

Student Work

---

12-1-1997

## The Relationship between Disengagement Strategies and Reconciliation Strategies

Sarah Holmes  
*University of Nebraska at Omaha*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/studentwork>  
Please take our feedback survey at: [https://unomaha.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_8cchtFmpDyGfBLE](https://unomaha.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8cchtFmpDyGfBLE)

---

### Recommended Citation

Holmes, Sarah, "The Relationship between Disengagement Strategies and Reconciliation Strategies" (1997). *Student Work*. 1672.  
<https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/studentwork/1672>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UNO. It has been accepted for inclusion in Student Work by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UNO. For more information, please contact [unodigitalcommons@unomaha.edu](mailto:unodigitalcommons@unomaha.edu).

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DISENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND  
RECONCILIATION STRATEGIES**

A Thesis

Presented to the  
Department of Communication

and the

Faculty of the Graduate College  
University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

University of Nebraska at Omaha

by

Sarah Holmes

December 1997

UMI Number: EP73512

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



UMI EP73512

Published by ProQuest LLC (2015). Copyright in the Dissertation held by the Author.

Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

All rights reserved. This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code



ProQuest LLC.  
789 East Eisenhower Parkway  
P.O. Box 1346  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 - 1346

THESIS ACCEPTANCE

Acceptance for the faculty of the Graduate College,  
University of Nebraska, in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree Master of Arts,  
University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Committee

<u>Marshall Partell</u>	<u>Communication</u>
<u>Michael Holt</u>	<u>COMMUNICATION</u>
<u>Wayne Keener</u>	<u>Sociology</u>

Chairperson Marshall Partell Communication

Date October 3, 1997

## ABSTRACT

This thesis examined the relationship between relational disengagement and reconciliation strategies. The literature review focused on the reasons for disengagement, disengagement theories, disengagement trajectories, disengagement strategies, and reconciliation strategies. The first research question asked if a partner used a direct disengagement strategy, would (s)he use a direct reconciliation strategy? The second research question asked if a partner used an indirect disengagement strategy, would (s)he use an indirect reconciliation strategy? Two hundred undergraduate students were asked to complete a questionnaire containing a hypothetical disengagement scenario and a hypothetical reconciliation scenario. The results indicated a significant, yet tenuous, relationship between direct/direct strategy use and indirect/indirect strategy use. Results also showed a significant, yet tenuous, relationship between direct/indirect strategy use and indirect/direct strategy use. Discussion, interpretation of results and future issues for research on disengagement and reconciliation strategy selection are explored, especially that of further developing the reconciliation instrument created by the researcher.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all those people who were instrumental in helping me achieve this goal. I would first like to thank my thesis advisor, Dr. Marshall Prisbell. His guidance and focus were unwavering, and I learned more about the research process through his instruction than I ever thought I knew. His encouragement and dedication are a testament to his abilities as an advisor.

I would also like to thank my other committee members, Dr. Mary Ann Lamanna and Dr. Michael Hilt, for their time and input. Their comments and suggestions were very much appreciated. I would like to thank Dr. Shereen Bingham for all her help with organization during the thesis proposal process.

I would like to thank all the professors and instructors in the Communication and Sociology Departments who took the time out of their class schedules to either administer questionnaires themselves or to allow me to administer questionnaires to their students. I also appreciate the students' participation, without which this thesis would not be complete.

Finally, I would like to thank all my family and friends. They showed their support by knowing when to push me and when to let me go at my own speed. Thank you all for keeping the faith.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	Title Page	i
	Approval Page	ii
	Abstract	iii
	Acknowledgements	iv
	Table of Contents	v
II.	CHAPTER ONE	
	Introduction - Statement of the Problem	
	Review of Literature	
	Relationship Disengagement	4
	Reasons for Disengagement	4
	Disengagement Theories	10
	Disengagement Trajectories	14
	Disengagement Strategies	21
	Relationship Reconciliation	29
	Reconciliation Strategies	32
	Purpose of Thesis	35
III.	CHAPTER TWO	
	Methodology	37
	Subjects	37
	Procedure	37
	Measurement	41
	Disengagement Strategy Items	41
	Reconciliation Strategy Items	41
	Statistical Analysis	42
IV.	CHAPTER THREE	
	Results	44
	Introduction	44
	Participant Characteristics	44
	Instrumentation Results	45
	Research Question Results	47
V.	CHAPTER FOUR	
	Discussion	49
	Introduction	49
	Interpretation of Results	49
	Strengths of Study	55
	Limitations of Study	57
	General Implications for Future Research	60
VI.	NOTES	64
VII.	REFERENCES	65
VIII.	APPENDICES	
	Appendix A - IRB Proposal and Acceptance	69
	Appendix B - Disengagement and Reconciliation Questionnaire	75
	Appendix C - Disengagement Strategies	86
	Appendix D - Reconciliation Strategies	89
	Appendix E - Letters to Patterson and O'Hair and Their Responses	92
	Appendix F - Patterson and O'Hair's (1992) Reconciliation Messages	101
	Appendix G - Intercoder Reliability	107

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**  
(Continued)

**IX. TABLES**

Table 1 - Scale Summary Statistics	111
Table 2 - Item-Total Correlations	112
Table 3 - Unrotated Factor Analysis of Reconciliation Items	115
Table 4 - Canonical Correlation Results	117
Table 5 - Correlation Coefficients Results	119



## CHAPTER ONE

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Songs have been sung about it; books have been written about it; plays and films have been based on it. Relational disengagement is a phenomenon in which intense emotions and behaviors are inextricably attached. The dissolution of a relationship can prove to be one of the most emotionally challenging situations a person can encounter. Researchers have examined the causes of relationship disengagement (Cate & Lloyd, 1992; Cupach & Metts, 1986; Duck, 1988; Levinger, 1976; Lloyd & Cate, 1985), the theories associated with breakups (Baxter, 1983, 1979; Cody, 1982; Cupach & Metts, 1986; Hill, Rubin, & Peplau, 1976; Simpson, 1987), the processes involved (Baxter, 1984; Duck, 1991, 1982; Knapp, 1984; Lee, 1984) and the strategies used to terminate relationships (Banks, Altendorf, Greene & Cody, 1987; Baxter, 1985, 1984, 1982, 1979; Baxter & Philpott, 1982; Cody, 1982; Hill et al., 1976; Metts, Cupach, & Bejlovec, 1989; Simpson, 1987; Wilmot, Carbaugh, & Baxter, 1985).

Even though relationship disengagement is a relatively recent area of study in human communication research, it has been widely studied. Relationship reconciliation, an even more recent area of exploration, has received little attention, however (Patterson & O'Hair, 1992). Taking into consideration the partners' past shared experiences and interactions, re-engaging a previous relationship is a

different process from engaging a new relationship - one in which the emotional, mental and physical aspects of the past relationship are bound to influence in some manner.

The focus of this thesis is on the verbal and nonverbal communication strategies dyadic partners use to dissolve their relationships (disengagement strategies) and the verbal and nonverbal strategies they employ to re-engage those relationships (reconciliation strategies). Thus, the purpose here is to examine the relationship that disengagement strategies have with reconciliation strategies.

In order to understand the purpose of this thesis, a review of the disengagement literature is imperative. The causes, theories and trajectories involved in relational dissolution can affect which disengagement strategy is used to end a relationship. Relational reconciliation literature will be reviewed also.

Relationship disengagement is still a relatively recent phenomenon studied by researchers; most of the attention has been focused on initial attraction, relationship formation and maintenance (Metts, Cupach, & Bejlovec, 1989). The dissolution of a close relationship is perhaps one of the most emotionally and physically painful experiences a person can encounter. Hill, Rubin and Peplau (1976) offer two reasons for studying pre-marital breakups:

First and foremost, breakups before marriage play a central role in the larger system of mate selection. In an ideal mate selection system, all breakups of intimate male-female relationships might take place before marriage . . . Second, breakup before marriage may provide a revealing comparison against which to view marital breakup (p. 148).

By understanding more about the different factors of relationship disengagement (reasons or accounts for falling out, dissolution theories and the stages of the disengagement process) and communicative strategies, one can better understand how interrelated the entire disengagement process is. Even though a relationship may appear to take a linear disengagement path, one factor or stage may influence later factors or stages.

What of those relationships that re-engage? Is there any relationship between the disengagement strategies used to end a relationship and the reconciliation strategies used to re-initiate the relationship? Questions such as these are worthy of study, taking into account that the dissolution and reconciliation of a relationship is one form of the cyclical nature of human relationships. Relationships are a process usually examined in terms of initiation, maintenance and dissolution. Relationship reconciliation is a continuation of this process. The Literature Review section of this thesis will summarize the dissolution process up to the point of disengagement and then address the area of relationship reconciliation. The causes or reasons for disengagement will be reviewed first.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### RELATIONSHIP DISENGAGEMENT

#### Reasons for Disengagement

Just as there are factors involved in the initiation of relationships (i.e. - attraction), there are several different factors involved in the breakup of couples. These factors seem to be similar across relationship types, including across sexual orientations (i.e. - homosexual relationships) (Kurdek, 1991).

Cate and Lloyd (1992) classify the antecedents of premarital relationship termination into three broad categories: **social incompatibility** (such as discrepancies in interests, goals, socio-economic background and educational aspirations or age), **low relationship quality** (such as low levels of love and communication) and **social network influence** (such as parental or peer disapproval). With the exception of external factors such as job relocation, job/social commitments and long-distance, the reasons for relationship disengagement can be grouped into these three categories. This section will examine dissolution causes in terms of these three classifications beginning with social incompatibility.

Social incompatibility can manifest itself in the form of ineptitude or lack of skills in self-expression (Duck, 1988). Lack of self-expression skills include awkward

physical movements or postures, odd patterns of eye movements, poor timing of speech, hesitancy, inability to ask interesting questions or make comments that involve other people and the signaling of disinterest.

Relationships also disengage when one or both of the partners no longer feel that the other provides the stimulation value that (s)he once did, whether it is in the area of new insights, advice on new ways to approach problems or offering challenging suggestions for the progression of life (Duck, 1988).

Along with perceived demographic similarity, attractiveness of perceived alternatives is a factor that Felmler, Sprecher and Bassin (1990) examine in their study of relationship stability. The more attractive perceived alternatives appear to a relationship partner, the more quickly he/she will exit the relationship.

George Levinger (1976) uses two concepts derived from Lewinian field theory to examine the psychological forces that affect a couple's cohesiveness and its dissolution. He suggests that any given relationship continues as a joint function of its (1) attractiveness for the partners (directly associated with the relationship's perceived rewards and inversely with its perceived costs) and (2) its constraints or barriers against their leaving it (barriers lessen the effect of temporary fluctuations in interpersonal attraction). A relationship may break up if its internal attractiveness compares unfavorably with a competing

alternative at a time when its barriers are too weak to prevent disengagement.

When barriers against leaving a relationship are weak, it is often at such times that extra-relational affairs are likely to occur. Cupach and Metts (1986) list affairs as a problem type leading to relationship dissolution. Affairs can cause the termination of a relationship not only because they can reflect emotional and/or physical incompatibility between the two partners, but also because the third party involved can influence the partner to leave the relationship.

Third party input can certainly sway a partner's decision to remain in or exit a relationship. Social network influence will be discussed next.

The support of one's own and partner's friends and family is a factor in relationship stability (Felmlee et al., 1990). As a relationship progresses and partners come into contact more often with one another's social network, the opinions of those network members are reinforced. After all, friends and family were there before the relationship began and will most likely be there after the relationship ends.

If members of a partner's peer group or family do not "like" or support the other partner, that can influence the first partner's decision to continue with the relationship, especially if that partner is already considering ending the relationship.

The final category of causes of relationship disengagement is low relationship quality. According to Felmler et al. (1990) levels of commitment, sexual involvement, amount of time spent together, underbenefitting inequity, and perceived investments are factors that contribute to the continuation or break-up of a relationship.

Cupach and Metts (1986) offer a typology of problem types leading to relational dissolution including:

**(1) Partners' references to the individuals involved in the relationship** (affective-psychological states and behaviors that reflect and/or contribute to relational strain and dissatisfaction).

**(2) Partners' references to the enactment of relational roles** (attitudes, dispositions, behaviors and expectations that are related to the costs and rewards and the presumed stability of relational roles and performances).

**(3) Partners' references to relational cohesion and intimacy** (relational incompatibilities, lack of mutuality, sharedness, "we-ness" and emotional bonds).

**(4) Partners' references to regulation of interaction** (attempts and failures at communication between partners, physical episodes which occur when verbal regulation has broken down and communication events within the larger social network).

Cate and Lloyd (1992) list deception, avoidance of relationship talk and conflict as three types of pre-marital interaction that can lead to relationship deterioration. One form of deception studied by Baxter and Wilmot (1985) is "taboo" topics in close relationships, or "deception through omission". They identified the following six topics as

those to be avoided: the state of the relationship, extra-relationship activity, relationship norms, prior relationships, conflict-inducing topics and negative self-disclosure. Relationship talk was seen as something to be avoided, especially in situations where the partners were in the process of redefining their interaction.

Duck (1988) describes deception as perhaps "the most important rule that should not be broken in personal relationships" (p. 108). He offers two hypotheses about why people do not initially assume deception in partner interaction:

we might be better at detecting lying in people whom we are getting to know than in those whom we know already, since our skepticism about new acquaintances has not yet been set aside in the course of building up trust. Equally and conversely it could be that we are better at deceiving people that we know well, since we are better acquainted with their thought patterns (p. 109).

Since couples tend to trust their partners more than strangers or acquaintances, deception in a relationship can be more devastating to the existence of that relationship.

Along with deception, Duck (1988) also lists rule breaking and conflict as reasons for falling out of relationships. Rules that are broken tend to be those of intimacy and support while general friendship rules are usually adhered to.

Conflict is necessary in every relationship and can actually provide relational growth. However, conflict over



issues that partners have carefully thought about and have reached different conclusions on can put partners on a "collision course" in which they feel badly about the issue.

This can lead to the development of doubts about each other as reasonable persons (Duck, 1988).

Conflict levels also change with the function of interdependence within relationships (Lloyd & Cate, 1985). In breaking down the relational timeline into five stages (casual, couple, committed, uncertain of the relationship's future and certain it will end), Lloyd and Cate (1985) studied the significance between conflict and commitment. They concluded that conflict increased significantly from "casual" to a "couple", from a "couple" to "committed", and from "committed" to "uncertain". There was no significant change in the level of conflict from "uncertain" about the relationship to "certain" it would end. As commitment levels in the relationships rose, conflict rose as well until it leveled off toward the end of the relationship. The researchers suggested that this is due to the reduction of involvement of the partners in the relationship (withdrawal) and/or the conflict lost its positive value leaving only negative repercussions.

The reasons for relational dissolution are extensive and somewhat overlapping. Just as these reasons may affect other elements of the disengagement process, they can even affect one another, i.e. - differences in interests and goals (social incompatibility) can decrease the amount of

time and experiences shared by two people and, therefore, the level of intimacy (low relationship quality) which can increase the perceived attractiveness of alternatives (social incompatibility) which can be supported by friends and family as a preferable option (social network influence).

Felmlee et al. (1990) discovered that relationships were less likely to break up at any point in time the longer a couple had been dating, the more hours the couple spent together, the worse the perceived alternatives, if the partners were of the same race and the greater the perception of social support from partner's friends and family. Comparison level for alternatives (or attractiveness of perceived alternatives) was found to be the strongest predictor of the rate of relational breakup; it was a more important predictor than investment and equity.

The reasons why couples break up are the building blocks of dissolution theories. These theories focus more inclusively on the partners' involvement once disengagement has begun. Disengagement theories will be examined next.

### **Disengagement Theories**

Disengagement theories tend to fall into either emotional, behavioral or psychological groupings. As with the causes of dissolution, a couple breaking up can have more than one disengagement theory apply to their situation.

Also, what theories apply to a break-up can be affected by what caused the dissolution. Emotional disengagement theories will be examined first.

Simpson (1987) offers Bersheid's theory of emotion as a method of examining the distress level felt by those experiencing dissolution. The extent of emotional distress is believed to be a function of both the number of interaction patterns, plans and goals interrupted and the availability of alternative partners who can facilitate these interrupted events.

Weiss' attachment theory, as mentioned by Cupach and Metts (1986), is an interesting emotional reaction that *impedes* disengagement yet does not prevent it from occurring: ". . . even after various aspects of love for one's partner have faded, the aspect of attachment remains" (p. 331). These feelings often co-exist with a number of negative emotions, i.e. - distress. Weiss's attachment theory is seen to be more prevalent in the dissolution of married couples because their relationships have a characteristic complexity that is not found in pre-marital relationships.

As some theories focus on the emotional aspects of dissolution, others focus on the behavioral aspects. Baxter (1983) examines the reversal hypothesis as a way of understanding the disengagement process. The reversal hypothesis involves the expectation that "the dissolution process is simply the relational growth stage in reverse"

(p. 85). Her results were inconclusive in that the reversal effect was "particularized rather than global across communication dimensions." The aspects concerning knowing the partner interpersonally (knowing the other's communication style and idiosyncrasies) were least susceptible to reversals. The aspects most susceptible to reversal include levels of self-disclosure, trust and time spent together. Other researchers refute the reversal hypothesis (Duck, 1982; Lloyd & Cate, 1985).

Disengagement theories can also be psychological in nature. Hill et al. (1976) and Baxter (1979) look at exchange theory in which each relationship bears its own reward and cost dynamics which are affected by the involvement in the relationship by the partners. Disengagement usually occurs when a partner or partners perceives the costs of staying in the relationship to outweigh the rewards.

In looking for a general theory of interpersonal relations in which to integrate his hypotheses, Simpson (1987) examines Rusbult's proposed investment model:

commitment should be a function of three dimensions: level of satisfaction (i.e., the extent to which the relationship provides rewarding outcomes), quality of alternative partners (i.e., the extent to which alternatives can provide rewarding outcomes), and level of investment (i.e., the extent to which various resources have been put into the relationship) (p. 690).

Drigotas and Rusbult's (1992) research extends interdependence theory by examining the dependence model:

"Over time, an individual may gradually realize that a current relationship is incapable of satisfying important needs" (p. 64). After time, one partner may become increasingly incapable of satisfying one need after another, and those needs may be better met by an alternative partner. Therefore, dependence upon the existing relationship to fulfill those needs decreases and the possibility of ending the relationship increases in likelihood (whether an alternative partner is present or the relationship simply fails to meet enough important needs better than relationships in a broader social network) (Drigotas & Rusbult, 1992).

When examining the motivations of disengagers, Cody (1982) applies equity theory:

According to equity theory, the individual who receives higher outcomes relative to his/her inputs is "overbenefitted," and the one who receives lower relative gains is "underbenefitted." The greater the perceived in-equity, the more the partners should feel "distress" and feel a desire to achieve actual equity or "psychological equity" (p. 158).

Equity theory states that too many or too few inputs by a partner will cause distress for the other partner. Cody does not define inputs, but if they can consist of any contribution to the relationship, inputs can include material goods; emotional support (love, understanding); levels of self-disclosure, trust, honesty and commitment; experiences shared; and time spent together.

To summarize, the theories on disengagement encompass the

emotions involved, possible behavioral shifts and the perceived costs and rewards involved for staying in or leaving the relationship. Just as the reasons for ending a relationship can be overlapping, so can the theories concerning disengagement. For example, if a partner feels that levels of love and commitment in the relationship are not as high as they once were (low relationship quality), this can lead that partner to examine the costs and rewards of staying in or leaving the relationship (exchange theory, equity theory). Again, earlier stages in the disengagement process can affect later stages.

Having reviewed the reasons why relationships dissolve and some of the general theories that apply, disengagement trajectories and their stages will be examined next.

### **Disengagement Trajectories**

The ending of relationships is a complex process, not static in nature (Duck, 1982). It can continue after the actual separation because of the need to formulate and reformulate one's account of the breakup. Since the different stages in this process are interrelated, the causes and theories of relationship disengagement can affect the actual trajectory a relationship takes in its termination.

Disengagement trajectories studied by different researchers usually have one of two points in common: they either list and explain the phases or steps involved in

trajectories or they provide various combinations of these phases. Trajectory phase listing and description will be examined first followed by combinations of phases. At the end of this section, dissolution speed will be discussed since each relationship is unique in how slowly or how quickly it ends.

Duck (1991, 1982) presents an often-cited model of the disengagement process consisting of five phases. The first is the **breakdown phase** in which one or both partners feel that the relationship is not going as well as it should. Often times the partner(s) will not vocalize any concern because it may just be due to factors such as a bad day, a busy schedule, the other partner being tired and so on. Depending on how this phase resolves itself determines whether or not the next stage of the process is achieved.

The **intrapsychic phase** is the "internal grumbling" or "blowing off steam" phase (Duck, 1991). In this stage the focus is not on telling the partner about the discontent. Instead, the focus is on the partner's role performance, depicting and evaluating negative aspects of being in the relationship, considering the costs of withdrawal, assessing positive aspects of alternative relationships and facing the dilemma of expressing or repressing discontent.

One study by Baxter and Wilmot (1984) on "secret tests" shows that people engage in intrapsychic "tests" of the other person (i.e. - "If she goes out once more with her

friends and not me, then it is over") and make judgments of them based on the test. By not telling the other partner about this condition, the dissatisfaction is still in the intrapsychic phase.

Face-to-face confrontation occurs in the **dyadic phase**. Here, the couple negotiate in relationship talk. Any attempts at repair are initiated in this stage, and the partners assess the joint costs of reduced intimacy or withdrawal.

In the **social phase**, partners openly discuss problems with the relationship with third parties. The essence of this phase is "the emergence of a socially acceptable story about 'who is to blame', and the efforts of the partners are devoted to getting the people in their personal networks to accept their version of what is going on" (Duck, 1991, p. 179).

The **grave-dressing phase** is the last and usually the longest phase, according to Duck's model. In this stage, the partners adjust to the breakup. They satisfy themselves and the people they know that there is a rationale to the ending of the relationship.

Another description of the dissolution phases comes from Knapp (1984). He includes the initiation process along with the disengagement process to create an entire sequence of the life of a relationship: (1) Initiating, (2) Experimenting, (3) Intensifying, (4) Integrating,



(5) Bonding, (6) Differentiating - participants work to get more space from each other and establish separate identities, (7) Circumscribing - communication becomes constricted; it focuses more on public and superficial topics with less breadth and depth, (8) Stagnating - the relationship is put "on hold" and relationship talk becomes taboo, (9) Avoiding - the participants go out of their way to not be together and (10) Terminating - one or more of the participants makes it clear that the relationship is over.

Knapp (1984) provides a more comprehensive focus of relational dissolution than Duck by examining the processes involved prior to termination.

Other researchers go one step further in providing multiple variations of the disengagement phases involved in the process. Focusing on Duck's dyadic phase, Baxter (1984) stresses the variation among relationship dissolutions in regard to her flow chart model. According to Baxter, variations in disengagement surround five distinctive features: (1) unilateral/bilateral exit resolution - the decision to exit the relationship is made by one or both partners, (2) direct/indirect disengagement action - the communicative directness the partner(s) use in ending the relationship, (3) single/multiple number of "passes" through the model - the number of times the partners cycle through the disengagement model, (4) attempted/unattempted repair action - the decision to abandon or not abandon the exit

goal and re-negotiate the state of the relationship, and (5) termination/continuation outcome - the end or the repair of the relationship.

Based on her study, Baxter outlines eight trajectory types:

(1) **Persevering Indirectness** (unilateral; indirect; multiple passes through the model; no attempted repairs; outcome-termination).

(2) **Ambivalent Indirectness** (unilateral; indirect; attempted repair; multiple passes or disengagement attempts; outcome-termination).

(3) **Swift Explicit Mutuality** (bilateral; direct; no attempted repairs; termination achieved on the first disengagement attempt).

(4) **Mutual Ambivalence** (bilateral; indirect; attempted repair; multiple passes or disengagement attempts; outcome-termination).

(5) **Swift Indirectness** (unilateral; indirect; no attempted repair; termination achieved on first disengagement attempt).

(6) **Swift Implicit Mutuality** (bilateral; indirect; no attempted repairs; outcome-termination).

(7) **Ambivalent Directness** (unilateral; direct; attempted repair; multiple passes or disengagement attempts; outcome-termination).

(8) **Swift Directness** (unilateral; direct; no repair attempts; termination achieved on first disengagement attempt) (p. 42-43).

Baxter's focus on variation among different disengagements reinforces the concept of dissolution as a complex, interrelated process.

Lee also addresses variation in her 1984 study. She begins by describing the different stages of the

disengagement process: (1) **D**iscovery of dissatisfaction, (2) **E**xposure, (3) **N**egotiation, (4) **R**esolution and (5) **T**ransformation of the relationship. She then presents the different formats the stages can follow:

Simple Format:	D - E - N - R - T
Omission Formats:	D - <del>E</del> - <del>N</del> - R - T
	D - E - <del>N</del> - R - T
	D - <del>E</del> - <del>N</del> - <del>R</del> - T
Extension Formats:	D - <u>E - N</u> - R - T
	D - E - N - <u>R - T</u>
Mixed Formats:	D - <del>E</del> - <del>N</del> - D - <u>E - N</u> - <u>R - T</u>

Wilmot (1987) discusses the concept of relational oscillation in regard to moving through the stages of dissolution. He defines oscillation as the dyad moving "between closeness and distance, with the participants moving farther and farther away" (p. 204). In other words, in moving away from their partner emotionally, mentally and/or physically, partners may understand or appreciate the positive features of the relationship; so they move closer.

By moving closer, the partners are reminded of the negative features of their relationship, and they move apart again. Once they get to the more definite stages of dissolution, partners will employ disengagement strategies to finalize the breakup. He believes it to be the most common

termination trajectory: "most of us know that the process is not linear and step by step. Rather, it more often reflects the dialectical tensions in relationships - as we try to get farther away from the other, we occasionally move closer" (p. 204).

Another factor to consider is that of dissolution speed.

As demonstrated by partners making single or multiple passes through different phases, some relationships move quickly toward termination and some move slowly. Davis (1973) refers to the differences in speed as "passing away" and "sudden death". In passing away, the intimacy declines by almost imperceptible degrees until the relationship can no longer endure. There are three factors external to an intimate relationship that can cause it to die: (1) the intrusion of a new intimate, (2) the expansion of interaction distance over space and (3) the aging of each intimate over time.

Sudden death has the same overall effect as passing away, but the disengagement tactics are more observable. In sudden death endings, the end is announced or made apparent with the swift "stroke of death". Davis maintains that sudden death is caused by (1) both people, (2) one person or (3) neither person, with outside forces responsible. The most common form is when one person terminates the relationship and the other is not expecting it. Davis offers two reasons why someone might use sudden death tactics: (1) some external event moves the disengager to

sudden action or (2) it serves to balance out previous patterns in a relationship that the disengager feels (s)he cannot alter. The different trajectories relationship disengagement can take are multiple, with partners moving sequentially through the phases, skipping phases and making multiple passes through the phases. How the relationship moves along a trajectory can be affected by earlier stages in the disengagement process. If the couple has been together for a long period of time, has invested significant inputs and the perceived costs and rewards of staying in the relationship are equal, the partners may make multiple repair attempts (oscillation) and/or multiple passes through the disengagement trajectory. If the couple has been together for a long time but one partner no longer finds the other partner stimulating, the attractiveness of alternatives is high and the one partner feels underbenefitted, the partners may not make any repair attempts and make few passes through the disengagement trajectory.

One point touched on when discussing disengagement trajectories was disengagement action (Baxter, 1984). The following section will delve into greater detail concerning the different strategies used to end a relationship.

### **Disengagement Strategies**

It is at this point in the disengagement process that actual actions, or strategies, are implemented to end the

relationship. Since the entire disengagement process encompasses several different psychological, behavioral and situational factors, their combinations could impact the method by which the relationship ends. In this section, disengagement strategies will be examined based on strategy types and researchers' observations of how these strategy types are used.

Many researchers have produced studies focusing on disengagement strategies and outcomes (Banks et al., 1987; Baxter, 1985, 1984, 1982, 1979; Baxter & Philpott, 1982; Cody, 1982; Hill et al., 1976; Metts et al., 1989; Simpson, 1987; and Wilmot et al., 1985). In her 1979 study, Baxter examines self-disclosure as a relationship disengagement strategy. Baxter tests the "intuitive reasonableness of reduced self-disclosure in the disengagement process by comparing willingness to self-disclose under conditions of relationship disengagement versus conditions of relationship maintenance" (pp. 216-217).

She discovered that a disengager will likely avoid a direct confrontation and discussion regarding the state of the relationship [Baxter and Wilmot (1985) posited relationship talk as a taboo subject]. Instead, disengagers may signal their desire to break up by talking about superficial topics in the hopes that their partners are socially perceptive enough to recognize this strategy. Baxter's study suggests that changes in self-disclosure play a minor role in a partner's total "repertoire" of

disengagement strategies due to the reliance on the other partner's intuitive abilities to determine the reason behind this change.

Baxter (1982) also found that 35 disengagement strategies resolved into a smaller, more cohesive set of strategies on the continuums of directness versus indirectness and self-oriented versus other-oriented. Direct strategies explicitly state to the other participant one's desire to exit the relationship, whereas indirect strategies try to accomplish the break up without an explicit statement of the goal. Other-orientation captures the degree to which the disengager attempts to avoid hurting the other person.

In the first study, Baxter (1982) devised four disengagement techniques based on the two continuums: withdrawal/avoidance, manipulatory strategies, concern for positive tone and openness. She discovered that more positive tone and withdrawal/avoidance techniques were used to end the closer, more intimate relationships. Likewise, fewer manipulative strategies were employed by disengagers in these close relationships.

Baxter's (1982) second study focused more on the mutuality of the desire to disengage the relationship and on the attributed cause(s) of dissolution. She included five strategies addressing these factors in addition to the original list of four techniques used in the first study. Again, the withdrawal/avoidance technique accounted for the most variance in the data with manipulatory, positive-tone

and open confrontation strategies emerging almost identically as they did in the first study.

Jones's (1964) disfavor tactics (as cited in Baxter & Philpott, 1982) are comprised of **other negation** (the giving of cues which demonstrate that the other is not liked), **difference** (the demonstration that one does not have things in common with the other), **self-presentation** (presentation of self in a less personal manner or presentation of one's negative attributes), **cost-rendering** (the cessation of favor-rendering and increased imposition of costs to the other), **disinterest** (the cessation of efforts to acquire additional information about the other) and **exclusion** (conscious effort to avoid having the other in one's presence).

Cody (1982) acknowledges that "in the more involving relationships the disengager must at least recognize that the partner has the right to request an accounting of changes in the disengager's behavior and that he/she is obligated to give some type of account" (p. 150). He observed five general tactics used by disengagers: (1) **behavioral de-escalation** (avoiding contact without discussion of the reason for doing so), (2) **negative identity management** (stating desire to disengage without offering a reason that addresses the feelings of the partner and possibly blaming the partner), (3) **justification** (full explanation of the person's reasons for seeking



termination), (4) de-escalation (expressing advantages to be gained by changing the relationship and holding out the possibility of some future relationship) and (5) positive tone (attending to the feelings of the partner when confronting in order to avoid ending the relationship on a "sour note").

In addition to different disengagement strategies, researchers have also observed specific conditions in which certain strategies would be used. These observations will be reviewed next.

In regard to equity theory and his five disengagement tactics, Cody (1982) hypothesized that (1) underbenefitted disengagers would feel more anger over the allocation of resources and engage in more negative identity management, justification and behavioral de-escalation strategies, and (2) overbenefitted disengagers would feel more guilt over the allocation of resources and engage in more de-escalation, positive tone and behavioral de-escalation strategies while minimizing justification and negative identity management strategies. Both hypotheses were supported. Hill et al. (1976) also found that 54 percent of the couples who were unequally involved broke off their relationships within two years while only 23 percent of the couples who were in equal involvement relationships broke up.

Banks et al. (1987), using Cody's five tactics,

discovered behavioral de-escalation was used most often when intimacy was low, dyadic adjustment (prior level of satisfaction and comfort experienced with the process of dyadic functioning) was low, constraint was low and the partner's fault was high. Justification tactics were more likely to be used when intimacy was high, constraint was high, fault was high and social network overlap was high. Negative identity management was used most often only when constraint was high. De-escalation tactics were used most when constraint, dyadic adjustment, intimacy and network overlap were high. Positive tone strategies were used when the partner did not have faults and when intimacy, constraint and network overlap were high.

Disengagers felt greater depression when intimacy was high and when the partner failed to compromise. Disengagers felt a sense of "freedom" when they previously felt more constrained, when the partner was less desirable and when they felt that they could trust the partner. Disengagers felt more anger when intimacy was high, when a partner failed to compromise and when trust was low.

In her review of ten studies, Baxter (1985) focuses on the dyadic phase of Duck's dissolution model again. She concludes with the following observations:

(1) Disengagement strategies vary on two underlying dimensions: directness and other-orientation.

(2) Strategy use varies. Indirectness is the pervasive strategy used with directness more likely employed with closer relationships, an external locus of cause for the

relationship's demise and anticipated future contact between the relationship partners.

(3) Relationship disengagement is not merely the reverse of the relationship growth process. Because they have acquired knowledge and predictability about one another, relationship partners cannot simply return to being strangers.

(4) Relationship disengagement is not a single sequential pattern. The most frequent disengagement trajectory is characterized by one partner's desire to exit the relationship, indirect strategy use, protracted "cycling" through multiple disengagement attempts and an ultimate outcome of dissolution (pp. 263-264).

These observations take into account the psychological and situational factors behind disengagement strategy selection, the process and the complexity within which they interrelate.

A study conducted by Wilmot et al. (1985) confirmed Baxter's earlier work (1982) in the area of direct versus indirect strategy selection. They also discovered that mutual terminations produced more positive emotional reactions and fewer regrets about how the termination was enacted compared to unilateral terminations.

No matter which disengagement strategy is used, it is important to realize that it requires two people to build a relationship but only one to end it (Wilmot, 1987). The fundamentals of relational disengagement (reasons for dissolution/antecedents, theories and the stages of the process) interrelate not only with one another but also with the tactics used to end the relationship. The reasons why a relationship ends can affect the trajectory the disengagement follows (as well as the number of times

partners go through the different phases). In turn, these can influence the strategy (or strategies) used to end the relationship.

The literature on disengagement has been examined up to the point of the strategies used to end the relationship. So, what happens after the relationship is terminated? If disengagement fundamentals can influence each other up to the disengagement strategy point, then the strategies used to end relationships may influence the strategies used to reconcile relationships.

The strategies used to terminate relationships are relevant to this thesis. The possible impact of disengagement strategies on selected reconciliation strategies is the purpose of this thesis. By reviewing the literature in the dissolution process (causes, theories and trajectories), one has a better understanding of the fundamentals involved and how they can affect one another up to the point in the relationship where a partner (or partners) invokes a strategy intended to end the relationship. The strategy/strategies used to dissolve a relationship may affect the strategy/strategies used to re-engage it. Now we need to examine the literature regarding the second construct addressed in this thesis: relationship reconciliation.

## RELATIONSHIP RECONCILIATION

If pre-marital relationship disengagement is still relatively "young" in the study of interpersonal relationships, then pre-marital relationship reconciliation is in its infancy. Very little attention has been focused on this area. According to Patterson and O'Hair (1992), O'Hair and Krayner's 1987 study is "the only study dealing with the issue" (p. 119). In a literature search from 1992 to 1997, no new studies regarding relational reconciliation were found.

Patterson and O'Hair (1992) do not provide a formal definition of reconciliation per se. The closest they come to defining reconciliation is in one of the requirements their subjects had to have experienced: "A complete reconciliation process indicated by a return of the relationship to a pre-disengagement level" (p. 121). For the sake of this thesis, the researcher offers the following definition of relationship reconciliation based in part on Patterson and O'Hair's (1992) subject requirement: a process resulting in the dyad's perception of the relationship to be similar in definition of that prior to the disengagement.

Since the literature relating to relationship reconciliation is so scarce, the researcher examined the literature regarding marital couples that divorce one another then later remarry the same partner. After conducting an extensive review, the research did not offer

any insight into this area. From 1985 to 1996, *The Journal of Marriage and Family*, *The Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, *The Journal of Marriage and Family Counseling* and *The Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* did not report any research regarding divorced couples who remarry their initial partners. Two articles that addressed the relationships between ex-spouses (Hobart, 1990; Masheter, 1990) did so in terms of their divorced status. In his book *Letting go: A practical theory of relationship disengagement and reengagement* (1987), Dudley Cahn uses "reengagement" in terms of repairing a relationship before it has terminated. Courtright, Millar, Rogers and Bagarozzi (1990) use "reconciliation" in their article's title in the same regard as Cahn. In looking at "reconciliation versus termination of distressed relationships" (p. 429) Courtright et al. (1990) examined marital couples who **repaired** their marriages **before** dissolution occurred and marital couples who proceeded to the termination stage. Wineberg's (1995) research also focused on attempted marital reconciliation before actually becoming divorced. Conville (1988) studied the case of a marital couple that separated for a time but then decided to stay in the marriage. Conville (1988) used "reconciliation" in terms of the couple deciding to continue with the marriage after extensive self-analysis during their separation period, not terminating the marriage altogether and then returning to it at a later point. Neither Cahn

(1987) nor Courtright et al. (1990), Wineberg (1992) nor Conville (1988) defined "reconciliation".

In examining potential similarities in marital and pre-marital dissolution, aspects such as children, monetary investments, time investments and social investments create complexities and barriers not usually found in most pre-marital disengagements. Cupach and Metts (1986) confirm this conclusion: "The structural and affective enmeshment of marital couples lend to their disengagement accounts a complexity that has no equivalent in the accounts of couples who dissolved their relationships prior to marriage" (p. 331).

In examining the effects of disengagement on marital and non-marital partners, Helgeson (1994) found consistencies in her study generalizing marital divorce findings (i.e. - marriage is more beneficial for men than women and that men suffer more distress than women on marital dissolution) to non-marital college students in long-distance relationships. Her research showed that "many of the sex differences in distress and adjustment to breakup that appeared in college students' early dating relationships are consistent with those observed among married adults" (p. 263).

Helgeson's (1994) study only examines similarities between marital & non-marital disengagement but not reconciliation. It appears that marital disengagement and reconciliation either is not available for study or is not comparatively compatible to pre-marital disengagement and

reconciliation.

Pre-marital reconciliation strategies have been researched, albeit limitedly. Since this thesis focuses on pre-marital couples, it is important to address these strategies at this time.

### **Reconciliation Strategies**

Patterson and O'Hair (1992) re-examined O'Hair and Krayer's (1987) study of reconciliation strategies, and they yielded a more representative typology:

(1) **Spontaneous Development** - these statements report that the relationship "just happened". Couples reported spending more time together or doing activities together. Re-development was positively influenced by the amount of time the couples spent together after termination.

(2) **Third Party Mediation** - these statements referred to independent intervention of a third, outside person. None of the outside persons was a professional counselor or clergy member.

(3) **High Affect/Ultimatum** - high affective statements dealt with affective expressions (i.e. - comparison of partner to rival suitors). Ultimatum statements made some type of demand. They were direct which spelled out the results of non-compliance.

(4) **Tacit/Persistence** - these statements asked the other person to do something seemingly without intending to reconcile. These strategies were mostly indirect, consisting of letter writing and modest requests for the other person's company.

(5) **Mutual Interaction** - such statements placed heavy emphasis on the role of open communication in achieving reconciliation. The most common component of these statements was the mention of the long duration of talk.

(6) **Avoidance** - partners did not discuss the matter and were aware at the time that that was what they were doing. Partners intentionally evaded the issues relating to the



breakup.

**(7) Vulnerable Appeal** - most statements were direct, point blank requests for reconciliation, usually including references to persistent caring and a sense of longing (pp. 122-124).

Patterson and O'Hair's (1992) typology of reconciliation strategies is a good starting point when examining the potential impact of disengagement strategies on reconciliation strategies.

The literature on relationship disengagement that has been reviewed provides a better understanding of the different components involved in the disengagement process. The component of most relevance to this thesis is that of disengagement strategies. Likewise, the component of relationship reconciliation that is relevant to this thesis is that of reconciliation strategies. Again, the purpose of this thesis is to examine the potential influence of disengagement strategies on the selection of reconciliation strategies to re-engage the relationship. Cody's (1982) disengagement strategies and Patterson and O'Hair's (1992) reconciliation strategies will be the classification typologies used in this thesis. The strategies in both typologies can be grouped into direct and indirect categories. This allows for the examination of possible influences that direct/indirect disengagement strategies may have on direct/indirect reconciliation strategies. The following section provides more detail on the area of study

in this thesis.

## PURPOSE OF THESIS

Relational disengagement is a complex process. To understand the dynamics of this process, one needs a general understanding of the factors involved in disengagement. The preceding literature review provides an overview of these disengagement factors (causes, theories, trajectories and their phases and strategies) as well as how they can affect one another throughout the dissolution process. If they can influence one another, then it is possible that the disengagement strategy used to end the relationship can affect the reconciliation strategy used to regenerate the relationship.

An area of interpersonal communication and relationships that has received little attention is that of relationship reconciliation. According to Patterson and O'Hair (1992), "the literature on reconciliation is almost nonexistent" (p. 119). Patterson and O'Hair (1992) updated the typology of reconciliation strategies developed by O'Hair and Krayner (1987) (as cited in Patterson & O'Hair, 1992) to include the following: (1) Spontaneous Development, (2) Third Party Mediation, (3) High Affect/Ultimatum, (4) Tacit/Persistence, (5) Mutual Interaction, (6) Avoidance and (7) Vulnerable Appeals.

In examining Patterson and O'Hair's (1992) reconciliation strategies and Cody's (1982) disengagement strategies, it appears that both strategy categories reflect direct and

indirect dimensions. Direct disengagement strategies would include negative identity management, justification and positive tone while direct reconciliation strategies include high affect/ultimatum, mutual interaction and vulnerable appeals. Indirect disengagement strategies include de-escalation and behavioral de-escalation while indirect reconciliation strategies include tacit/persistence and avoidance. Having grouped these strategies into the more general direct/indirect subcategories helps this thesis to address a point brought up by Patterson and O'Hair (1992).

Patterson and O'Hair (1992) posit the following question in their suggestions for future research:

Are the strategies used [to reconcile] the opposite of those used to terminate (p. 126)?

The preceding question is worthy of study. The purpose of this thesis is to explore the potential relationship between disengagement and reconciliation strategies along the dimensions of direct and indirect.

Thus, this thesis explores the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the relationship between direct disengagement strategy use and direct reconciliation strategy use?

RQ2: What is the relationship between indirect disengagement strategy use and indirect reconciliation strategy use?

## CHAPTER TWO

### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter describes the methodology used to conduct this study including an overview of the subjects, methodological design, procedures, measures and statistical analysis.

#### Subjects

Subjects will be undergraduate students enrolled in the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Subjects will be chosen from the introductory and advanced courses in the Department of Communication. The subjects' responses will remain anonymous and confidential. The subjects will be debriefed after completing the questionnaire as to the purpose of the study.

#### Procedure

Prior to conducting this thesis, subject approval was sought from the Institution Review Board (see Appendix A for a copy of the approval form and letter). Subjects will complete a questionnaire dealing with relationship disengagement and reconciliation strategies. The terms "disengagement" and "reconciliation" will be defined by the researcher in the beginning instructions of the questionnaire (see Appendix B for a complete copy of the

questionnaire).

The questionnaire will consist of two hypothetical scenarios created by the researcher: one in which the subjects will be asked to play the role of relationship disengager and one in which they will be asked to play the role of relationship reconciliator. The ideal situation would be to use subjects who have been both the disengager and reconciliator in real relationships to provide actual personal experience. Hypothetical situations were selected for the questionnaire because they will allow subjects to participate actively as both the disengager and reconciliator. Therefore, subjects are able to fulfill both roles regardless of whether or not they have had actual experience as both a relationship disengager and reconciliator with the same partner (subjects will be asked if they have had such experience). This will provide a larger number of subjects to participate in the study.

For each scenario, the subjects will be asked to rate the likelihood that they would use a strategy to disengage and reconcile the hypothetical relationship. A total of 28 items will be used for Cody's (1982) five disengagement strategies. The disengagement strategy items will be taken directly from Cody's (1982) research (see Appendix C for a list of Cody's (1982) disengagement strategy items). A total of 20 items will be used for five of Patterson and O'Hair's (1992) seven reconciliation strategies.<sup>1</sup> The reconciliation strategy items will be developed by the

author (see Appendix D for a list of the reconciliation strategy items) and examined for language and/or accuracy concerns by two graduate students in the U.N.L. Department of Journalism and by one business professional who has completed the graduate program in the U.N.O. Department of Communication.<sup>2</sup> They will also test for intercoder reliability to help determine if the reconciliation strategy items fit into the categories they have been assigned to (see Appendix G for the interrator reliability instrument).

This design is similar to the design used by Jackson and Backus in their 1982 study regarding the dependency of compliance-gaining strategies on situational variables. They modeled their design after that used by Miller, Boster, Roloff, and Seibold (1977). Jackson and Backus (1982) used Miller et al.'s (1977) same four hypothetical situations varying in relational intimacy and duration of consequences for their study. They then had two authors compose three strategy lists based on the model of Marwell and Schmitt's (1967) typology of 16 compliance-gaining strategies.

Questionnaires for Jackson and Backus' 1982 study were composed of a paragraph describing one of the four situations followed by a strategy list consisting of a series of seven-interval rating scales on which subjects indicated the likelihood they would use the particular strategy in the given situation. The subjects were students recruited from various speech classes at two mid-western universities.

Jackson and Jacobs (1983) argue that a research design involving use of a single message to represent a category of messages limits the scope of generalization supported by the message sample. Jackson and Jacobs (1983) state:

Designs based on "control" of message characteristics do not assure generalizable results . . . . Assuming that a research design has provided for a number of separate cases of each category defined by the variables, generalization of results to other cases is still not guaranteed (p. 173).

They suggest that: (1) efforts to portray message categories should lean toward prototypicality - "relatively clear cases of a category should be used initially to represent the category" (p. 177) - Jackson and Jacobs (1983) state that the first efforts to represent categories are usually obvious examples, but subsequent attempts increase variability; (2) messages should be chosen to "maximize the difference in form and content within the sample, subject only to the restriction that each message be a clear case of the category" (p. 177); and (3) messages should be chosen to maximize their "naturalness." So, the fewer the "artificial constraints" placed on the message sample, the broader the scope of generalization. Jackson and Jacobs (1983) go so far as to recommend limiting or even eliminating multiple pre-test procedures because the "naturalness" of the message sample is likely to decrease considerably with increasing manipulation by the experimenter.



## Measurement

### Disengagement Strategy Items

The researcher developed a hypothetical disengagement situation and asked subjects to indicate the likelihood that they would use a specific dissolution strategy on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from "Extremely Unlikely" to "Extremely Likely". A total of twenty-eight items were used for the disengagement questionnaire (six items each for positive tone, negative identity management, justification and de-escalation and four items for behavioral de-escalation - see Appendix C for a listing of Cody's (1982) disengagement strategies and corresponding items used in the questionnaire). Items were arranged in the order of one each of positive tone, negative identity management, justification, behavioral de-escalation, and de-escalation and repeated for all four to six items of each strategy.

### Reconciliation Strategy Items

The researcher developed a hypothetical reconciliation situation and asked subjects to indicate the likelihood that they would use a specific reconciliation strategy on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from "Extremely Unlikely" to "Extremely Likely". Four items for each strategy were created by the researcher for the reconciliation questionnaire based on the actual messages provided by Patterson and O'Hair from their 1992 study. (see Appendix D for a listing of Patterson and O'Hair's (1992)

reconciliation strategies and corresponding items used in the questionnaire). Items were arranged in the order of one each of high affect/ultimatum, tacit/persistence, mutual interaction, avoidance, and vulnerable appeal and repeated for all four items of each strategy.

The questionnaire also contains questions reflecting subjects' gender, age, previous role of relationship disengager, number of times subjects disengaged previous relationships, role of relationship reconciler and number of times subjects reconciled previous relationships.

### Statistical Analysis

The first research question explored in this thesis asks, "what is the relationship between direct disengagement strategy use and direct reconciliation strategy use?" In order to test the association between direct disengagement use and direct reconciliation use, a canonical correlation analysis was computed. Canonical analysis was chosen in order to examine the possible interrelationships among independent variables (i.e. - direct and indirect disengagement) and dependent variables (i.e. - direct and indirect reconciliation) (Levine, 1977). For all tests of significance, alpha level was set at .05. In order to assess the internal reliability for each disengagement and reconciliation strategy, Cronbach alpha estimates were computed.

The second research question explored in this thesis

asks, "what is the relationship between indirect disengagement strategy use and indirect reconciliation strategy use?" In order to test the association between indirect disengagement use and indirect reconciliation use, a canonical correlation analysis was computed. Canonical analysis was chosen in order to examine the possible interrelationships among independent variables (i.e. - direct and indirect disengagement) and dependent variables (i.e. - direct and indirect reconciliation) (Levine, 1977). For all tests of significance, alpha level was set at .05. In order to assess the internal reliability for each disengagement and reconciliation strategy dimension, Cronbach alpha estimates were computed.

## CHAPTER 3

### **Results**

#### Introduction

The purpose of this thesis was to investigate the relationship between direct relationship disengagement strategies and direct reconciliation strategies and the relationship between indirect relationship disengagement strategies and indirect reconciliation strategies. To accomplish this, 200 participants were administered a questionnaire compiled of two hypothetical scenarios: one asking subjects to rate the likelihood they would use Cody's (1982) 28 items representing five disengagement strategies and one asking subjects to rate the likelihood they would use the 20 items created by this researcher based on Patterson and O'Hair's (1992) five reconciliation strategies. Other demographic questions were also asked.

#### Participant Characteristics

Of the 200 undergraduate students sampled, 78 (39%) were male and 122 (61%) were female. The mean age of the subjects was 24.5 years old. One hundred eighty-seven subjects (93.5%) had disengaged an average of 4.9 intimate relationships; 12 subjects (6%) had never disengaged an intimate relationship and 1 subject (.5%) was unsure. One

hundred forty-one subjects (70.9%) had attempted reconciliation of an average of 3.1 intimate relationships; 55 subjects (27.6%) had never attempted reconciliation of any intimate relationships and three subjects (1.5%) were unsure.

### Instrumentation Results

A team of coders made up of two graduate students and one professional having completed a graduate degree coded the reconciliation instrument items to help determine if the reconciliation strategy items fit into the categories they have been assigned to. Using Downs and Harrison's (1985) formula for calculating intercoder reliability, the reliability was .93.

The obtained means, standard deviations, and Cronbach alpha reliabilities for Cody's (1982) 28 items of the five disengagement strategy dimensions are as follows: positive tone ( $M = 21.12$ ,  $SD = 4.8$ , reliability = .76), negative identity management ( $M = 14.98$ ,  $SD = 4.33$ , reliability = .70), justification ( $M = 19.95$ ,  $SD = 4.51$ , reliability = .66), behavioral de-escalation ( $M = 6.71$ ,  $SD = 3.72$ , reliability = .85), and de-escalation ( $M = 18.55$ ,  $SD = 4.70$ , reliability = .73) (See Table 1 for scale summary statistics).

The obtained means, standard deviations, and Cronbach alpha reliabilities for this researcher's newly created 20 items based on Patterson and O'Hair's (1992) five

reconciliation strategy dimensions are as follows: high affect/ultimatum ( $M = 10.52$ ,  $SD = 3.08$ , reliability = .38), tacit/persistence ( $M = 13.42$ ,  $SD = 2.89$ , reliability = .43), mutual interaction ( $M = 15.04$ ,  $SD = 2.84$ , reliability = .56), avoidance ( $M = 11.89$ ,  $SD = 3.84$ , reliability = .73), and vulnerable appeal ( $M = 15.19$ ,  $SD = 3.11$ , reliability = .68) (see Table 1 for scale summary statistics).

The ranges of item-total correlations for the disengagement strategy items are as follows: positive tone = .24 to .51; negative identity management = .28 to .58; justification = .27 to .57; behavioral de-escalation = .63 to .79; and de-escalation = .38 to .59. The ranges of item-total correlations for the reconciliation strategy items are as follows: high affect/ultimatum = .04 to .33; tacit/persistence = .17 to .35; mutual interaction = .25 to .39; avoidance = .44 to .59; and vulnerable appeal = .41 to .58 (see Table 2 for item-total correlations).

In order to explore the dimensionality of the five reconciliation strategies, an unrotated factor analysis was performed on each of the reconciliation strategy dimensions (high affect/ultimatum, tacit/persistence, mutual interaction, avoidance and vulnerable appeal). One factor emerged for the dimension of high affect/ultimatum. The unrotated factor structure for high affect/ultimatum had factor loadings ranging from .12 to .79 with an eigenvalue of 1.50 and accounted for 34.5% of the variance (see Table 3).

One factor emerged for the dimension of tacit/persistence. The unrotated factor structure for tacit/persistence had factor loadings ranging from .44 to .74 with an eigenvalue of 1.51 and accounted for 37.7% of the variance (see Table 3).

One factor emerged for the dimension of mutual interaction. The unrotated factor structure for mutual interaction had factor loadings ranging from .53 to .73 with an eigenvalue of 1.73 and accounted for 43.3% of the variance (see Table 3).

One factor emerged for the dimension of avoidance. The unrotated factor structure for avoidance had factor loadings ranging from .67 to .80 with an eigenvalue of 2.23 and accounted for 55.7% of the variance (see Table 3).

One factor emerged for the dimension of vulnerable appeal. The unrotated factor structure for vulnerable appeal had factor loadings ranging from .64 to .81 with an eigenvalue of 2.15 and accounted for 53.8% of the variance (see Table 3).

### Research Question Results

The first research question explored in this thesis asked, "what is the relationship between direct disengagement strategy use and direct reconciliation strategy use?" Canonical correlation analysis explored the relationship between a linear combination of the direct disengagement strategies to the direct reconciliation

strategies. Two significant canonical roots emerged from the analysis. Canonical root one was significant ( $F(9/472)=7.76$ ,  $Cr=.47$ ,  $p<.0001$ ) and accounted for 22% of the variance. The main contributors in the canonical model were positive tone, justification and mutual interaction, vulnerable appeal (see Table 4). Canonical root two was also significant ( $F(4/390)=4.13$ ,  $Cr=.26$ ,  $p<.003$ ) and accounted for 7% of the variance. The main contributors for canonical root two were negative identity management and high affect/ultimatum (see Table 4).

The second research question explored in this thesis asked, "what is the relationship between indirect disengagement strategy use and indirect reconciliation strategy use?" Canonical correlation analysis examined a linear combination of the indirect disengagement strategies to a linear combination of the indirect reconciliation strategies. Results indicated two significant canonical roots. Canonical root one was significant ( $F(4/392)=6.04$ ,  $Cr=.30$ ,  $p<.0001$ ) and accounted for 9% of the variance. The main contributors in the canonical model were behavioral de-escalation and avoidance (see Table 4). Canonical root two was also significant ( $F(1/197)=5.59$ ,  $Cr=.17$ ,  $p<.02$ ) and accounted for 3% of the variance. The main contributors in the canonical model were de-escalation and tacit persistence (see Table 4).



## CHAPTER 4

### **Discussion**

#### Introduction

In the preceding chapter, the results of an investigation concerning the relationship between disengagement strategy use and reconciliation strategy use, specifically direct and indirect strategy selection, were reported. In this chapter, the research questions are examined with regard to these results. Strengths and limitations of the research along with suggestions for future research will also be discussed.

#### Interpretation of Results

The research questions examined in this thesis were:

RQ1: What is the relationship between direct disengagement strategy use and direct reconciliation strategy use?

RQ2: What is the relationship between indirect disengagement strategy use and indirect reconciliation strategy use?

The results of the study indicated a significant, but weak, relationship between direct disengagement strategy use and direct reconciliation strategy use. The results also indicated a significant, but weak, relationship between indirect disengagement strategy use and indirect reconciliation strategy use. While the two research questions are minimally supported by the data gathered, direct disengagement strategy selection may not necessarily

be a guaranteed predictor of direct reconciliation strategy selection. Likewise, indirect disengagement strategy selection may not necessarily be a guaranteed predictor of indirect reconciliation strategy selection. It would appear that the propensity to do so is evident given the hypothetical scenarios under which participants chose their strategy use. However, the low reliability of the reconciliation strategy dimensions reduces the generalizability of these results. Also, the hypothetical scenarios allowed for only one cause for disengagement and one cause for reconciliation. They did not allow for multiple causes or a variety of causes for disengagement and reconciliation. So, while the research questions are supported given the hypothetical scenarios provided, the weak significance may not carry over to other hypothetical scenarios providing different circumstances.

Although the results in this study suggest that individuals' use of direct disengagement strategies predicts the use of direct reconciliation strategies and the use of indirect disengagement strategies predicts the use of indirect reconciliation strategies, these results do not suggest that direct-indirect and indirect-direct use exists. In order to examine this, simple Pearson Product-moment correlations were examined. Results demonstrated that between the direct disengagement strategies of justification, positive tone and negative identity management and the indirect reconciliation strategies of

avoidance and tacit/persistence, there was a significant relationship between positive tone & tacit/persistence ( $r = .34$ ,  $p < .01$ , variance = 12%). Between the indirect disengagement strategies of behavioral de-escalation and de-escalation and the direct reconciliation strategies of mutual interaction, vulnerable appeal and high affect/ultimatum, there were significant relationships between behavioral de-escalation and mutual interaction ( $r = -.15$ ,  $p < .05$ , variance = 2%); between de-escalation and mutual interaction ( $r = .39$ ,  $p < .01$ , variance = 15%); between de-escalation and vulnerable appeal ( $r = .35$ ,  $p < .01$ , variance = 12%); and between de-escalation and high affect/ultimatum ( $r = .28$ ,  $p < .01$ , variance = 8%) (see Table 5).

In addition to the significant direct-direct and indirect-indirect results, it would appear that direct-indirect and indirect-direct strategy selection is significant as well. An association exists between one direct disengagement dimension (positive tone) and one indirect reconciliation dimension (tacit/persistence). Both indirect disengagement dimensions (behavioral de-escalation and de-escalation) showed a significant association with one or more of the three direct reconciliation dimensions (mutual interaction, vulnerable appeal and high affect/ultimatum). Behavioral de-escalation showed a significant association with mutual interaction and de-escalation was significantly related to all three direct

reconciliation strategies. One explanation may be that more indirect disengagement strategies were selected by participants to end the hypothetical relationships (scenarios) where a greater variety of direct and indirect reconciliation strategies were used to reconcile.

Although these results indicated statistical significance between direct-direct and indirect-indirect strategy selection, the results may not be trustworthy due to the low reliability of the reconciliation measurement instrument, despite the high intercoder reliability results. Using Nunnally's (1967) guideline of .70 for acceptable reliability, only two out of the five reconciliation strategy dimensions met or came close to this guideline (avoidance = .73; vulnerable appeal = .68). Cody's (1982) disengagement strategy dimensions all met or exceeded the reliability guideline except for justification (reliability = .66).

Due to the low reliability of the reconciliation strategy dimensions, the results in this study are tenuous at best. One possible explanation for the weak results is the subjects' use of hypothetical scenarios vs. actual disengagement/reconciliation experiences. While hypothetical scenario use allows for a larger number of subjects to participate (Jackson & Backus, 1982; Jackson & Jacobs, 1983) without having to have had actual experience as both an active disengager and reconciler, any inexperienced responses on behalf of the participants may

not accurately represent what strategies they would use if they were involved in an actual disengagement and/or reconciliation.

Along similar lines, the hypothetical scenarios used in this study allowed for six months between the act of breaking up until the act of "getting back together." They did not allow for a longer (i.e. - one year) or shorter (i.e. - three months) span of time to pass between the break-up and reconciliation. The amount of time between the two could be a significant factor in what type of reconciliation strategy might be consciously selected by the person actively seeking to reconcile the relationship. However, research has not examined this factor.

Moreover, during the time apart, partners may participate in activities that may influence reconciliation strategy selection. Again, the hypothetical scenarios in this study did not address this issue. Activities such as professional counseling (in which partners may learn more about themselves and their motivations in the relationship) and/or being involved in other relationships could impact reconciliation strategy selection.

Loneliness for the other partner and incompatibility of other partners were the only two reasons used in the hypothetical reconciliation scenario of this thesis as motivation for the reconciliation. External, independent intervention of others (family, friends, clergy or professional counselor) was not examined as a reason for

relational reconciliation. Patterson and O'Hair's (1992) Third Party Mediation reconciliation strategy was not included in this thesis' reconciliation instrument because this strategy is not instigated by either ex-partner. Despite this fact, outside intervention may impact not only the decision to reconcile a relationship but also the manner in which a partner does so.

The hypothetical scenarios allowed for the disengager to have dated other people and preferred the company of the original partner. This addresses the theory of the attractiveness of alternative others (Drigotas & Rusbult, 1992; Simpson, 1987). In the disengagement scenario, the availability of alternative partners to better meet the needs of the disengager is the primary reason for the break-up. Participants may or may not have experienced this type of motivation for ending a relationship. Also, other motivations for disengaging the relationship were not allowed for, such as physical distance and separation; differences in beliefs, morals, values and life goals; personal insecurities and personality differences. All of these factors could influence whether disengagement occurs, how it occurs, whether reconciliation occurs and how it may occur.

Finally, the relationship in this study's hypothetical scenarios involved a one year friendship prior to the development of the romantic relationship. This type of platonic foundation could impact what type of disengagement

strategies might be used by partners compared to romantic relationships that do not begin with friendship (i.e. - de-escalation from romantic to platonic or positive tone vs. behavioral de-escalation). Reconciliation strategy selection may also be affected by the friendship vs. non-friendship foundation.

### Strengths of Study

This section explores the strengths associated with this thesis. One strength pertains to Cody's (1982) disengagement strategy instrument. Cody's (1982) disengagement items were used for the disengagement portion of the questionnaire. In this thesis, the strategy dimension alpha coefficients were .66 (justification); .70 (negative identity management); .73 (de-escalation); .76 (positive tone); and .85 (behavioral de-escalation). Cody's (1982) alpha coefficients were .81 (justification); .84 (negative identity management); .80 (de-escalation); .79 (positive tone); and .91 (behavioral de-escalation). Banks et al. (1987) used Cody's (1982) disengagement strategies for their study. Their alpha coefficients were .75 (justification); .74 (negative identity management); .74 (de-escalation); .73 (positive tone); and .81 (behavioral de-escalation). Outside of the lower alpha coefficient found for justification in this thesis (.66), Cody's (1982) disengagement strategy dimension has proven reliable in this thesis and other studies as well.

Another strength of this study is the size of the participant population (N = 200, males = 39%, females = 61%, mean age = 24.5 years). The number of students, the average age and the male/female ratio provided for a representative cross-section of the population. According to Bowers and Courtright (1984), "the sample must be 'sufficiently large' to represent the 'salient' attributes in the population" (p. 178). They examine the relationship between "effect size" and "sample size." The larger the effect, the smaller the sample size needed to detect a larger and more obvious difference. The population sampled in this thesis were undergraduate students (of traditional and non-traditional ages). Of the subjects participating, 70.9% said they had reconciled an average of 3.1 intimate relationships. Since the hypothetical scenarios allowed for participants to play the roles of both active disengagers and reconciler, even those participants who had never reconciled a relationship were able to contribute data to this thesis, thus expanding the sample size.

An additional strength of this study was the intercoder reliability obtained for the development of the reconciliation instrument. Using Downs and Harrison's (1985) formula for calculating intercoder reliability, the reliability obtained in the reconciliation instrument development was .93.

A final strength of this thesis is the initial development of a reconciliation dimension instrument. Since



no other instrument has been developed in this area, the instrument created for this thesis is a starting point for future researchers to begin with and further improve upon.

### Limitations of Study

This section examines the limitations of this thesis. The primary limitation of this thesis is the low reliability of the reconciliation instrument dimensions which provided tenuous results. Despite the high intercoder reliability during the development of the items for the instrument, the newly developed instrument did not appear to have acceptable reliability estimates of the reconciliation strategies (see Table 1 for scale summary statistics). Bowers and Courtright (1984) define reliability of a measurement as (1) stable - consistent across time and (2) accurate - internally consistent.

In designing the reconciliation instrument, the researcher used Patterson and O'Hair's (1992) actual message samples in order to create message items for each reconciliation strategy category. Due to the origination of the reconciliation instrument, it does not have the stability over time that Cody's (1982) disengagement instrument has. Cody's (1982) instrument has been shown to be reliable through his research and that of other researchers (Banks et al., 1987). Avoidance was the only reconciliation dimension displaying acceptable reliability (see Table 1). The reconciliation dimension instrument does

not have the stability or internal consistency necessary to be a truly reliable instrument, despite the high intercoder reliability.

In addition, the reconciliation instrument may lack face validity. According to Bowers and Courtright (1984), face validity, or content validity, is defined as the ability of the "items that make up the measure to represent the concepts that the researcher is trying to operationalize" (p. 119). The results of this thesis indicate that the items in each reconciliation dimension do not appear to accurately measure the strategy they were assigned to. Participants' responses indicated that certain items in the reconciliation dimension represented another strategy other than the one the item was originally assigned to (i.e. - high affect/ultimatum and vulnerable appeal). These results diminish the face validity of the reconciliation dimension.

One explanation for the discrepancy between the intercoder reliability and the Cronbach alpha reliabilities may lie within the intercoders themselves. One had completed a master's degree program in communication and the other two coders were in the process of obtaining their master's degree in journalism. Compared to undergraduate students in other degree programs, the coders may have more training in the area of analyzation and perceptiveness to subtleties within messages. Due to their areas of study, the coders could have more refined skills in detecting the

smaller differences between a message item in one category compared to the message item in another category.

Another limitation of the study is that of using hypothetical scenarios. While they allow for a broader number of participants, hypothetical scenarios limit the experiences of the participants based on the confines of the scenario. The reasons behind the disengagement and reconciliation are limited to those provided by the researcher. The scenarios revolve around the attractiveness of alternative others: the disengagement scenario has the disengager wishing to date other people even though the hypothetical relationship was not dysfunctional or unhealthy. The reconciliation scenario was based on the disengager not experiencing a "better" alternative and wanting to re-engage the previous relationship.

The disengagement scenario did not consider issues such as personal and social incompatibility; mental, emotional or physical abuse; extra-relational affairs; or differing goals and values. The reconciliation scenario did not consider other relationships experienced by the "reconcilee"; counseling attended by either partner; or involvement by outside individuals. Similarly, they ask participants to respond to a situation they may have never have experienced before. Those responses may not accurately represent what participants would do or say if in the actual situation.

### General Implications for Future Research

This section addresses areas for future research. One of the most important implications is the need to further develop the reconciliation due to its low reliability and apparent lack of face validity in this thesis. Additional items need to be created for the reconciliation instrument. Face validity must be assessed by having students and faculty in communication read the items and make any necessary suggestions for improvement of wording. In other words, a process needs to be developed and followed to insure the internal reliability and predictive validity of the measurement instrument. The instrument developed for this thesis is a starting point, yet it needs to be improved upon before being used for any future research.

Babbie (1983) asserts that "The creation of specific, reliable measures often seems to diminish the richness of meaning our general concepts have. This problem is inevitable. The best solution is to use several different measures, tapping the different aspects of the concept" (p. 119). The addition of more measurement items to the reconciliation instrument would help cover more aspects of each reconciliation dimension.

In moving from the conceptualization phase to the operationalization phase in research, Babbie (1983) suggests the following when using closed-ended questions: response categories should be exhaustive and mutually exclusive. Items should be clear, and respondents must be competent to

answer the questions. The low reliability of the reconciliation results indicate that more emphasis needs to be placed on these criteria with regard this reconciliation instrument being used for future research. Finally, Babbie (1983) supports the idea of pre-testing measurement items. Various samples could be used to test for the reliability and stability of the reconciliation dimension structures (i.e., factor analysis).<sup>3</sup>

Another implication from this study is to use participants who have actually disengaged and reconciled a past or current relationship as Patterson and O'Hair (1992) did in their study on reconciliation. Participants' responses would be actual representations of strategy selection, not simply what they think they might do if in that situation. Researchers would need to consider the issue of recall (or the problem thereof) in regard to participants' responses.

In using actual disengagers and reconcilers, they could be interviewed as to what motivated them to select a certain disengagement/reconciliation strategy as opposed to another. Future research may also want to explore multiple strategy use in disengagements and reconciliations. Combinations of direct and indirect strategies may provide valuable insight into what to expect from different relationship backgrounds (i.e. - relationships that started as friendships vs. relationships that began romantically).

Demographic differences is another area to focus on. Do

males use a particular strategy or combination of strategies to disengage/reconcile a relationship compared to females? Do partners in their early 20's use a particular strategy or combination of strategies to disengage/reconcile a relationship compared to partners in their late 20's, 30's or 40's? Does the number of relationships a participant has engaged in affect disengagement/reconciliation strategy selection?

This study used a unilateral break-up and reconciliation in its hypothetical scenarios. Baxter's (1984) relationship dissolution flow chart takes into account what type of direct or indirect disengagement trajectory a relationship might take with regard to a bilateral exit decision. Her study does not examine what type of disengagement strategy(ies) may be used in these trajectories. Future research may want to investigate strategy use in regard to unilateral disengagement and reconciliation vs. bilateral disengagement and reconciliation.

In summary, this thesis reaffirms the complexity of relational disengagement and reconciliation. The various factors involved between the reasons to disengage/reconcile, the trajectories taken and the strategies used are interwoven and interdependent. The view examined in this thesis is a foundation to build future research upon, but was not able to provide reliable enough results to be able to generalize across the disengagement and reconciliation process.

Patterson and O'Hair's (1992) future research question "Are the strategies used [to reconcile] the opposite of those used to terminate" (p. 126) was not supported in this study. This question is still worthy of consideration given the low reliability of this study's reconciliation measurement instrument, tenuous results and the suggestions for future research (i.e. - using participants who have actually both disengaged and reconciled a past or current relationship). If reconciliation is another stage in relational development (Patterson & O'Hair, 1992), then understanding how it might occur, what prompts it, and who/what initiates it may help us understand the overall dynamics better and why some reconciliations succeed and why some do not.

NOTES

1. Patterson and O'Hair's (1992) reconciliation strategies of spontaneous development and third party mediation do not entail an initial, conscious decision (direct or indirect) by the reconciler. Spontaneous development "just happened" and third party mediation involved the "independent intervention of a third, outside person" (Patterson & O'Hair, 1992, 122-123). In either case, the decision to initiate a reconciliation was not originally intentional on behalf of either partner.

2. The researcher wrote to both Patterson and O'Hair requesting a list of the original messages collected in their 1992 study of reconciliation strategies (see Appendix E for the letters to Patterson and O'Hair and their responses). O'Hair responded that Patterson had a listing of the messages which Patterson did provide (see Appendix F for the list of reconciliation messages Patterson and O'Hair collected in their 1992 study). The researcher developed the reconciliation items based on these messages.

3. Factor analysis is a statistical procedure used in the development of newly created instruments. The primary purpose of factor analysis is to determine the factor structure and dimensionality of the created items (McCroskey & Young, 1979).



REFERENCES

- Babbie, E. (1983). *The Practice of Social Research*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co.
- Banks, S. P., Altendorf, D. M., Greene, J. O. & Cody, M. J. (1987). An examination of relationship disengagement: Perceptions, breakup strategies and outcomes. *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 51, 19-41.
- Baxter, L. A. (1985) Accomplishing relationship disengagement. In S. W. Duck & D. Perlman (Eds.) *Understanding personal relationships*. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Baxter, L. A. (1984). Trajectories of relationship disengagement. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 1, 29-48.
- Baxter, L. A. (1983). Relationship disengagement: An examination of the reversal hypothesis. *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 47, 85-98.
- Baxter, L. A. (1982). Strategies for ending relationships: Two studies. *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 46, 223-241.
- Baxter, L. A. (1979). Self-disclosure as a relationship disengagement strategy: An exploratory investigation. *Human Communication Research*, 5, 215-222.
- Baxter, L. A. & Philpott, J. (1982). Attribution-based strategies for initiating and terminating friendships. *Communication Quarterly*, 30, 217-224.
- Baxter, L. A. & Wilmot, W. W. (1984). Secret tests: Social strategies for acquiring information about the state of the relationship. *Human Communication Research*, 11, 171-201.
- Baxter, L. A. & Wilmot, W. W. (1985) Taboo topics in close relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 2, 253-269.
- Bowers, J. W. & Courtright, J. A. (1984). *Communication Research Methods*. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman & Co.
- Cahn, D. D. (1987). *Letting go: A practical theory of relationship disengagement and reengagement*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

- Cate, R. M. & Lloyd, S. A. (1992). *Courtship*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Cody, M. J. (1982). A typology of disengagement strategies and an examination of the role intimacy, reactions to inequity and relational problems play in strategy selection. *Communication Monographs*, *49*, 148-170.
- Conville, R. L. (1988). Relational transitions: An inquiry into their structure and function. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *5*, 423-437.
- Courtright, J. A., Millar, F. E., Rogers, L. E. & Bagarozzi, D. (1990). Interaction dynamics of relational negotiation: Reconciliation versus termination of distressed relationships. *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, *54*, 429-453.
- Cupach, W. R. & Metts, S. (1986). Accounts of relational dissolution: A comparison of marital and non-marital relationships. *Communication Monographs*, *53*, 311-334.
- Davis, M. S. (1973). *Intimate relations*. New York: Free Press.
- Downs, A. C. & Harrison, S. K. (1985). Embarrassing age spots or just plain ugly? Physical attractiveness stereotyping as instrument of sexism on american television commercials. *Sex Roles*, *13*, 9-19.
- Drigotas, S. M. & Rusbult, C. E. (1992). Should I stay or should I go? A dependence model of breakups. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *62*, 62-87.
- Duck, S. W. (1991). *Understanding relationships*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Duck, S. W. (1988). *Relating to others*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Duck, S. W. (1982). A topography of relationship disengagement and dissolution. In S. W. Duck (Ed.) *Personal relationships 4: Dissolving personal relationships*, (pp. 1-29). New York: Academic Press.
- Felmlee, D., Sprecher, S. & Bassin, E. (1990). The dissolution of intimate relationships: A hazard model. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, *53*, 13-30.

- Hill, C. T., Rubin, Z. & Peplau, L. A. (1976). Breakups before marriage: The end of 103 affairs. *Journal of Social Issues, 32*, 147-168.
- Helgeson, V. S. (1994). Long-distance romantic relationships: Sex differences in adjustment and breakup. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 20*, 254-265.
- Hobart, C. (1990) Relationships between the formerly married. *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage, 14*, 1-23.
- Jackson, S. & Backus, D. (1982). Are compliance-gaining strategies dependent on situational variables? *Central States Speech Journal, 33*, 469-479.
- Jackson, S. & Jacobs, S. (1983). Generalizing about messages: Suggestions for design and analysis of experiments. *Human Communication Research, 9*, 169-181.
- Kelly, C. W., Chase, L. J. & Tucker, R. K. (1979). Replication in experimental communication research: An analysis. *Human Communication Research, 5*, 338-342.
- Knapp, M. L. (1984). *Interpersonal communication and human relationships*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Kurdek, L. A. (1991). The dissolution of gay and lesbian couples. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 8*, 265-278.
- Lee, L. (1984). Sequences in separation: A framework for investigating endings of the personal (romantic) relationship. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 1*, 49-73.
- Levine, M. S. (1977). *Canonical analysis and factor comparison*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Levinger, G. (1976). A social psychological perspective on marital dissolution. *Journal of Social Issues, 32*, 21-47.
- Lloyd, S. A. & Cate, R. M. (1985). The developmental course of conflict in dissolution of premarital relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 2*, 179-194.
- Marwell, G. & Schmitt, D. R. (1967). Dimensions of compliance-gaining behavior: An empirical analysis. *Sociometry, 30*, 350-365.

- Masheter, C. (1990). Postdivorce relationships between exspouses: A literature review. *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, *14*, 97-122.
- McCroskey, J. C. & Young, T. J. (1979). The use and abuse of factor analysis in communication research. *Human Communication Research*, *5*, 375-382.
- Metts, S., Cupach, W. R. & Bejlovec, R. A. (1989). 'I love you too much to ever start liking you': Redefining romantic relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *6*, 259-274.
- Miller, G., Boster, F., Roloff, M. & Seibold, D. (1977). Compliance-gaining message strategies: A typology and some findings concerning effects of situational differences. *Communication Monographs*, *44*, 37-51.
- Nunnally, J. C. (1967). *Psychometric theory*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Patterson, B. & O'Hair, D. (1992). Relational reconciliation: Toward a more comprehensive model of relational development. *Communication Research Reports*, *9*, 119-129.
- Simpson, J. A. (1987). The dissolution of romantic relationships: Factors involved in relationship stability and emotional distress. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *53*, 683-692.
- Wilmot, W. W., Carbaugh, D. A. & Baxter, L. A. (1985). Communicative strategies used to terminate romantic relationships. *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, *49*, 204-216.
- Wilmot, W. W. (1987). *Dyadic communication*. New York: Random House.
- Wineberg, H. (1995). An examination of ever-divorced women who attempted a marital reconciliation before becoming divorced. *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, *22*, 129-146.

**APPENDIX A**

Copy of IRB Proposal and Acceptance

March 27, 1996.

Institutional Review Board  
University of Nebraska Medical Center  
Eppley Science Hall 3018  
600 S. 42nd St.  
Omaha, NE 68198-6810

To Whom It May Concern:

Please accept this material as my application to conduct research for the completion of the Masters of Communication degree program at the University of Nebraska-Omaha.

I would like to apply for exempt status on the research for my thesis. Survey procedures will be used involving voluntary participation from subjects (see attached).

Please let me know if you need any further information.

Sincerely,

Sarah B. Holmes  
8215 Karl Ridge Rd. #721  
Lincoln, NE 68506  
Omaha Work #: 691-7889 (11-8 pm)

**EXEMPTION FORM**

**SECTION I: APPLICATION DATA**

TITLE OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL: The Relationship Between Disengagement Strategies and Reconciliation Strategies

STARTING DATE: April 22, 1996

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Sarah B. Holmes

SECONDARY INVESTIGATOR(S): Marshall Prisbell, Shereen Bingham and Maryann Lamana

DEPARTMENT/COLLEGE: Communication/Arts & Sciences

ADDRESS: 8215 Karl Ridge Rd - Lincoln, NE ZIP CODE: 68506

TELEPHONE: (402)489-2972

**SECTION 2: CERTIFICATION**

**CERTIFICATION OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Signature certifies that the research project as described will be conducted in full compliance with University of Nebraska Regulations governing human subject research as stated in the IRB Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects. It is understood that the IRB will be notified of any proposed changes which may affect the exempt status of the research.

Sarah B. Holmes

Signature of Principal Investigator

3.27.96

Date

Graduate Student

Position

**ADVISOR APPROVAL:** Student investigators are required to obtain approval from their advisor. Signature of approval certifies the research proposal has been approved and recommended for submission to the IRB.

Shereen Bingham

Signature of Advisor

3-27-96

Date

Shereen Bingham

Printed Name of Advisor

The IRB requires submission of an original and one (1) copy of the Exemption Form.

**I. Purpose of the Study** - This study is fashioned to answer one research question and two research subquestions: 1) What is the relationship between disengagement strategy use and reconciliation strategy use? 1a) Is direct disengagement strategy use related to direct reconciliation strategy use to reconcile the relationship? 1b) Is indirect disengagement strategy use related to indirect reconciliation strategy use to reconcile the relationship?

**II. Characteristics of the Subject Population** -

- a. **Age Range** - 18 years old to middle-age (50s)
- b. **Sex** - Males and Females
- c. **Number** - 100
- d. **Selection Criteria** - Subjects will be undergraduate students from the introductory and advanced courses in the Department of Communication at the University of Nebraska-Omaha.

**III. Method of Subject Selection** - Subjects will be asked to participate in the study on a voluntary basis.

**IV. Study Site** - University Of Nebraska-Omaha classrooms.

**V. Description of Procedures** - Subjects will be provided with copies of the questionnaire in class (see attached). They will be asked to complete and return the questionnaires in class.

**VI. Confidentiality** - Subjects will be asked to provide their gender, age and whether they have ever disengaged or reconciled a romantic relationship. Otherwise, no other personal identification information is requested. This will ensure the anonymity of the subjects during data analysis. Only the researcher and the thesis advisor will read and analyze the questionnaire responses. The findings of this study will be published for purposes of completion of the Masters of Communication degree program at the University of Nebraska-Omaha.

**VII. Informed Consent** - Due to the voluntary participation of subjects, this study does not require informed consent. Any potential subject may elect not to participate and complete the questionnaire. A brief explanation of the study topic will be given prior to the subjects filling out the questionnaire. This will give any person who may be upset by the topic matter the opportunity not to take part in the study. Also, the anonymity factor of subject participation eliminates the possibility of disclosing subjects responses in a manner that will place them at any type of risk.



**VIII. Justification of Exemption** - This research study qualifies for exemption under category 2. The method of research involves survey procedures, and participation is on a strictly voluntary basis. Subjects' responses will be recorded in such a manner that will make it impossible to identify those who took part. Disclosure of subjects' responses will not put them at any civil, criminal, financial or reputable risk. Also, subjects will be given a brief description of the study topic prior to participation.



Institutional Review Board  
For the Protection of  
Human Subjects

University of Nebraska Medical Center  
Eppley Science Hall 3018  
600 South 42nd Street  
Box 986810  
Omaha, NE 68198-6810  
(402) 559-6463  
Fax (402) 559-7845

April 9, 1996

Sarah Holmes  
8215 Karl Ridge Road  
Lincoln, NE 68506

IRB #: 136-96-EX

TITLE OF PROTOCOL: The Relationship Between Disengagement Strategies and Reconciliation Strategies

---

Dear Ms. Holmes:

The IRB has reviewed your Exemption Form for the above-titled research project. According to the information provided, this project is exempt under 45 CFR 46:101b, category 2. You are therefore authorized to begin the research.

It is understood this project will be conducted in full accordance with all applicable sections of the IRB Guidelines. It is also understood that the IRB will be immediately notified of any proposed changes that may affect the exempt status of your research project.

Sincerely,



Ernest D. Prentice, PhD  
Vice Chairman, IRB

EDP:jljg

**APPENDIX B**

Disengagement and Reconciliation Questionnaire

(1-3) Code: \_\_\_\_\_

(4) Gender: Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_

(5-8) Age: Years \_\_\_\_\_ Months \_\_\_\_\_

This research project focuses on relationship break-ups and relationship reconciliation. The following definitions need to be kept in mind when completing this survey:

Definition of Relationship Disengagement: The process of ending an existing relationship, i.e. "breaking up"

Definition of Reconciliation: The process of re-establishing a previous relationship, i.e. "getting back together"

(9) Have you ever disengaged a relationship before?  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Unsure \_\_\_\_\_

(10-11) Number of times \_\_\_\_\_

(12) Have you ever reconciled a relationship before?  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Unsure \_\_\_\_\_

(13-14) Number of times \_\_\_\_\_

Please read the following scenario carefully and respond accordingly.

Chris and Pat have dated each other exclusively for nine months after being friends for a little less than one year. Pat has noticed that the relationship has fallen into a rather predictable routine that, albeit comfortable, does not appear to be growing. Pat has also become interested in spending time with and getting to know other people. After some deliberation, Pat decides to end the romantic relationship with Chris to open up the horizons for both of them. If you were Pat, rate the likelihood that you would use the disengagement strategies listed on the following pages to terminate the relationship by placing a check in the appropriate space.

- (15) I would tell him/her that I cared for him/her very, very much.

Extremely  
Unlikely

Extremely  
Likely

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

- (16) I would tell him/her that I was going to date other people and that I thought he/she should date others also.

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

- (17) I would fully explain why I felt dissatisfied with the relationship, that it hasn't been growing and that I believe we will both be happier if we didn't date anymore.

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

- (18) Without explaining my intentions to break off the relationship, I would avoid scheduling future meetings with him/her.

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

- (19) I would tell him/her that there should be mutual love and understanding in a relationship and that at the moment I didn't feel as close as I should. I would then say that I think we should lay off awhile and see if we wanted to get back together. If we wanted to get back together, we will.

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

- (20) I would try very hard to prevent us from having any "hard feelings" about the breakup.

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

- (21) I would tell him/her that it was the best thing for both of us, that we need more time to date others and that I wanted to be sure to find the right person.

Extremely  
Unlikely

Extremely  
Likely

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

- (22) I would say that I am really changing inside and I didn't quite feel good about our relationship anymore. I would say that we'd better stop seeing each other.

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

- (23) I would never verbally say anything to the partner, but I would discourage our seeing each other again.

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

- (24) I would tell him/her that I needed to be honest with him/her and suggest that we break it off for awhile and see what happens.

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

- (25) I would tell him/her that I was very, very sorry about breaking off the relationship.

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

- (26) I would tell him/her that I wanted to be happy and that we should date other people.

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

- (27) I would honestly convey my wishes not to date anymore.

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

- (28) I wouldn't say anything to the partner, I would avoid contact with him/her as much as possible.

Extremely Unlikely (EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL) Extremely Likely (EL)

- (29) I would say that we are very close and that we shouldn't be anything but honest and open. If one is not happy, then the other wouldn't be happy either. I think the best thing for us is to let things cool off for awhile and see if we want to continue.

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

- (30) I would try very hard to prevent us from leaving on a "sour note".

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

- (31) I would say that I thought we might ruin our relationship altogether if we didn't start dating around a little because I was not happy.

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

- (32) I would fully explain my reasons for why we shouldn't see each other anymore.

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

- (33) I would never bring up the topic of breaking off the relationship, I would just never call the person again and never return any of his/her calls.

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

- (34) I would tell him/her that while I was happy most of the time I sometimes felt that I can't do all the things I wanted to. I would then say that we should call it quits for now and if we still wanted to get back together we will.

Extremely  
Unlikely

Extremely  
Likely

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

- (35) I would tell him/her that I regretted very much having to break off the relationship.

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

- (36) I would tell him/her life is too short and that we should date other people in order to enjoy life.

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

- (37) I would say that a good relationship meets the needs of both people and that ours isn't meeting my needs. I would say that I didn't want to change him/her and I would have to if he/she was going to meet my needs. So I don't think we should see each other any more.

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

- 38) I would say that the relationship was becoming a strain on me and that we're just going to call it off for now. Maybe some day we can get back together and things will work out.

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

- (39) I would tell him/her that I was very scared too and didn't want to hurt his/her feelings.

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)



- (40) I would tell him/her that I thought we should date around and leave it at that.

Extremely  
Unlikely

Extremely  
Likely

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

- (41) I would fully explain how I felt and that I wanted to break things off. I would explain that a relationship was no good unless it makes both people happy and that I wasn't happy and that I didn't want to date anymore.

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

- (42) I would say that we have become too dependent upon each other and have nothing to offer to this relationship and that if we take a period of time to do other things we would be capable of continuing the relationship in the future.

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

Please read the following scenario carefully and respond accordingly.

A few months ago, Pat broke off a romantic relationship with Chris. Since the break-up, Pat has discovered that he/she enjoys spending time the most with Chris and wants to begin dating Chris exclusively again. If you were Pat, rate the likelihood that you would use the reconciliation strategies listed below to reconcile the relationship by placing a check in the appropriate space. (Please recall the definition of relationship reconciliation from the front page.)

- (43) I would tell him/her that I felt I was wasting my time and money on other people that I didn't care about.

Extremely Unlikely (EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL) Extremely Likely

- (44) I would be sure to keep in touch so he/she would know that I was around and he/she wouldn't forget about me.

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

- (45) I would ask him/her to meet me for coffee so we could talk about everything that had happened and go from there.

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

- (46) I would just try to start a conversation with him/her, but I wouldn't bring up the subject of our break-up.

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

- (47) I would tell him/her that I was wrong to break up with him/her.

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

- (48) I would tell him/her that if he/she truly wasn't interested in getting back together, then I would bow out of the picture completely.

Extremely  
Unlikely

Extremely  
Likely

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

- (49) I would write him/her a letter telling him/her I wanted to get back together.

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

- (50) I would be completely honest about everything I felt and everything that had happened in our relationship.

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

- (51) When I would talk to him/her, I would be pretty relaxed about everything without mentioning the break-up.

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

- (52) I would tell him/her that I still cared for him/her and that I wanted to get back together.

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

- (53) I would tell him/her that if I was willing to give it another chance, so should he/she.

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

- (54) I would leave him/her little notes, just to say "hi," and call to see how he/she was doing.

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

- (55) I would discuss with him/her the problems we had before the break-up and what we could do to improve them.

Extremely Unlikely (EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL) Extremely Likely

- (56) I would basically go back to square one - "Hi, how have you been." I wouldn't discuss our past relationship right away.

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

- (57) I would tell him/her that we can work it out and should give it another try.

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

- (58) I would tell him/her that there was no one better for me than him/her and vice versa.

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

- (59) I would ask him/her if he/she wanted to do something like go to a movie or go for a drink, something small like that.

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

- (60) I would tell him/her that we need to get away to talk about the relationship we had and work it out.

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

- (61) I would ask him/her to go out with me, but I wouldn't talk about the subject of our break-up point blank.

(EU) / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / (EL)

(62) I would tell him/her that I miss him/her.

Extremely  
Unlikely

(EU)

/ \_\_\_\_\_ /

/ \_\_\_\_\_ /

/ \_\_\_\_\_ /

/ \_\_\_\_\_ /

/ \_\_\_\_\_ /

Extremely  
Likely

(EL)

**APPENDIX C**

## Disengagement Strategies

**Positive Tone:**

- (1) I would tell him/her that I cared for him/her very, very much.
- (6) I would try very hard to prevent us from having any "hard feelings" about the breakup.
- (11) I would tell him/her that I was very, very sorry about breaking off the relationship.
- (16) I would try very hard to prevent us from leaving on a "sour note".
- (21) I would tell him/her that I regretted very much having to break off the relationship.
- (25) I would tell him/her that I was very scared too and didn't want to hurt his/her feelings.

**Negative Identity Management:**

- (2) I would tell him/her that I was going to date other people and that I thought he/she should date others also.
- (7) I would tell him/her that it was the best thing for both of us, that we need more time to date others and that I wanted to be sure to find the right person.
- (12) I would tell him/her that I wanted to be happy and that we should date other people.
- (17) I would say that I thought we might ruin our relationship altogether if we didn't start dating around a little because I was not happy.
- (22) I would tell him/her life is too short and that we should date other people in order to enjoy life.
- (26) I would tell him/her that I thought we should date around and leave it at that.

**Justification:**

- (3) I would fully explain why I feel dissatisfied with the relationship, that it hasn't been growing and that I believe we will both be happier if we don't date anymore.
- (8) I would say that I am really changing inside and I don't quite feel good about our relationship anymore. I would say that we'd better stop seeing each other.
- (13) I would honestly convey my wishes not to date anymore.
- (18) I would fully explain my reasons for why we shouldn't see each other anymore.
- (23) I would say that a good relationship meets the needs of both people and that ours isn't meeting my needs. I would say that I don't want to change him/her and I would have to if he/she was going to meet my needs. So I don't think we should see each other any more.
- (27) I would fully explain how I feel and that I want to

break things off. I would explain that a relationship was no good unless it makes both people happy and that I am not happy and that I don't want to date anymore.

**Behavioral De-escalation:**

- (4) Without explaining my intentions to break off the relationship, I would avoid scheduling future meetings with him/her.
- (9) I would never verbally say anything to the partner, but I would discourage our seeing each other again.
- (14) I wouldn't say anything to the partner, I would avoid contact with him/her as much as possible.
- (19) I would never bring up the topic of breaking off the relationship, I would just never call the person again and never return any of his/her calls.

**De-escalation:**

- (5) I would tell him/her that there should be mutual love and understanding in a relationship and that at the moment I didn't feel as close as I should. I would then say that I think we should lay off awhile and see if we wanted to get back together. If we wanted to get back together, we will.
- (10) I would tell him/her that I needed to be honest with him/her and suggest that we break it off for awhile and see what happens.
- (15) I would say that we are very close and that we shouldn't be anything but honest and open. If one is not happy, then the other wouldn't be happy either. I think the best thing for us is to let things cool off for awhile and see if we want to continue.
- (20) I would tell him/her that while I was happy most of the time I sometimes felt that I can't do all the things I wanted to. I would then say that we should call it quits for now and if we still wanted to get back together we will.
- (24) I would say that the relationship was becoming a strain on me and that we're just going to call it off for now. Maybe some day we can get back together and things will work out.
- (28) I would say that we have become too dependent upon each other and have nothing to offer to this relationship and that if we take a period of time to do other things we would be capable of continuing the relationship in the future.



**APPENDIX D**

## Reconciliation Strategies

**High Affect/Ultimatum:**

- (1) I would tell him/her that I felt I was wasting my time and money on other people that I didn't care about.
- (6) I would tell him/her that if he/she truly wasn't interested in getting back together, then I will bow out of the picture completely.
- (11) I would tell him/her that if I was willing to give it another chance, so should he/she.
- (16) I would tell him/her that there was no one better for me than him/her and vice versa.

**Tacit/Persistence:**

- (2) I would be sure to keep in touch so he/she would know that I was around and he/she wouldn't forget about me.
- (7) I would write him/her a letter telling him/her I wanted to get back together.
- (12) I would leave him/her little notes, just to say "hi," and call to see how he/she was doing.
- (17) I would ask him/her if he/she wanted to do something like go to a movie or go for a drink, something small like that.

**Mutual Interaction:**

- (3) I would ask him/her to meet me for coffee so we could talk about everything that had happened and go from there.
- (8) I would be completely honest about everything I felt and everything that had happened in our relationship.
- (13) I would discuss with him/her the problems we had before the break-up and what we could do to improve them.
- (18) I would tell him/her that we need to get away to talk about the relationship we had and work it out.

**Avoidance:**

- (4) I would just try to start a conversation with him/her, but I wouldn't bring up the subject of our break-up.
- (9) When I would talk to him/her, I would be pretty relaxed about everything without mentioning the break-up.
- (14) I would basically go back to square one - "Hi, how have you been." I wouldn't discuss our past relationship right away.
- (19) I would ask him/her to go out with me, but I wouldn't talk about the subject of our break-up point blank.

**Vulnerable Appeal:**

- (5) I would tell him/her that I was wrong to break up with him/her.
- (10) I would tell him/her that I still cared for him/her and that I wanted to get back together.
- (15) I would tell him/her that we can work it out and should give it another try.
- (20) I would tell him/her that I miss him/her.

APPENDIX E

Letters to Patterson and O'Hair and Their Responses

January 19, 1994

Dr. Dan O'Hair  
Texas Tech University  
Department of Communication Studies  
Lubbock, TX 79409-3803

Dear Dr. O'Hair:

I am a graduate student at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, Department of Communication. I am currently working on my thesis regarding the possible impact of relational disengagement strategies on chosen reconciliation strategies in the re-initiation of pre-marital romantic relationships. My thesis advisor, Dr. Marshall Prisbell, directed me toward the research article you wrote with Dr. Brian Patterson entitled "Relational Reconciliation: Toward a More Comprehensive Model of Relational Development." Needless to say, I was thrilled to get my hands on your article because, as you mention, reconciliation literature is virtually "nonexistent."

My purpose in writing to you is to inquire if you know of a questionnaire (which subjects can complete themselves) that addresses the reconciliation strategies used to re-engage previously terminated romantic relationships. If such an instrument is available presently, I have been unable to locate it.

I would greatly appreciate your input and would like to thank you in advance. Enclosed is a self-addressed stamped envelope for your convenience. Again, thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Sarah Holmes

encl.

cc: Dr. Brian Patterson, West Virginia University

January 19, 1994

Dr. Dan O'Hair  
Texas Tech University  
Department of Communication Studies  
Lubbock, TX 79409-3803

Dear Dr. O'Hair:

I am a graduate student at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, Department of Communication. I am currently working on my thesis regarding the possible impact of relational disengagement strategies on chosen reconciliation strategies in the re-initiation of pre-marital romantic relationships. My thesis advisor, Dr. Marshall Prisbell, directed me toward the research article you wrote with Dr. Brian Patterson entitled "Relational Reconciliation: Toward a More Comprehensive Model of Relational Development." Needless to say, I was thrilled to get my hands on your article because, as you mention, reconciliation literature is virtually "nonexistent."

My purpose in writing to you is to inquire if you know of a questionnaire (which subjects can complete themselves) that addresses the reconciliation strategies used to re-engage previously terminated romantic relationships. If such an instrument is available presently, I have been unable to locate it.

I would greatly appreciate your input and would like to thank you in advance. Enclosed is a self-addressed stamped envelope for your convenience. Again, thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

*Sarah Holmes*

Sarah Holmes

encl.

cc: Dr. Brian Patterson, West Virginia University

*Sarah,  
Thanks for your nice letter. I do  
not know of a sub report instrument  
pertaining to reconciliation strategies.  
Sorry. Good luck w/ your thesis.  
Sincerely,  
Marshall*

January 19, 1994

Dr. Brian Patterson  
West Virginia University  
Department of Communication Studies  
Morgantown, WV 26506-6293

Dear Dr. Patterson:

I am a graduate student at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, Department of Communication. I am currently working on my thesis regarding the possible impact of relational disengagement strategies on chosen reconciliation strategies in the re-initiation of pre-marital romantic relationships. My thesis advisor, Dr. Marshall Prisbell, directed me toward the research article you wrote with Dr. Dan O'Hair entitled "Relational Reconciliation: Toward a More Comprehensive Model of Relational Development." Needless to say, I was thrilled to get my hands on your article because, as you mention, reconciliation literature is virtually "nonexistent."

My purpose in writing to you is to inquire if you know of a questionnaire (which subjects can complete themselves) that addresses the reconciliation strategies used to re-engage previously terminated romantic relationships. If such an instrument is available presently, I have been unable to locate it.

I would greatly appreciate your input and would like to thank you in advance. Enclosed is a self-addressed stamped envelope for your convenience. Again, thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Sarah Holmes

encl.

cc: Dr. Dan O'Hair, Texas Tech University



27 January 1994

Ms. Sarah Holmes  
7110 Jones Circle. # 12  
Omaha, NE 68106

Dear Ms. Holmes,

To the best of my knowledge, the questionnaire you seek does not exist—sorry. An advisee of mine and I have recently decided to work on this program of research further. As such, we're dealing with the same problems you are. As you can see by the article, the line between repair, maintenance and reconciliation is rather difficult to delineate clearly—especially in terms of communication strategies. My advice would be to go in one of two directions. One route is to try and locate a less tedious and perhaps more proven, set of strategies for example, affinity seeking strategies. This is probably the path of least resistance (generally, a good path for theses and other such documents of monumental magnitude). A second option is to examine the literature on maintenance, repair, and reconciliation, and then try to create a "macro" typology. Canary and Stafford's set is a great start. You might add several of the strategies we found unique to reconciliation, anchor them to five point scales and then ask Ss how likely they'd be to use each strategy based on a variety of disengagement scenarios. You might also try to get them to respond to real events from their lives but that would really shrink your subject pool.

I wish you luck with your research. I hope you will remember to send me a copy of your findings as I would obviously be very interested in what you find. If I can be of any further assistance, please feel free to contact me directly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Brian R. Patterson".

Dr. Brian R. Patterson  
Assistant Professor

P. S. Regards to Dr. Prisbell



September 5, 1995

Dr. Brian R. Patterson  
West Virginia University - Dept. of Communication Studies  
130 Armstrong Hall  
PO BOX 6293  
Morgantown, WV 26506-6293

Dear Dr. Patterson:

I wrote to you back in January 1994 concerning my thesis I am working on with Dr. Marshall Prisbell at the University of Nebraska at Omaha regarding the relationship between disengagement strategy selection and reconciliation strategy selection. At the time, I inquired as to whether you knew of any questionnaire that addresses the reconciliation strategies used to re-engage previously terminated romantic relationships. You replied you knew of no such questionnaire to date.

What I have decided to do is to create a questionnaire using Cody's 1982 disengagement strategy typology and use actual disengagement message samples he acquired in his study. I would also like to create a reconciliation questionnaire using the reconciliation strategy typology in your 1992 study with Dr. Dan O'Hair, "Relational reconciliation: Toward a more comprehensive model of relational development."

I am writing to you to ask if I might be able to obtain a list of the actual 103 message statements categorized in each of your seven strategy types from that study. Instead of creating my own statements and trying to make them "fit" each of your strategy types, I believe that using actual samples from your research will be more effective.

Your help is greatly appreciated. I would like to thank you in advance. Enclosed is a self-addressed stamped envelope for your convenience. Again, thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Sarah Holmes

encl.



Department of Communication Studies  
**West Virginia University**

304 293-3905 □ FAX 304 293-8667 □ 130 ARMSTRONG HALL □ PO BOX 6293 □ MORGANTOWN WV 26506-6293

23 October 1995

Sarah Holmes  
8215 Karl Ridge Rd., #721  
Lincoln, NE 68506

Dear Ms. Holmes,

My apologies for having taken so long to get back to you. I'm afraid that the tactics were entered using a program that I was very fond of some years ago. As a result, retrieving them in electronic form proved difficult. However, please find enclosed, a hard copy of the original strategies. I hope they prove useful to you. I'm still interested in this line of research so please send me the results of your study.

Additionally, you might want to have a look at the upcoming issue of *Communication Research Reports*. A student of mine and I looked at the use of affinity seeking strategies in relational repair. If there's anything else I can do for you, feel free to contact me again. My e-mail address is [DRPATT@WVNVMS.WVNET.EDU](mailto:DRPATT@WVNVMS.WVNET.EDU).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'B. R. Patterson'.

Brian R. Patterson, Ph.D.

enc.

October 6, 1995

Dr. Dan O'Hair  
Texas Tech University  
Department of Communication Studies  
Lubbock, TX 79409-3803

Dear Dr. O'Hair:

I wrote to you back in January 1994 concerning my thesis I am working on with Dr. Marshall Prisbell at the University of Nebraska at Omaha regarding the relationship between disengagement strategy selection and reconciliation strategy selection. At the time, I inquired as to whether you knew of any questionnaire that addresses the reconciliation strategies used to re-engage previously terminated romantic relationships. You replied you knew of no such questionnaire to date.

What I have decided to do is to create a questionnaire using Cody's 1982 disengagement strategy typology and use actual disengagement message samples he acquired in his study. I would also like to create a reconciliation questionnaire using the reconciliation strategy typology in your 1992 study with Dr. Brian Patterson, "Relational reconciliation: Toward a more comprehensive model of relational development."

I am writing to you to ask if I might be able to obtain a list of the actual 103 message statements categorized in each of your seven strategy types from that study. Instead of creating my own statements and trying to make them "fit" each of your strategy types, I believe that using actual samples from your research will be more effective.

Your help is greatly appreciated. I would like to thank you in advance. Enclosed is a self-addressed stamped envelope for your convenience. Again, thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Sarah Holmes

encl.

cc: Dr. Brian Patterson, West Virginia University



# *The University of Oklahoma*

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

October 19, 1995

Sarah,

Thanks for your inquiry. Brain Patterson thinks he has those statements on a hard drive on an old computer at his home. He plans to look for them and let us know. Those statements were generated in 1987, so he's not sure they are still intact. You can contact him for further information.

Good luck with this project.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan O'Hair".

Dan O'Hair

APPENDIX F

Patterson and O'Hair's (1992) Reconciliation Messages

**SPONTANEOUS DEVELOPMENT**

- 12. We both ended up spending time together and we did a lot.
- 21. It was a mutual deal. It just started to work out that way.
- 29. We forgot everything that had happened and started our lives the way they should have been.
- 42. We just saw each other more often. It just kinda picked up.
- 52. He/she got stung by a jellyfish and his/her friends brought him/her up to my room - he/she had asked them to.
- 53. (Following an injury) I took care of him/her and we spent the rest of the trip together.
- 54. We just decided to do more things together.

**THIRD PARTY MEDIATION**

- 1. I think I went over to our friend's as an excuse to see him/her, I knew he was over there.
- 30. My friends thought that we were too happy together to just blow it off. My friend literally dialed the number for me and said, "Here, talk to him/her."
- 33. He/she told my cousin all this stuff and then he (the cousin) told me what he thought.
- 81. A friend of his/hers relayed to me what was going through his/her mind.
- 91. I talked to his/her Mom and she seemed to believe me and trust me and she said could go out with her son/daughter.

**HIGH AFFECT/ULTIMATUM**

- 3. I told him/her about when I was going out with a couple of other girls/guys and I felt like I was wasting my time and money on something I didn't even care about.
- 6. I told him/her that unless he/she was just using me, it was obvious that he/she still had feelings for me. I told him/her that I thought there was no one better for him/her than me.  
I told him/her that if he/she wanted to date other people to go ahead but I didn't think that it was necessary to stop seeing me because of that.
- 8. He/she was dating this other person and I told him/her that I thought he/she was getting the raw end of the deal.
- 25. I told him/her that he/she was just trying to make me mad and that I thought it was insensitive and I said, "No more."
- 37. Make a decision, if you want to come back then let's do it and if not then let's end it.
- 44. We would start talking - arguing and I'd say, "is

- that why we broke up in the first place?" or "Why, am I not good enough for you?" or "Why, do you want to date other people."
45. I used to tell him/her, "You're just afraid of commitment."
48. I gave him/her a ring and told him/her that if he/she wanted to get together, the only way was [sic] he/she could was to return the ring.
50. I said, "If you go with him/her, don't even bother to see me."
58. I said, "I promise I'll leave you alone forever if you can look me in the eyes and tell me that you have no feelings for me at all - if I know that, then I won't push anymore."
61. He/she said, "Either you either take me again full blast or else we need to pull out completely."
64. I said, "I don't want you to do that at all, and if you do it'll be over again" (regarding a drinking alcohol [sic]).
68. I said that I'd like to get back together and he/she didn't know if he/she was ready for that so I told him/her, "It's now or never."
73. I asked, "What's going on? Are we going to get back together again or what's going to happen?"
89. He/she said, "Do you want to try again?" It was just blurted out.
96. The letters said everything was great, like we were going to get back together again and then the last part said something like, "But you didn't do this." It was like it erased the first part.

#### TACIT/PERSISTENCE

5. He/she was following me every where.
13. I was persistent.
19. I left a note on his/her car.
20. He/she called me early the next morning and I said, "Be ready, I'm coming over."
27. I didn't have to say anything. All I did was keep in touch - call him/her, go see him/her.
28. He/she kept calling me all the time and I broke down.
38. I sent him/her a letter. I wrote the way I felt.
43. I was always bringing stuff up.
- 46a. He/she asked me to go to the movies.
47. You wrote me a letter with the (gift).
49. He/she called me and said "Meet me, I'm going to have a boring time (going on a date with another person)".
54. I kept calling him/her and leaving notes on his/her car.
56. He/she called me up and said, "Can you come over?"
65. I called him/her and asked if he/she would go get a Coke with me.
70. I called and asked if he/she wanted to do something.

- 74. I would always call him/her.
- 75. I'd talk to him and ask how he was doing.
- 77. I'd ask, "Can I come see you?"
- 79. I went back for Christmas and I took her a present. We were happy to see each other and I asked him/her to go out. We just started going out again.
- 82. I called him/her and asked how he/she was doing with math. I figured that would be a good way to talk to him/her.
- 94. We went over the note. She said what she meant by it and I asked her for her reasoning behind it.
- 97. He/She called and asked if I wanted to go to the park.

#### **MUTUAL INTERACTION**

- 2. I told him/her that I wanted to talk. Let's drive around and we'll talk.
- 4. We went out one night and just sat. We talked for two hours.
- 9. We started talking again to each other and that's when things started up again.
- 15. I made him/her stay and talk.
- 17. We confronted it when it was brought up.
- 22. We said, "Back to square one and let's make it better this time."
- 24. We sat and talked for a long time and I let everything out. I just screamed - I didn't scream too loud.
- 26. We stopped in front of my house and started talking for almost two hours. We just talked everything out.
- 31. So I asked if he/she wanted to talk.
- 32. We walked around campus for two or three hours just trying to get everything worked out.
- 36. I told him/her that I wanted to talk and we needed to. I suggested that we get away from everyone and just talk.
- 51. We were just talking about old times and all that.
- 55. I called him/her and that was when we started talking sensibly again, after I realized some things and could talk to him/her honestly about them.
- 57. We stood there and talked all night in front of the house.
- 59. We were completely honest about everything.
- 60. There was a lot of nice things said and a lot of hurt feelings came out.
- 71. We talked for a long time.
- 76. We would talk on the phone for three hours.
- 78. I called him/her on the phone and he/she came to see me and we talked and I asked her if she wanted to get back together.
- 83. We started talking about the problems that we had before then we started talking about getting back together.



86. I said, "I need to talk to you."  
 90. We just kept talking and communicating and realized that we had a fighting chance.  
 93. We started bringing parts of it (the breakup) up.  
 98. We talked a little bit and we said that we missed each other and we talked about what had gone wrong and why we were fighting.  
 102. We discussed where we were going to go form [sic] there and just see (what happens).

#### **AVOIDANCE**

11. I said, "Okay so we'll just be friends."  
 18. He/she was real nonchalant, "Yea, Chris yea, what happened?"  
 23. The subject really wasn't faced point blank.  
 46b. We just decided, we didn't even ask each other about it. We kinda decided to drop it.  
 87. We weren't talking seriously, Like, "Oh well your room looks different now."  
 92. We were basically back to square one. Like, "How ya been?" We didn't even bring up the issue right away.  
 95. It was like, "How's school? How are you doing?" and stuff that was non-personal. We didn't bring it up at all.

#### **VULNERABLE APPEAL**

10. I said, "Look, I still care for you."  
 14. I promised him/her a bunch of things, the relationship can be this and the relationship can be that and it'll be okay.  
 16. I'm sorry, you're sorry, we screwed up.  
 34. I wanted to start the relationship again and I tried for three months.  
 35. I kept saying that I thought we could work it out. It's not worth throwing away.  
 39. I told him/her that I wanted to get back together.  
 40. He/she said that she rally [sic] cared about me.  
 41. I told him/her I'd be here for him/her and that I wasn't going to drift away.  
 62. I said, "Would you please take me back?"  
 63. I told him/her that I would try to be good.  
 66. I said that I missed him/her and taht [sic] I cared for him/her.  
 67. I said that I thought we needed to give it another try and that I was willing to adjust to what he/she wanted.  
 69. I told him/her that I missed him/her.  
 72. I had to go to his/her house and let him/her know how I felt.  
 80. I just told him/her that I wanted to get together with him/her seriously.  
 84. I said, "I know what I did wrong and I'd like to see

- you again."
85. He/she started telling me how he/she felt.
88. He/she bent over and kissed me and said he/she missed me.
100. I said that I still cared a lot about him/her and I wanted to know how he/she felt about me.
101. I said that I wanted to come back.

APPENDIX G

Intercoder Reliability

Five of Patterson and O'Hair's (1992) reconciliation strategies are defined below. Based on these definitions, please indicate which strategy the following reconciliation strategy items would belong to by marking the strategy number on the line next to the item.

#### RECONCILIATION STRATEGIES

**(1) Avoidance** - partners did not discuss the matter and were aware at the time that that was what they were doing. Partners intentionally evaded the issues relating to the breakup.

**(2) High Affect/Ultimatum** - high affective statements dealt with affective expressions (i.e. - comparison of partner to rival suitors). Ultimatum statements made some type of demand. They were direct which spelled out the results of non-compliance.

**(3) Tacit/Persistence** - these statements asked the other person to do something seemingly without intending to reconcile. These strategies were mostly indirect, consisting of letter writing and modest requests for the other person's company.

**(4) Mutual Interaction** - such statements placed heavy emphasis on the role of open communication in achieving reconciliation. The most common component of these statements was the mention of the long duration of talk.

**(5) Vulnerable Appeal** - most statements were direct, point blank requests for reconciliation, usually including references to persistent caring and a sense of longing.

**RECONCILIATION STRATEGY ITEMS**

I would tell him/her that I felt I was wasting my time and money on other people that I didn't care about. \_\_\_\_\_

I would be sure to keep in touch so he/she would know that I was around and he/she wouldn't forget about me. \_\_\_\_\_

I would just try to start a conversation with him/her, but I wouldn't bring up the subject of our break-up. \_\_\_\_\_

I would ask him/her to meet me for coffee so we could talk about everything that had happened and go from there. \_\_\_\_\_

I would tell him/her that I was wrong to break up with him/her. \_\_\_\_\_

I would write him/her a letter telling him/her I wanted to get back together. \_\_\_\_\_

I would be completely honest about everything I felt and everything that had happened in our relationship. \_\_\_\_\_

I would tell him/her that if he/she truly wasn't interested in getting back together, then I would bow out of the picture completely. \_\_\_\_\_

When I would talk to him/her, I would be pretty relaxed about everything without mentioning the break-up. \_\_\_\_\_

I would tell him/her that I still cared for him/her and that I wanted to get back together. \_\_\_\_\_

I would tell him/her that if I was willing to give it another chance, so should he/she. \_\_\_\_\_

I would discuss with him/her the problems we had before the break-up and what we could do to improve them. \_\_\_\_\_

I would leave him/her little notes, just to say "hi," and call to see how he/she was doing. \_\_\_\_\_

I would basically go back to square one - "Hi, how have you been." I wouldn't discuss our past relationship right away.  
\_\_\_\_\_

I would tell him/her that we can work it out and should give it another try. \_\_\_\_\_

I would tell him/her that there was no one better for me than him/her and vice versa. \_\_\_\_\_

I would tell him/her that I miss him/her. \_\_\_\_\_

I would tell him/her that we need to get away to talk about the relationship we had and work it out. \_\_\_\_\_

I would ask him/her if he/she wanted to do something like go to a movie or go for a drink, something small like that.  
\_\_\_\_\_

I would ask him/her to go out with me, but I wouldn't talk about the subject of our break-up point blank. \_\_\_\_\_

TABLE 1

## Scale Summary Statistics

Disengagement Strategy	N	# of Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Reliability
Positive Tone (D*)	200		21.12	4.80	.76
Negative Identity Management (D)	200		14.99	4.33	.70
Justification (D)	200		19.95	4.51	.66
Behavioral De-escalation (I)	200		6.71	3.72	.85
De-escalation (I)	200		18.55	4.70	.73
Reconciliation Strategy	N	# of Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Reliability
High Affect/ Ultimatum (D)	200		10.52	3.08	.38
Tacit/ Persistence (I)	200		13.42	2.89	.43
Mutual Interaction (D)	200		15.04	2.84	.56
Avoidance (I)	200		11.89	3.84	.73
Vulnerable Appeal (D)	200		15.19	3.11	.68

\*D = Direct Strategy  
I = Indirect Strategy

**TABLE 2**  
Item-Total Correlations \*

Item Number	Variable/r
Positive Tone	
	.42
6	.43
11	.44
16	.51
21	.47
25	.24
Negative Identity Management	
2	.44
7	.41
12	.58
17	.47
22	.45
26	.28
Justification	
	.40
8	.27
13	.28
18	.57
23	.33
27	.53

\* = See Appendix C for Disengagement Strategy Items  
See Appendix D for Reconciliation Strategy Items



**TABLE 2**  
(Continued)

Item Number	Variable/r
Behavioral De-escalation	
4	.65
9	.75
14	.79
19	.63
De-escalation	
5	.48
10	.40
15	.53
20	.59
24	.38
28	.39
High Affect/Ultimatum	
	.25
6	.04
11	.23
16	.33
Tacit/Persistence	
2	.25
7	.17
12	.35
17	.21

TABLE 2  
(Continued)

Item Number	Variable/r
	Mutual Interaction
	.25
8	.38
13	.39
18	.35
	Avoidance
	.59
9	.56
14	.44
19	.50
	Vulnerable Appeal
	.41
10	.58
15	.45
20	.51

**TABLE 3**Unrotated Factor Analysis of  
Reconciliation Items

Reconciliation Strategy	Item	Factor Loading
High Affect/Ultimatum	1	.62
	6	.12
	11	.69
	16	.79
Eigenvalue = 1.59		Percentage of Variance = 37.5%
Tacit/Persistence	2	.66
	7	.44
	12	.74
	17	.57
Eigenvalue = 1.51		Percentage of Variance = 37.7%
Mutual Interaction	3	.53
	8	.70
	13	.73
	18	.65
Eigenvalue = 1.73		Percentage of Variance = 43.3%
Avoidance	4	.80
	9	.78
	14	.67
	19	.72
Eigenvalue = 2.23		Percentage of Variance = 55.7%

**TABLE 3**  
(Continued)

---

Reconciliation Strategy	Item	Factor Loading
Vulnerable Appeal	5	.64
	10	.81
	15	.71
	20	.75

Eigenvalue = 2.15      Percentage of Variance = 53.8%

---

---

TABLE 4

## Canonical Correlation Results

Disengagement Strategies

Reconciliation Strategies

(RQ1: What is the relationship between direct disengagement strategy use and direct reconciliation strategy use?)

**Direct**

Positive Tone

Negative Identity Management

Justification

**Indirect**

High Affect/Ultimatum

Mutual Interaction

Vulnerable Appeal

Canonical Root One

F = 7.76

DF = 9/472

Cr = .47

p &lt; .0001

Variance = 22%

Canonical Root Two

F = 4.13

DF = 4/390

Cr = .26

p &lt; .003

Variance = 7%

## Standardized Correlation Coefficients

Root One

PT = -.75

NIM = -.32

JU = -.76

HA = -.53

MI = -.91

VAP = -.85

Root Two

PT = -.04

NIM = .93

JU = -.12

HA = .82

MI = -.21

VAP = .11

**TABLE 4**

(Continued)

Disengagement Strategies

Reconciliation Strategies

(RQ2: What is the relationship between indirect disengagement strategy use and indirect reconciliation strategy use?)

**Indirect**  
Behavioral De-escalation  
De-escalation

**Indirect**  
Tacit/Persistence  
Avoidance

Canonical Root OneCanonical Root Two

F = 6.04  
DF = 4/392  
Cr = .30  
p < .0001  
Variance = 9%

F = 5.59  
DF = 1/197  
Cr = .17  
p < .02  
Variance = 3%

Standardized Correlation Coefficients

Root OneRoot Two

BDE = .97  
DES = .11  
TP = .31  
AV = .90

BDE = -.24  
DES = .99  
TP = .96  
AV = -.45

TABLE 5

## Correlation Coefficients Results

Strategy	MI	AV	VAP	PT	NIM	JU	BDE	DES	HA	TP
MI	1.00									
AV	-.27**	1.00								
VAP	.56**	-.22**	1.00							
PT	.30**	-.11	.34**	1.00						
NIM	.09	-.05	.15*	.09	1.00					
JU	.36**	-.11	.26**	.15*	.24**	1.00				
BDE	-.15*	.29**	-.10	-.15*	.01	-.25**	1.00			
DES	.39**	-.02	.35**	.34**	.38**	.31**	-.13	1.00		
HA	.38**	-.03	.44**	.16*	.28**	.18*	.13	.28**	1.00	
TP	.23**	.15*	.26**	.34**	.005	-.02	.09	.16*	.32**	1.00

\* =  $p < .05$ \*\* =  $p < .01$ MI=Mutual Interaction AV=Avoidance VAP=Vulnerable Appeal PT=Positive Tone NIM=Negative Identity Management  
JU=Justification BDE=Behavioral De-escalation DES=De-escalation HA=High Affect/Ultimatum TP=Tacit/Persistent