ordinarily, in recent weeks have you:	**Never Always**	**Sometimes**		**Often**
	0	**1**	**2**	**3**
1.accepted that there was nothing you could do to change your situation?	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**
2. tried to just take whatever came your way?	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**
3. talked with friends or relatives about your problem?	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**
4. tried to do things which you typically enjoy?	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**
5. sought out information that would help you resolve your problems?	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**
6. blamed others for creating your problems or making them worse?	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**
7. sought the advice of others to resolve your problems?	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**
8. blamed yourself for your problems?	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**
9. exercised?	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**
10. tried to live a better life according to your religious beliefs?	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**
11. said what you felt no matter what others thought?	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**
gone over your problems in your mind over and over again?	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**
13. asked others for help?	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**
14. thought about your problems a lot?	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**
15. became involved in recreation or pleasure activities?	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**
16. worried about your problems a lot?	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**
17. tried to keep your mind off things that are upsetting you?	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**
18. tried to distract yourself from your troubles?	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**
19. avoided thinking about your problems?	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**
20. made plans to overcome your problems?	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**
21. thought a lot about who is responsible for your problems (besides yourself)?	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**
22. told yourself that other people have dealt with				

problems such as yours?	0	1	2	3
23. thought a lot about how you have brought your problems on yourself?	0	1	2	3
24. decided to wait and see how things turn out?	0	1	2	3
25. decided that your current problems are a result of your own past actions?	0	1	2	3
26. gone shopping?	0	1	2	3
27. asserted yourself and taken positive action on problems that are getting you down?	0	1	2	3
28. sought reassurance and moral support from others?	0	1	2	3
29. resigned yourself to your problems?	0	1	2	3
30. thought about how your problems have been caused by other people?	0	1	2	3
31. been very emotional in how you react, even to little things?	0	1	2	3
32. decided that you can grow and learn through your problems?	0	1	2	3
33. told yourself that other people have problems like your own?	0	1	2	3
34. looked for how you can learn something out of your bad situation?	0	1	2	3
35. asked for God's guidance?	0	1	2	3
36. kept your feelings bottled up inside?	0	1	2	3
37. found yourself crying more than usual?	0	1	2	3
38. tried to act as if you were not upset?	0	1	2	3
39. prayed for help?	0	1	2	3
40. gone out?	0	1	2	3
41. held in your feelings?	0	1	2	3
42. tried to act as if you weren't feeling bad?	0	1	2	3
43. taken steps to overcome your problems?	0	1	2	3

Appendix B

Premeasure Study 1

Name:_____
e-mail:_____
Phone:_____

Background Information

Gender: Female / Male (please circle one)

Age: _____

What is the status of your current relationship? (please check the one that best applies to you)

_____ we are casually dating

_____ we are in a serious relationship but not co-habitating

_____ we are in a serious relationship and co-habitating

_____ we are engaged

_____ we are married

How long have you been in your current relationship _____ years and _____months.

What is the status of your current sexual relationship with your partner? (please check the one that best applies to you)

_____ we are not currently sexually active

_____ we are sexually active but do not engage in sexual intercourse (vaginal or anal)

_____ we are sexually active and engage in sexual intercourse (vaginal or anal)

How long have you been sexually active with your current partner _____ years and months.

Anonymity/Confidentiality: The data collected in this study will be kept anonymous and confidential. Only research personnel directly involved in the study will have access to the responses provided. To ensure anonymity all participants will be assigned a code that will be used for identification purposes and participants will not be referred to by name on the questionnaires. Codes and their corresponding names will only be available to the personnel directly involved in the study and they will be stored separate from the completed questionnaires. All questionnaires and codes are stored separately, in a secure lab space, and the names are not attached to the data. Responses to questionnaires will also be kept confidential from participating partners. If partners choose to discuss their participation after the study, this is their choice, but confidentiality is kept by the researcher.

Right to Withdraw: Your participant in this study is entirely voluntary. At any point during the study you have the right not to complete certain questions or to withdraw with no penalty whatsoever.

I have read the description of the study concerning how communication styles and sexual compatibility may affect relationship and sexual satisfaction. The data collected will be used in research publication and/or for teaching purposes. My signature indicated that I agree to participate in the study, and this is no way constitutes a waiver of my rights.

Full Name (please print):

Participant Signature:

Researcher Signature:

Date:

Appendix G

Study 2 Measures

Triangular Intimate Partner Scale

Listed below are several statements that discuss qualities of an intimate partner. Please read each statement carefully and decide to what extent you believe this quality to be important when you are a partner. For each statement fill in the response beside each question that indicates how much it applies to you using the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
not at all		somewhat		moderately		quite		extremely

1. _____When I am an intimate partner it is important for my partner to be able to count on me in times of need.
2. _____When I am an intimate partner I always feel a strong responsibility for my partner.
3. _____When I am an intimate partner I value having a partner in my life greatly.
4. _____When I am an intimate partner there is nothing more important to me than being in an intimate relationship.
5. _____When I am an intimate partner I expect that love for my partner should last for the rest of my life.
6. _____When I am an intimate partner it is important to share myself and my possessions with my partner.
7. _____When I am an intimate partner romance is an important part of my relationship.
8. _____When I am an intimate partner I can't imagine ending my relationship with my partner.
9. _____When I am an intimate partner I cannot imagine my life without being an intimate partner.
10. _____When I am an intimate partner I view myself as being an intimate partner permanently.
11. _____When I am an intimate partner I provide emotional closeness for my partner.
12. _____When I am an intimate partner I adore my intimate partner.
13. _____When I am an intimate partner I am certain of my love for my partner.
14. _____When I am an intimate partner I give considerable emotional support.
15. _____When I am an intimate partner I think about my partner frequently during the day.
16. _____When I am an intimate partner I am committed to maintaining my relationship.
17. _____When I am an intimate partner I have a comfortable relationship.

18. _____When I am an intimate partner just seeing my partner is exciting for me.
19. _____When I am an intimate partner I don't let anything get in the way of my commitment to my partner.
20. _____When I am an intimate partner I have a warm relationship with my partner.
21. _____When I am an intimate partner I idealize my partner.
22. _____When I am an intimate partner I have confidence in the stability of my relationship.
23. _____When I am an intimate partner there is something almost "magical" about my relationship.
24. _____When I am an intimate partner I view my relationship as a good decision.
25. _____When I am an intimate partner I share deeply personal information about myself with my partner.
26. _____When I am an intimate partner I find my partner deeply attractive.
27. _____When I am an intimate partner I care about my partner.
28. _____When I am an intimate partner I feel that I really understand my partner.
29. _____When I am an intimate partner I would rather be with my partner than anyone else.

Multidimensional Sexuality Questionnaire

Instructions: Listed below are several statements that concern the topic of sexual relationships. Please read each item carefully and decide to what extent it is characteristic of you. Some of the items refer to a specific sexual relationship. Whenever possible, answer the questions in general terms referring to how you think your responses would most likely be across all of your relationships (past, present and desired), not just how they may be in the current relationship. For each statement fill in the response on the answer sheet that indicate how much it applies to you by using the following scale:

1= Not at all characteristic of me
2= Slightly characteristic of me
3= Somewhat characteristic of me
4= Moderately characteristic of me
5= Very characteristic of me

1. _____I am confident about myself as a sexual partner
2. _____I think about sex all of the time
3. _____My sexuality is something that I am largely responsible for.
4. _____I am very aware of my sexual feelings
5. _____I am very motivated to be sexually active
6. _____I feel anxious when I think about the sexual aspects of my life
7. _____I am very assertive about the sexual aspects of my life
8. _____I am depressed about the sexual aspects of my life
9. _____The sexual aspects of my life are determined mostly by chance happenings
10. _____I sometimes wonder what others think of the sexual aspects of my life
11. _____I am somewhat afraid of becoming sexually involved with another person
12. _____I am a pretty good sexual partner
13. _____The think about sex more than anything else
14. _____The sexual aspects of my life are determined in large part by my own behavior
15. _____I am very aware of my sexual motivations
16. _____I am strongly motivated to devote time and effort to sex
17. _____I am worried about the sexual aspects of my life
18. _____I am not very aware of my sexual motivations
19. _____Most things that affect the sexual aspects of my life happen to me by accident
20. _____I am very concerned with how others evaluate the sexual aspects of my life.
21. _____I sometimes have a fear of sexual relationships.
22. _____I am better at sexual relations than most other people
23. _____I tend to be preoccupied with sex
24. _____I am in control of the sexual aspects of my life
25. _____I tend to think about my sexual feelings
26. _____I have a strong desire to be sexually active

27. _____Thinking about the sexual aspects of my life leaves me with an uneasy feeling
28. _____Luck plays a big part in influencing the sexual aspects of my life.
29. _____I'm very aware of what others think of the sexual aspects of my life.
30. _____I sometimes am fearful of sexual activity
31. _____I would rate myself pretty favorably as a sexual partner
32. _____I'm constantly thinking about having sex
33. _____The main thing which affects the sexual aspects of my life is what I myself do
34. _____I'm very alert to changes in my sexual desires
35. _____It's really important to me that I involve myself in sexual activity
36. _____I usually worry about the sexual aspects of my life
37. _____The sexual aspects of my life are largely a matter of (good or bad) fortune
38. _____I'm concerned about how the sexual aspects of my life appear to others
39. _____I don't have very much fear about engaging in sex
40. _____My sexual relationships are very good compared to most
41. _____I would be very confident in a sexual encounter
42. _____I think about sex the majority of the time
43. _____My sexuality is something that I myself am in charge of
44. _____I am very aware of my sexual tendencies
45. _____I strive to keep myself sexually active
46. _____I feel nervous when I think about the sexual aspects of my life
47. _____I feel sad when I think about my sexual experiences
48. _____The sexual aspects of my life are a matter of fate (destiny)
49. _____I'm concerned about what other people think of the sexual aspects of my life
50. _____I'm not very afraid of becoming sexually active

Personal Dimensions of Difference: A self-assessment of social identity

The following questions concern how you identify yourself in terms of various social identities.
Please indicate in the space provided which identities you identify with:

Sex
1. female_____ male_____

2. Using the rating scale below, please describe how strongly you identify with your gender identity (circle number)

Not at all identified		Somewhat identified		Very Identified
1	2	3	4	5

3. Some persons feel that they are empowered or derive strength from certain identities. Below, please describe how much you derive a sense of personal power and energy from your gender identity (circle number)

Very Energized/ Empowered		Somewhat Energized/Empowered		Not at all Energized/ Empowered
1	2	3	4	5

4. How much approval or support do you receive due to your gender identity (circle number)

Positively affects me		Does not affect me		Negatively affects me
1	2	3	4	5

Ethnic Identity
5. The ethnic group I most identify with is:_____

6. Using the rating scale below, please describe how strongly you identify with your ethnic identity (circle number)

Not at all identified		Somewhat identified		Very Identified
1	2	3	4	5

7. Some persons feel that they are empowered or derive strength from certain identities. Below, please describe how much you derive a sense of personal power and energy from your ethnic identity (circle number)

.

Very Energized/ Empowered		Somewhat Energized/Empowered		Not at all Energized/ Empowered
1	2	3	4	5

8. How much approval or support do you receive due to your ethnic identity (circle number)

Positively affects me		Does not affect me		Negatively affects me
1	2	3	4	5

Sexual Partner Identity

9. When defining who you are sexually, please consider how you think and feel about all of the sexual aspects of your sexual life (either alone or with a partner). This may include how satisfying you find sexual contact, how much you enjoy sexual contact, your sexual self-esteem, how in control of your sexuality your feel and how sexually confident or anxious you feel. While sexual orientation (being heterosexual, bisexual or homosexual) will affect your sexual partner identity it is only one aspect of your sexual partner identity. Please choose one of the following options that best characterizes how important your sexual identity is to you:

_____Sexuality is very important to who I am
_____Sexuality is important to who I am
_____Sexuality is somewhat important to who I am
_____Sexuality is not an important part of who I am
_____Sexuality is not a part of who I am

10. Using the rating scale below, please describe how strongly you identify with your sexual partner identity (circle number)

Not at all identified		Somewhat identified		Very Identified
1	2	3	4	5

11. Some persons feel that they are empowered or derive strength from certain identities. Below, please describe how much you derive a sense of personal power and energy from your sexual partner identity (circle number)

Very Energized/ Empowered		Somewhat Energized/Empowered		Not at all Energized/ Empowered
1	2	3	4	5

12. How much approval or support do you receive due to your sexual partner identity (circle number)

Positively affects me		Does not affect me		Negatively affects me
1	2	3	4	5

Intimate Partner Identity

13. When defining who you are as an intimate partner, please consider how you think and feel about all of the aspects of who you are as an intimate partner (across all past, present and desired intimate relationships). Your intimate partner identity may include, but is not limited to, a strong attraction and commitment to being an intimate partner and a sense of self-worth which is derived from being an intimate partner. Please choose one of the following options that best characterizes how important you intimate partner identity is to you:

_____Being an intimate partner is very important to who I am

_____Being an intimate partner is important to who I am
_____Being an intimate partner is somewhat important to who I am
_____Being an intimate partner is not an important part of who I am
_____Being an intimate partner is not part of who I am

14. Using the rating scale below, please describe how strongly you identify with your intimate partner identity (circle number)

Not at all identified		Somewhat identified		Very Identified
1	2	3	4	5

15. Some persons feel that they are empowered or derive strength from certain identities. Below, please describe how much you derive a sense of personal power and energy from your intimate partner identity (circle number)

Very Energized/ Empowered		Somewhat Energized/Empowered		Not at all Energized/ Empowered
1	2	3	4	5

16. How much approval or support do you receive due to your intimate partner identity (circle number)

Positively affects me		Does not affect me		Negatively affects me
1	2	3	4	5

17. Using the rating scale below, complete the following phrase (circle number):

My intimate identity is _____ than my sexual partner identity.

Is way more Important	Slightly more Important	Equally Important	Slightly less Important	Is way more Unimportant
1	2	3	4	5

Sexual Relationship Conflicts

Conflicts can occur in intimate relationships when partners have different opinions, make different choices or deal with situations differently. Conflict can happen when couples make choices about when to engage in sexual behaviors, discuss sexual aspects of the relationship or when partners negotiate sexual behaviors. How couples define sexual conflict may vary, making it difficult for researchers to study how couples deal with sexual conflict. Listed below are several different sexual conflict situations. These situations have been included to remind you of different conflict experiences you may have had in your own relationship and to provide an understanding of the types of conflict that may be used to answer the following questionnaire (on the next page). Please read each scenario and then indicate whether or not you have encountered a similar scenario in your own relationship.

1. One of us was interested in engaging in sexual activities and the other was not (circle number).

Never happens — Sometime happens — Always happens
1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5

2. We had different ideas on the amount of sexuality activities we should have per week. (circle number).

Never happens — Sometime happens — Always happens
1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5

3. While engaging in sexual activities one of use did not want to do something the other partner wanted to do (circle number).

Never happens — Sometime happens — Always happens
1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5

4. We argued over the fact that we are not having as much sex as we used to have. (circle number).

Never happens — Sometime happens — Always happens
1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5

5. One partner expressed a desire for more sexual pleasure from the other partner (circle number).

Never happens — Sometime happens — Always happens
1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5

General Relationship Conflicts

Conflicts can occur in intimate relationships when partners have different opinions, make different choices or deal with situations differently. Conflict can happen when couples make choices about what to eat at mealtime, plan how leisure time is spent or figure out finances or household duties. How couples define conflict may vary, making it difficult for researchers to study how couples deal with conflict. Listed below are several different conflict situations. These situations have been included to remind you of different conflict experiences you may have had in your own relationship and to provide and understanding of the types of conflict that may be used to answer the following questionnaire (on the next page). Please read each scenario and then indicate whether or not you have ever encountered a similar scenario in your own relationship.

1. We both had different ideas of what to do with our leisure time. (circle number).

Never happens Sometime happens Always happens
1 2 3 4 5

2. We couldn't agree on how to pay our bills. (circle number).

Never happens Sometime happens Always happens
1 2 3 4 5

3. We had different ideas of who should do which chores around the house. (circle number).

Never happens Sometime happens Always happens
1 2 3 4 5

4. We couldn't agree on what to have for dinner. (circle number).

Never happens Sometime happens Always happens
1 2 3 4 5

5. We argued because one of use thought the other's driving was bad. (circle number).

Never happens Sometime happens Always happens
1 2 3 4 5

Sexual Accommodation Styles

This questionnaire is designed to measure the accommodation style you use when relating with your intimate partner in sexual situations. Please read the questions carefully and place a number, using the rating system below, which best describes how you communicate with your partner on the line beside each question. If any of the questions do not reflect experiences from your current relationship answer the questions by thinking about how you would respond if the situation arose.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
*				*				*
I never do this				I sometimes do this				I always do this

1. _____ When I'm unhappy with my partner sexually, I consider breaking up
2. _____ When my partner says something I don't like about sex, I talk to them about what's upsetting me.
3. _____ When we have sexual problems in our relationship, I patiently wait for things to improve.
4. _____ When I'm upset with my partner about sex I sulk rather than confronting the issue.
5. _____ When I'm angry at my partner about sex, I talk to them about breaking up.
6. _____ When my partner and I have sexual problems, I discuss things with them.
7. _____ When I'm upset about sex in our relationship, I wait awhile before saying anything to see if things improve on their own.
8. _____ When I'm really bothered about something my partner has done during sex, I criticize them for the things that are unrelated to the real problem.
9. _____ When we have serious sexual problems in our relationship, I take action to end the relationship.
10. ____ When I am sexually unhappy with my partner, I tell them what's bothering me.
11. ____ When my partner hurts me sexually, I say nothing and simply forgive them.
12. ____ When I'm upset with my partner because of sex, I ignore them for awhile.
13. ____ When I'm irritated with my partner because of sex, I think about ending our relationship.
14. ____ When things aren't going well between us sexually, I suggest changing things in the relationship in order to solve the problem.
15. ____ When my partner and I are angry with each other about sex, I give things some time to cool off on their own rather than take action.
16. _____When I'm really angry about our sex life, I treat my partner badly (for example, by ignoring him/her or saying cruel things).
17. _____ When we have sexual problems I discuss ending our relationship.
18. _____ When my partner and I are angry with one another about our sex life, I suggest a compromise solution.

19. _____When there are things about my partner's sexuality that I don't like, I accept their faults and weaknesses and don't try to change them.
20. _____ When we have a sexual problem in our relationship, I ignore the whole thing and forget about it.
21. _____ When our sex life is going really poorly between us, I do things to drive my partner away.
22. _____ When we've had an argument about sex, I work things out with my partner right away.
23. _____ When my partner is sexually inconsiderate I give them the benefit of the doubt and forget it.
24. _____When I'm angry at my partner about sex, I spend less time with them (for example, I spend more time with my friends, watch a lot of television, work longer hours, etc.)
25. _____ When I'm dissatisfied with our sexual relationship, I consider dating other people.
26. _____ When we have serious problems in our sexual relationship I consider getting advice from someone else (friends, parents, or counselor).
27. _____ When we have sexual troubles, no matter how bad things get I am loyal to my partner.
28. _____ When my partner and I have sexual problems, I refuse to talk to them about it

General Accommodation Styles

This questionnaire is designed to measure the accommodation style you use when relating with your intimate partner. Please read the questions carefully and place a number, using the rating system below, which best describes how you communicate with your partner on the line beside each question. If any of the questions do not reflect experiences from your current relationship answer the question by thinking about how you would respond if the situation arose.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
*				*				*
I never do this				I sometimes do this				I always do this

1. _____ When I'm unhappy with my partner, I consider breaking up
2. _____ When my partner says something I don't like, I talk to them about what's upsetting me.
3. _____ When we have problems in our relationship, I patiently wait for things to improve.
4. _____ When I'm upset with my partner I sulk rather than confront the issue.
5. _____ When I'm angry at my partner, I talk to them about breaking up.
6. _____ When my partner and I have problems, I discuss things with them.
7. _____ When I'm upset about something in our relationship, I wait awhile before saying anything to see if things improve on their own.
8. _____ When I'm really bothered about something my partner has done, I criticize them for the things that are unrelated to the real problem.
9. _____ When we have serious problems in our relationship, I take action to end the relationship.
10. ____ When I am unhappy with my partner, I tell them what's bothering me.
11. ____ When my partner hurts me, I say nothing and simply forgive them.
12. ____ When I'm upset with my partner, I ignore them for awhile.
13. ____ When I'm irritated with my partner, I think about ending our relationship.
14. ____ When things aren't going well between us, I suggest changing things in the relationship in order to solve the problem.
15. ____ When my partner and I are angry with each other, I give things some time to cool off on their own rather than take action.
16. _____ When I'm really angry, I treat my partner badly (for example, by ignoring him/her or saying cruel things).
17. _____ When we have problems I discuss ending our relationship.
18. _____ When my partner and I are angry with one another, I suggest a compromise solution.
19. _____ When there are things about my partner that I don't like, I accept their faults and weaknesses and don't try to change them.

20. _____ When we have a problem in our relationship, I ignore the whole thing and forget about it.
21. _____ When things are going really poorly between us, I do things to drive my partner away.
22. _____ When we've had an argument, I work things out with my partner right away.
23. _____ When my partner is inconsiderate I give them the benefit of the doubt and forget it.
24. _____ When I'm angry at my partner, I spend less time with them (for example, I spend more time with my friends, watch a lot of television, work longer hours, etc.)
25. _____ When I'm dissatisfied with our relationship, I consider dating other people.
26. _____ When we have serious problems in our relationship I consider getting advice from someone else (friends, parents, or counselor).
27. _____ When we have troubles, no matter how bad things get I am loyal to my partner.
28. _____ When my partner and I have problems, I refuse to talk to them about it.

Dyadic Adjustment Scale

Most partners have disagreements in their relationships. Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the list. Please read the questions carefully and place a number, using the rating system below, on the line beside each question.

0	1	2	3	4	5
All of the Time	Most of the time	More often than not	Occasionally	Rarely	Never

1. _____ How often do you discuss or have you considered ending the relationship?
2. _____ How often do you or your partner leave the house after a fight?
3. _____ In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?
4. _____ Do you confide in your partner?
5. _____ Do you ever regret that you are together?
6. _____ How often do you and your partner quarrel?
7. _____ How often do you and your partner "get on each other's nerves?"
8. _____ Do you kiss your partner?

9. The numbers on the following line represent different degrees of happiness in your relationship. Please circle the dot which best describes the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship.

*	*	*	*	*	*
extremely unhappy	fairly unhappy	a little unhappy	a little happy	very happy	extremely happy

Which of the following statement best describes how you feel about your current relationship? Choose one and place a check mark beside the statement that best describes your current relationship.

10. _____I want desperately for my relationship to succeed, and I would go to almost any lengths to see that it does.
11. _____I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and will do all I can to see that it does.
12. _____I want very much for my relationship to succeed, I will do my fair share to see that it does.
13. _____It would be nice if my relationship succeeded, but I can't do much more than I am doing now to help it succeed.
14. _____It would be nice if it succeeded, but I refuse to do any more that I am doing now to keep the relationship going.
15. _____My relationship can never succeed, and there is no more that I can do to keep the relationship going.

Index of Sexual Satisfaction (ISS)

This questionnaire is designed to measure the degree of satisfaction you have in the sexual relationship with your partner. It is not a test, so there are no right or wrong answers. Answer each item as carefully and accurately as you can by placing a number beside each one as follows:

1 Rarely or none of the time
2 A little of the time
3 Some of the time
4 Good part of the time
5 Most or all of the time

Please begin:

1. I feel that me partner enjoys our sex life _____
2. My sex life is very exciting _____
3. Sex is fun for my partner and I _____
4. I feel that my partner sees little in me except for the sex I can give _____
5. I feel that sex is dirty and disgusting _____
6. My sex life is monotonous _____
7. When we have sex it is too rushed and hurriedly completed _____
8. I feel that my sex life is lacking in quality _____
9. My partner is sexually very exciting _____
10. I enjoy the sexual techniques that my partner likes or uses _____
11. I feel that my partner wants too much sex from me _____
12. I think that sex is wonderful _____
13. My partners dwells on sex too much _____
14. I feel that sex is something that has to be endured in our relationship _____
15. My partner is too rough when we have sex _____
16. My partner observes good personal hygiene _____
17. I feel that sex is a normal function of our relationship _____
18. My partner does not want sex when I do _____
19. I feel that our sex life really adds a lot to our relationship _____
20. I would like to have sexual contact with someone other than my partner _____
21. It is easy for me to get sexually excited by my partner _____
22. I feel that my partner is sexually pleased with me _____
23. My partner is very sensitive to my sexual needs and desires _____
24. I feel that I should have sex more often _____
25. I feel that my sex life is boring _____

Appendix H

Pilot Study Results

Murray and Holmes (1993) indicate that when individuals construct stories regarding their intimate partners, the construction process masks negative responses, and positive pre-existing stories become the focus. Therefore, a paradigm designed to reduce the positive biases that exist in research settings when measuring dilemmas in intimate relationships was pilot tested prior to Study 2.

It was believed that by having participants identify with common relationship scenarios they would recognize the presence of conflict in their relationship. Additionally, it was believed that by describing conflict as a positive aspect of relationships participants would continue to acknowledge the presence of conflict and not interpret it as a threat to their relationship. It was hoped that the paradigm would provide a more sensitive, and less positively-biased response than those obtained without the scenario assessments.

Two groups of participants were used for the pilot study. Both groups were presented with five conflict scenarios and asked to describe how similar or different they were from the couples in the scenarios. Both groups were presented with the same conflict scenarios but only the target group was given a positive evaluation of conflict in relationships prior to completing the accommodation style assessment. This was done in order to assess if couples were more likely to acknowledge their own relationship as involving similar conflict when a positive evaluation of conflict was provided. Once the

assessment was completed participants were administered the outcome measures.

Once participants completed the questionnaires three measures to assess the efficacy of the paradigm were employed. First they were asked to complete a measure designed to assess the belief that relationship functioning and relationship conflict are related (e.g., In general, disagreement and conflict is good for my relationship; In general, disagreement and conflict is not good for my relationship). Participants were then asked to complete a measure designed to assess the belief that relationship scenarios could be interpreted as conflict situations (e.g., In general, the scenarios presented in the study are representative of common relationship disagreements. In general, the scenarios presented in the study are not representative of common relationship disagreements). All four items were assessed on a five point rating scale ranging from 1 (I strongly disagree) to 5 (I strongly agree). In order to determine if past conflicts were primed in the laboratory we asked participants to recall the number of disagreements they have had with their partners in the last 30 days. Participants were then probed for suspicion of the paradigm.

Regression analyses were performed to determine if participants from the two groups differed on the four measures. It was found that the two groups did not differ in their belief that conflict was good ($F<1$) nor in the belief that it was not good ($F(1,35)=2.4$, *ns*) for their relationship. Nor did groups differ in their belief that the scenarios presented were common ($F<1$) nor in their belief that the scenarios were not common ($F<1$) relationships disagreements. Groups did not differ in the number of conflicts they reported ($F(1,35)=2.75$). Additionally, four regression analyses were

performed to determine if the groups differed on levels of positive and negative accommodation styles in both sexual and non-sexual domains. It was found that the groups did not differ on the measures of positive sexual accommodation($F<1$), negative sexual accommodation ($F(1,35)=5.51$, *ns*), positive general accommodation ($F<1$) and negative general accommodation ($F(1,35)=3.9$, *ns*). Finally, sexual accommodation styles were regressed on non-sexual accommodation styles to determine if they differed. It was found that both positive (sexual and general) ($F(1,35)=93.19$, $p.<.05$) and negative(sexual and general) ($F(1,35)=24.35$, $p.<.05$) accommodation styles differed significantly.

Based on the results of the pilot study it was determined that the paradigm was not effective in increasing the belief that conflict was beneficial to the relationship or increasing the number of conflicts reported. Given that the two groups did not report significant differences on either measure of accommodation styles, and that sexual and non-sexual accommodation styles differed significantly across both groups, it was concluded that having participants read conflict scenarios, without a positive description of these scenarios, would be sufficient to prime sexual and non-sexual conflict scenarios prior to filling out the accommodation measures.

In addition to the study 2 paradigm, the Intimate Partner/Sexual Partner Identity Hierarchy Inventory was pilot tested. The inventory is based on a modified version of the Personal Dimensions of Difference Scale (PDD) (Dunbar, 1997) which assesses multiple identities simultaneously across three dimensions, including, strength of identification, power, and support. In the pilot study we tested the validity of the modifications made

to the scale and whether the measure accurately assessed the identities of interest. Participants were questioned to determine their understanding of the sexual partner and intimate partner identities presented in the Intimate Partner/Sexual Partner Identity Hierarchy Inventory. They were asked to indicate how accurately the Intimate Partner/Sexual Partner Identity Hierarchy Inventory reflected and measured their perceptions of these identities.

Results showed that the sexual partner and intimate partner identity definitions accurately reflected the participants' understanding of these identities. The participants indicated that the definitions provided in the questionnaire were similar to their own definitions of the identities and that they had previously considered these identities. Participants also revealed that the format of the questionnaire was cumbersome and often difficult to follow. Therefore, the format of the questionnaire was altered and rather than assessing all four identities (gender, ethnic, sexual partner and intimate partner) simultaneously on the three measures, the three measures assessing each identity were employed together following each identity definition so that each identity was assessed separately.

Anonymity/Confidentiality: The data collected in this study will be kept anonymous and confidential. You will not be asked to place your name on any of the questionnaires or the return envelope ensuring anonymity of responses. A code will be placed on each questionnaire package (yours and your partner's) in order to match up both packages. At no time will your name be attached to the code or the questionnaire. Only research personnel directly involved in the study will have access to the responses provided. All questionnaires are stored in a secure lab space, and your mailing addresses and names are not attached to the data. Responses to questionnaires will also be kept confidential from participating partners. If partners choose to discuss their participation after the study, this is their choice, but confidentiality is kept by the researcher.

Right to Withdraw: Your participant in this study is entirely voluntary. At any point during the study you have the right not to complete certain questions or to withdraw with no penalty whatsoever.

The data collected will be used in research publication and/or for teaching purposes. By filling out the questionnaires and mailing them back to the researchers you have indicated that you agree to participate in the study, and this is no way constitutes a waiver of your rights.

Appendix K

Detailed Instructions Study 2

Dear Sir/Madame,

Thank-you for agreeing to participate in the current study. The information you provide on the following questionnaires will be extremely important to the completion of this research project and will be kept confidential. Please read the following instructions before filling out the enclosed questionnaires.

Enclosed you will find three groups of questionnaires labeled Section A, Section B and Section C, please complete the sections in order from Section A thru to Section C. Please do not read questions from any section prior to finishing the previous section. Please complete each section fully before moving on the next. It is also important the three Sections be completed together and not at different times.

Prior to beginning Section A we ask that you move to a separate room from your intimate partner. Additionally we ask that you not share your responses with your partner prior to returning the packages to the researcher. Once you are in a separate room from your partner please read the informed consent form. This form describes the purpose, requirements, potential risk, confidentiality and right to withdraw information for the research project. If you choose to continue your participation in the research project please sign and date the form. If you choose not to participate please return the unanswered questionnaires in the return envelope.

Once you have completed the questionnaires please place them in the enclosed envelope and mail them back to the researcher. When the questionnaires have been received you will be sent a $10.00 gift certificate to a local merchant.

Within two weeks of the researcher mailing out the questionnaires or upon receipt of the finished questionnaires the researcher will be contacting you to find out if you had any concerns about the study. If you would like to contact the research prior to this time you will find contact information provided at the end of Section C. Additionally, a detailed description of the purpose of the study can be found on the last page of Section C. On the final page you will also find a list of agencies and contact information that you may use if you feel any discomfort or concern for yourself or your relationship after completing the questionnaires.

Once again thank-you for your time and participation in this study.

Sincerely,

Alia Offman