Managing Conflict in Relationships: A Locus of Control Perspective

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Abstract

The present study sought a deeper understanding of how individuals with either an internal or external locus of control communicate during episodes of conflict with their romantic relational partner. After considering extant literature, it was posited that internal individuals would use more integrative conflict management styles and external individuals would use more avoidant and dominating styles. Forty five participants took surveys assessing tendencies for their reported conflict management styles and their reported locus of control. The results did not support the hypotheses. Externals reported being just as likely to use integrative styles as internals. Internals also showed more use of dominating styles. The results may point to differing variables other than locus of control for tendency to use certain conflict styles. Implications and areas for future research are discussed.

Keywords: locus of control, conflict management, relationships

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Many people throughout the world believe that destiny plays some kind of role in their lives. A Google.com search of the terms "destiny relationships" reveals over 3 million results (Dec., 2010) with many of the results showing pages such as "What is your relationship destiny?" or offering love horoscopes to relationship seekers showing what type of person they are destined to marry. This belief or perception of the world that forces outside the individual play either a large or small role in shaping individuals' circumstances has been coined "locus of control" and has been studied in many contexts. The present study looked at the role locus of control plays in tendencies to manage conflict in differing ways between individuals in various relationships. In other words, does the locus of control an individual reports determine a tendency to approach conflict with their significant other in a specific way? Previous studies have explored elements related to locus of control and conflict management styles, but few if any directly studied the effects of either dimension on each other. The literature suggests a more negative view of external locus of control, such as its relation to greater hostility and verbal aggressiveness, and a more positive view of internal locus of control. The literature also gives a positive picture of the integrative conflict management style, while showing a less positive view of avoidance and dominating styles, which are seen as anti-social and negative.

A review of the literature to follow includes brief definitions of locus of control and reviews of extant studies relevant to general locus of control, locus of control in relationships, and trends in locus of control within society. The review will then include a brief explanation of conflict management styles and conflict in general and move to review the literature on conflict styles both in and outside of romantic relationships. Finally, the review will conclude by drawing parallels between the two areas of research.

Locus of Control

Locus of control (LOC) is defined here according to Rotter and Mulry (1965) who state there are differences in individuals in regards to expectancy of reinforcement. Internal LOC individuals have an expectancy that reinforcement is contingent on their own behavior, while external LOC individuals are more likely to expect that reinforcement depends on luck, chance, or fate-of-powerful others. Rotter and Mulry (1965) found that internal LOC people tend to choose activities where they can demonstrate their skill, whereas external LOC people select activities where they can demonstrate luck. Rotter (1966) found strong support that these conditions do exist in his findings that people who believe they are in control of their destiny will take steps to improve their environmental condition, be more alert to information that can help their future behavior, rely on their own skill and achievement, and more readily resist persuasion attempts. Rotter (1966) described that these behaviors are fairly consistent from individual to individual in that they develop these generalized expectancies in learning situations with regard to whether or not reinforcement, reward, or success in these situations depends on external forces or their own behavior. The Rotter Internal-External scale (I-E, Rotter, 1966) has been a reliable instrument to estimate the degree of internal or external LOC in individuals.

General LOC Studies. Many studies have concluded that having an internal LOC is more desirable (Twenge et al., 2004). For example, Avtgis and Rancer (1997) stated that internal LOC individuals reported using constructive aggressive predispositions and that having an internal LOC was negatively related to a tendency to avoid arguments. External individuals reported a tendency to avoid arguments, which may be due to a perceived lack of control over the interpersonal encounter as Avtgis and Rancer (1997) suggest. Avtgis and Rancer (1997) also found that externals reported higher levels of verbal aggressiveness. In another study on

attachment (see attachment theory, Bowlby, 1969) and LOC it was recently found that people

with external LOC exhibited greater anxiety and avoidance, while individuals with internal LOC

exhibited less anxiety and avoidance (Dilmac, Hamarta & Arslan, 2009). Individuals with secure

attachments were more internal than those individuals who had preoccupied and fearful

attachments. Externals have also been found to feel more anxiety over negative events and have

a tendency to receive a greater amount of social support (Sandler & Lakey, 1982).

Research has also looked into whether an internal or external LOC can be influenced

more than the other, can exhibit differing levels of hostility, and be subject to differing levels of

depression. Biondo and MacDonald (1971) gave evidence pointing out that individuals with an

external LOC conform to subtle and overt influence attempts, and individuals with an internal

LOC react against such attempts. Pefley (1987) found significant associations between hostility

and LOC, more specifically, that an external LOC is associated with greater hostility. Greater

externality has also been associated with greater depression in individuals (Benassi, Sweeney, &

Dufour, 1988).

There are some clear findings within individuals and their tendencies related to the LOC

they report. The studies looking at LOC within the dynamics of romantic relationships points to

some similar and differing findings showing how couples tend to behave if they feel they are

more in control of their relationship or are subject to more influences outside of their control.

LOC in Relationships. In married couples, LOC was applied in stable and unstable

marriages (Mlott & Lira, 1977), marriage dissatisfaction (Doherty, 1981), and marital

satisfaction (Bugaihis, Schumm, Bollman & Jurich, 1983). Bugaighis, Schumm, Bolman, and

Jurich (1983) found that more satisfaction was experienced in marriages with a greater internal

LOC. Instances of a wife who is more external in her locus than her husband have been studied

due to their likeliness to cause instability. One such study found that an external female is less likely to take responsibility and more likely to blame her husband or other outside factors for marital instability (Mlott & Lira, 1977). Along the same lines Doherty (1981) showed that an unstable marriage can result from an internal husband guarding his stance and reacting unsympathetically to an external wife's influence attempts or need for emotional support. Doherty and Ryder (1979) studied newlywed couples and found that internal husbands act with more assertiveness than external husbands, but internal wives who were low in trusting behavior were the most assertive in situations of marital conflict. Scanzoni and Arnett (2003) stated that in marriages where men and women assign less control to fate and are more autonomous, marital commitment will be enhanced and partners will be influenced to continue working indefinitely at their relationships.

The Miller Marital Locus of Control Scale (MMLOC; Miller, Lefcourt & Ware, 1983) is a 44-item scale measuring marital LOC and was used by Miller, Lefcourt, and Ware (1983) to find that externality was a negative state leading to lower marital satisfaction. Miller, Lefcourt, Holmes, Ware, and Saleh (1986) later used the MMLOC and supported the notion that internal marriages produced more engagement in marital problem solving, for the couple and individually. However, this study did not find an association on the Rotter I-E scale. Myers and Booth (1999) showed more support (through use of the MMLOC) for internal marriages producing less negative marital quality and more positive marital quality.

Relationships are one context in which LOC can play a role, but looking at broader contexts can reveal more of a picture of why individuals within relationships behave in differing ways.

Trends in LOC. In society as a whole, powerlessness, resulting in hopelessness, fatalism, and/or mass apathy, comes from a loss of control over an individual's destiny (Tiffany & Tiffany, 1973). Individuals who feel powerless (more often lower socioeconomic classes) were shown to react impulsively (non-self-directed) under increased stress conditions while those who do not feel powerless (more often higher socioeconomic classes) are more prone to react constructively and feel they have the ability to alter their environment under the same conditions (Tiffany & Tiffany, 1973). Externality (more of a feeling of powerlessness) has reportedly become more prevalent recently. Twenge, Zhang, and Im (2004) found that young Americans increasingly feel that outside forces control their destinies. In their study, they found college students' I-E scores were becoming increasingly external in LOC. The average college student in 2002 was 80% more external than the average student in the early 1960s. As stated by Twenge et al. (2004), the results of their analysis suggest that individualism, greater cynicism, and alienation lead people to the assumption that their personal actions mean little. This feeling that an individual can be more or less assertive (or internal) may come from social status and roles (Twenge, 2001). This may originate from religion, family, organizations, and institutions like government which seek to define roles and provide support for individuals in differing ways.

As mentioned above, an individual's LOC may play into how constructively they react to situations and affect their views on their ability to alter their environment. Given that certain conflict management styles are considered more constructive and others less constructive (as outlined below), it follows that internals and externals will manage conflict in differing ways.

Conflict and Conflict Management

Interpersonal conflict is defined as interactions between individuals expressing opposing interests, views, or opinions (Kline, Pleasant, Whitton, & Markman, 2006). Conflict, as

Spitzberg, Canary, and Cupach (1994) describe, is ubiquitous and almost unanimously disliked: "Conflict encounters seem capable of lowering people to their most base instincts, and, yet, out of conflict we often derive our most productive achievements" (p. 183). Conflict management is a process of how couples deal with conflict in their relationships. Individuals deal with conflict in different ways, which are called conflict management styles. A widely accepted view of conflict management styles is the five-style approach based on the dimensions of concern for self and concern for others (Rahim, 1983). Rahim (1983) stated that in handling interpersonal conflict, individuals may use one of the following approaches: integrating (high concern for both self and others), obliging (low concern for self and high concern for others), dominating (high concern for self and low concern for others), avoiding (low concern for both self and others), and compromising (moderate concern for both self and others).

The three conflict communication strategies (enacted both verbally and nonverbally) focused on in the present study are integrative, dominating, and avoidant due to the fact that these dimensions have been studied more often. According to Spitzberg, Canary, and Cupach (1994), integrative behaviors are demonstrated by seeking areas of commonality, exchange of information, trying to understand the other party, and compromising. Distributive behaviors are demonstrated by actions such as counterproposals, threats, intimidation, and criticism. Avoidant behaviors try to detract attention from the conflict and range from topic evasion to direct denials.

Researchers have seen conflict management strategies such as integration as more satisfying, positive, pro-social, and providing an increase to relational satisfaction while strategies such as distribution (dominating) and avoidance are seen as less satisfying, more negative and anti-social (Dainton & Gross, 2008; Olson & Braithwaite, 2004; Sillars, 1980; Spitzberg, Canary, & Cupach, 1994). However, avoidance is less associated with negative

conflict management strategies and may also serve to maintain a relationship and save face

(Oduru-Frimpong, 2007).

In Romantic Relationships. Olson and Braithwaite (2004) showed that individuals who

had experienced verbal and/or physical aggression during conflict episodes with their partners

used more distributive strategies than integrative or avoidant strategies. The study showed that

violent couples use more negative affect and will attack their partner more during conflict and

problem-solving discussions. Olson and Braithwaite (2004) also found that conflict was resolved

in several nonverbal ways such as crying, physical aggression, and physical violence. However,

sometimes these led to positive outcomes, for instance, when crying is validated by a non-crying

partner. Creasy (2002) found support for young adults (mostly women) with secure attachments

using more positive and less negative behaviors during conflict in romantic relationships. He also

found that preoccupied and dismissing individuals had difficulties in managing conflict episodes.

Mackey, Diemer, and O'Brien (2000) examined couples in lasting marriages (married

over 20 years) and found that the strongest predictor of conflict-management styles used more

recently in a marriage were shaped by conflict styles used in previous years (i.e., child-rearing

years) and that these were relatively stable.

Segrin, Hazal, and Domschke (2009) examined which side of the conflicting literature

concerning spouses' accuracy and biases in perceptions of the martial conflict styles of each

other held true. While spouses were both accurate (i.e., seeing her/himself as a partner sees them)

and biased (i.e., seeing the partner the same as they see her/himself) in perceptions of each

other's conflict styles, the researchers found more support for the benevolent perception model

over the accurate perception model of marital satisfaction. The more positively an individual

viewed a spouse' conflict style, the happier the individual was with the marriage rather than

perceptual accuracy (negative or otherwise) being associated with positive marital outcomes.

Bippus, Boren, and Worsham (2008) stated that individuals in romantic relationships who feel underbenefitted are more likely to criticize, express anger, and deny or avoid conflict from their partner and are less likely to use integrative tactics. On the other hand, they found that sensitivity to being overbenefitted was linked to more integrative tactics and less avoidance tactics. This may be explained in that internals, who are more likely to seek and get what they want from a relationship (more likely overbenefitted), are willing to use integrative tactics while an external who is more likely to be underbenefitted (by non-self-reliance) will feel relationship events are out of their control.

Outside Romantic Relationships. Non-relational, temporary task-oriented dyads, were examined by Gross, Guerrero, and Alberts (2004) who found that nonconfrontational strategies were negatively associated with competence, while solution-oriented strategies were perceived more positively. Gross et al. (2004) also found evidence for the notion that people rate their own controlling behaviors as appropriate, but rate their task partner's as inappropriate. Birditt, Rott, and Fingerman (2009) examined parent-child dyads and found that constructive strategies were linked with greater relationship quality and destructive and avoidant strategies were linked to lower relationship quality. Although mothers and fathers were equally as likely to use constructive or deconstructive strategies, mothers were more likely to use avoidant strategies. Birditt et al. (2009) found that African American families were less likely to use avoidant strategies than European American families. People with less education were also less likely to use avoidant strategies. Sternberg and Dobson (1987) posited that individuals use consistent styles of conflict resolution that extend across actual and hypothetical situations, real and ideal styles, and varying interpersonal relationships.

Ting-Toomey, Oetzel, Yee-Jung (2001) researched self-construal types and conflict management styles and found that biconstruals (high on independent and interdependent self-construals), independents (high independent, low interdependent), and interdependents (low independent, high interdependent) use integrating and compromising more than ambivalents (low on both independent and interdependent self-construals). Also, biconstruals use emotional expression more than ambivalents, biconstruals use dominating more than interdependents and ambivalents, interdependents and ambivalents use third-party help more than biconstruals and independents, and ambivalents use neglect more than biconstruals and independents. They also concluded that these self-construal types give a better explanation for conflict than ethnicity or sex. Although self-construals regard the extent to which individuals conceive they are separate or connected to others, they are conceptually similar constructs to LOC in that externals can be said to be more interdependent and less independent. The reverse can be said of internals.

Sillars (1980) studied college dormitory roommates and found that a roommate was more likely to use integrative strategies and less likely to use distributive and avoidant strategies if they attributed more responsibility for conflicts to themselves (internality) rather than their roommate. Integrative tactics were used more frequently than avoidant tactics where individuals attributed less stability to conflicts. In all, individuals were more communicative and less competitive during conflicts they attributed to unstable characteristics of themselves rather than to competing intentions and stable characteristics of their roommates (externality). Sillars (1980) notes that integrative strategies were least likely to be used and were used mostly when the conflict was low in importance and when there was low frequency of conflict in the relationship. Avoidant strategies were used when frequency and importance of conflicts were high.

One study showed support for the notion that young adults' LOC predicted conflict

strategies they employed (Taylor, 2010). It found internal young adults reported using more confrontational and solution-oriented strategies while more external individuals reported using more nonconfrontational strategies (i.e., avoidant) and less use of solution-oriented strategies.

LOC and Conflict

In sum, the literature points to a potential avenue of research. In regards to LOC and conflict, some interesting patterns emerge. The literature suggests that individuals with an external LOC will communicate with more dominating and avoidance conflict management strategies. This is due to the findings that being more external is associated with using greater hostility (Pefley, 1987), verbal aggressiveness (Avtgis & Rancer, 1997) anxiety and avoidance (Dilmac, Hamarta & Arslan, 2009), and having a more external relationship was found to be unsatisfying (Doherty, 1981; Bugaihis, Schumm, Bollman & Jurich, 1983). These dimensions of externality can be equated to the findings that dominating and avoidant conflict styles are used by couples who have experienced verbal and/or physical aggression (Olson & Braithwaite, 2004) and is seen as more negative, anti-social, and is linked to lower relationship quality (Dainton & Gross, 2008; Olson & Braithwaite, 2004; Sillars, 1980). Internal LOC individuals tend to use more integrative and solution-oriented strategies (Taylor, 2010). Internal relationships were also found to be more satisfying and more committed, and the couples engaged in more problem solving (Miller, Lefcourt, Holmes, Ware, & Saleh, 1986; Scanzoni & Arnett, 2003). These dimensions of internality can be equated to the findings that integrative conflict management strategies are seen as more positive, pro-social, and proving an increase to relational satisfaction (Spitzberg, Canary, & Cupach, 1994; Dainton & Gross, 2008; Olson & Braithwaite, 2004; Sillars, 1980). From these assumptions, it is hypothesized here that:

H_1: Individuals with a more external LOC will score higher on avoidant conflict management styles in situations of committed relationship conflict than those with an internal LOC.

H_2: Individuals with a more external LOC will tend to use more dominating conflict management styles in situations of committed relationship conflict than those with an internal LOC.

H_3: Individuals with a more internal LOC will score higher on integrative conflict management styles in situations of committed relationship conflict than those with an external LOC.

Method

Participants

A total of 45 individuals were recruited to participate in the study from word of mouth, social networking Websites, and Internet forums. Only individuals over age 18 and currently involved in romantic relationships were solicited for the study. The participants included 39 females and six males, four of which identified themselves as casual dating, four engaged to marry, one just friends, 29 married, and seven serious dating. There were 41 Caucasians, two Asian Americans, one Hispanic, and one identifying themselves as mixed. In regards to socioeconomic status, four reported earning up to $20,000 per year, 13 reported $21,000 to $40,000 per year, 15 reported, $41,000 to $60,000 per year, four reported $61,000 to $80,000 per year, six reported $81,000 to $100,000 per year, and three reported earning over $100,000 per year. Two respondents reported an education level of G.E.D. or high school, 11 with some college, eight with an associate's degree, 18 with a bachelor's degree, and 11 with a master's degree. The average age of the participants was 34 ($SD = 9.93$).

Of the respondents, 27 (5 male, 22 female) were internal in LOC and 18 (1 male, 17 female) were external in LOC. The respondents reported using the integrative conflict style the most ($M = 4.26$, $SD = .09$), followed by compromising ($M = 3.84$, $SD = .20$), obliging ($M = 3.50$, $SD = .38$), dominating ($M = 2.93$, $SD = .38$), and avoiding ($M = 2.71$, $SD = .54$). The respondents reporting a high school or G.E.D. for education level had the lowest mean for integration ($M = 4$, $SD = 1.30$) and the highest for dominating ($M = 3.30$, $SD = 1.25$) and avoiding ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 1.20$) compared to the other education levels in integrating ($M = 4.28$, $SD = .11$), dominating ($M = 2.91$, $SD = .38$), and avoidant ($M = 2.68$, $SD = .54$). In general, the participants were more internal ($M = 10.47$, $SD = 4.88$) than external (1 to 11 denotes internality, 12 and over denotes externality).

Procedure

Surveys were conducted in an online environment to facilitate greater numbers of participants and ease of data retrieval. Couples could take part, but each filled out separate surveys. The survey was held on a Website where participants were told that their answers will be held in strict confidence. Internet protocol (IP) addresses were logged to prevent duplicate entries. The surveys included four sections measuring participant demographics, partner demographics, and the two surveys outlined below.

Measurement

This limited empirical study included a survey given to assess participants' LOC as well as the conflict management style they employ in relational conflict episodes. Participants were asked for contact information (not mandatory) in order to conduct a follow-up survey consisting of more in-depth questions seeking to find out more about the complexities involved with their actual LOC and conflict styles. No participants who provided contact information responded to

attempts to garner information to the follow-up questions. Implications of this are outlined in the discussion section.

Locus of Control. The Rotter I-E scale (Rotter, 1966; Appendix A) was used to find the generalized LOC for each individual. The scale was sufficient in finding to what degree a person believes events are in their control (internal locus) or dependent on things outside of their control (external locus). Each external answer was given one point for a total of 23. The more points, the more external the individual. Six filler questions are built in to obscure the purpose of the scale to the participants.

Conflict Management Styles. A modified Thomas-Kilman instrument (Rahim & Magner, 1995; Appendix B) was used to find the participants' conflict styles. The five-point Likert-type scale included 28 questions assessing the levels of integrative, obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising conflict styles of each participant. "Supervisor" was substituted with "partner" in many cases.

The Rotter I-E Scale (Rotter, 1966) proved reliable with an internal consistency of $\alpha =$ .82. However, the modified Thomas-Kilman instrument (Rahim & Magner, 1995) was slightly unreliable with an internal consistency of $\alpha = .68$.

Results

The results do not show support for the first hypothesis: Individuals with a more external LOC will score higher on avoidant conflict management styles in situations of committed relationship conflict than those with an internal LOC. There was no significant difference between internals and externals for the avoiding items on the conflict management scale, $t(88) =$ .71, $p = .48$. The mean for internals in avoidance on the conflict management scale was 2.69 (SD = .59) and 2.77 ($SD = .48$) for externals.

The results also show lack of support for the second hypothesis: Individuals with a more external LOC will tend to use more dominating conflict management styles in situations of committed relationship conflict than those with an internal LOC. There was a significant difference between internals and externals for the dominating items on the conflict management scale, $t(88) = 2.40$, $p = .02$. For dominating, internals showed more use at a mean of 3.03 ($SD = .40$) than 2.84 ($SD = .35$) for externals.

The results also do not show support for the third hypothesis: Individuals with a more internal LOC will score higher on integrative conflict management styles in situations of committed relationship conflict than those with an external LOC. There was no significant difference between internals and externals for the integrating items on the conflict management scale, $t(88) = .90$, $p = .37$. The means for the integration on the conflict management scale were 4.26 ($SD = .10$) for internals and 4.24 ($SD = .11$) for externals.

Table I

Conflict Style scores (vertical) and LOC scores (horizontal) (5-point Likert scale means).

	Internal Means	External Means	t-Test
Dominating	3.03	2.84	$t(88) = 2.40$, $p = .02$
Integrating	4.26	4.24	$t(88) = ..90$, $p > .05$
Avoiding	2.69	2.77	$t(88) = .71$, $p > .05$

Discussion

In much of the literature, having an external LOC has been associated with more negative behaviors and having an internal LOC has been associated with more positive behaviors. In most studies, integrative conflict management styles are seen as the best way to handle conflict, and

from looking at these past studies it was posited in this study that internal individuals would use

this style more than external individuals. However, the results show that both internals and

externals reported using this style at nearly the same levels. This contradicts the literature and the

notion that being more external equates to less use of more positively viewed conflict styles.

There very well could be a disconnect between reported and actual use of integrating styles, or a

difference in knowing the most appropriate styles to use and actually using them where

appropriate. It also may be that externals will attempt to use integrative communication, but fall

back onto another tactic if it does not work the way they want. For instance, the present study

found that externals reported slightly higher use of the avoidant conflict style.

      This leads into the present study's failure to find support for the first and second

hypotheses. Strategies such as distribution (dominating) and avoidance have been reported to be

more negative and anti-social (Dainton & Gross, 2008; Olson & Braithwaite, 2004; Sillars,

1980), and having an external LOC is associated with greater hostility (Pefley, 1987), anxiety

(Sandler & Lakey, 1982), and a tendency to avoid arguments and be verbally aggressive (Avtgis

& Rancer, 1997). However, the present study found that internal individuals reported higher

levels of the dominating conflict style and similar levels to externals of the avoidant conflict

style. It may be that the internals viewed the conflict scale dominating items as being more

assertive. For example, one item for dominating reads "I use my influence to get my ideas

accepted" while another reads "1 am generally firm in pursuing my side of the issue." Avtgis and

Rancer (1997) showed that internals reported using more constructive aggressive predispositions.

The ambiguity of the dominating items may have led the internal individuals to believe these

were simply being constructively aggressive.

The levels of externals reporting avoidance were more in line with previous studies (Dilmac, Hamarta & Arslan, 2009). It was expected that externals would be more avoidant because they perceive a lack of control over interpersonal encounters (Avtgis & Rancer, 1997). As suggested by Dilmac, Hamarta, and Arslan (2009) and Pefley (1987), externals have been shown to exhibit more anxiety and hostility, which could explain their tendency to avoid conflict situations. However, externals responses to the present study suggest they are more integrative than avoiding. The results may show that although externals may want to use more constructive means of managing conflict, they still are more prone to think that these situations are somewhat out of their control and may avoid them to let fate decide.

One factor that emerged which may explain the use of these conflict management styles is education level. Participants who reported having a high school diploma or G.E.D. reported lower levels of integration and higher levels of both avoidance and dominance, which contradicts Birditt, Rott, and Fingerman's (2009) notion that less educated people use less avoidance. Although the number of participants was low, variables like this may present an area for future research.

The results showing lack of support for the third hypothesis is due to externals reporting similar use of integrative conflict management styles to internals. It was expected that the level of use of integration by externals would be lower than the results show. Both internals and externals reported nearly the same levels of use of integrative tactics which may be due to the fact that, in general, the participants were more internal than external. As there were more individuals reporting an internal LOC (27 internal to 18 external), it may be that a larger sample of more external participants would report lower levels of use of integration. More specifically,

more participants with an I-E Scale score closer to the highest possible score for externality may report less use of integration.

What the results may show in regards to integrative styles is that both internals and externals view them positively, but again, actual use of the style may vary. One indicator of this in the present study may be the lack of response to the follow-up questions. While a number of participants responded that they would be open to further interview questions about their actual use of conflict, upon attempts to follow up none of these participants actually desired to take part in the interviews. When this information is coupled with studies such as Segrin, Hazal, and Domschke (2009), where positive views of a partner's conflict style (whether accurate or not) lead to satisfaction, a picture of actual versus perceived conflict may appear. The participants open to further questions may not have wanted negative events to come into the open in order to hold on to the "benevolent" view of their partner. Sillars (1980) showed in his study that integrative strategies were least likely to be used and were used most when conflict topic importance and frequency were low. So while people may like to hold the perception that they use integrative strategies the most (the reported most used in this study), their actual use may vary. This may be an important area of future study to consider.

Some general limitations to consider are the low level of participants and the high level of female respondents. A higher level of male respondents, and respondents in general, would make the results more generalizable. Also, the directions for the conflict management survey were not as clear as they should have been. A more personal statement at the beginning asking the participant to think about the questions in terms of their own relationship should have been added.

The study as a whole may not show as many implications as it does avenues for future research. Since the findings in the present study do not suggest a substantive link between LOC and conflict styles, contrary to Taylor (2010), it is suggested that conflict management styles used in relationships may be better predicted by other factors such as socioeconomic status, education level, cultural backgrounds, or other variables. Also, as suggested above, the actual conflict management styles of the participants would provide much more accurate representations of how LOC plays a part in tendencies to approach conflict.

Conflict will always be a part of relationships whether it is viewed as a positive process or not. Investigations such as the present study only seek to understand and find better ways to constructively manage these occurrences. It is the knowledge that humankind cannot fully understand these processes in relationship, but only outline how better outcomes are produced in relationships, that gives the frame in which to take the information from studies like the present and create a better informed society.

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Appendix A

Rotter I-E Scale

Give 1 point to external answers (not filler) and add up. A zero through three denoted an

extreme internal LOC, a four through 11 denotes a healthy internal LOC, and a 12 through 23

denotes an external LOC. An asterisk identifies the external answer.

1. Children get into trouble because their parents punish them too harshly.

The trouble with most children nowadays is that their parents are too easy with them.

(Filler Question)

2. Many of the unhappy things in people's lives are partly due to bad luck. *

People's misfortunes result from the mistakes they make.

3. One of the major reasons why we have wars is because people don't take enough interest in

politics.

There will always be wars, no matter how hard people try to prevent them. *

4. In the long run people get the respect they deserve in this world

Unfortunately, an individual's worth often passes unrecognized no matter how hard he tries. *

5. The idea that teachers are unfair to students is nonsense.

Most students don't realize the extent to which their grades are influenced by accidental

happenings. *

6. Without the right breaks one cannot be an effective leader. *

Capable people who fail to become leaders have not taken advantage of their opportunities.

7. No matter how hard you try some people just don't like you. *

People who can't get others to like them don't understand how to get along with others.

8. Heredity plays the major role in determining one's personality

It is mainly one's experiences in life which determine what they're like.

(Filler Question)

9. I have often found that what is going to happen, will happen. *

Trusting to fate has never turned out as well for me as making a decision to take a definite course of action.

10. In the case of the well prepared student there is rarely if ever such a thing as an unfair test.

Many times exam questions tend to be so unrelated to course work that studying is often useless. *

11. Becoming a success is a matter of hard work. Luck has little or nothing to do with it.

Getting a good job depends mainly on being in the right place at the right time. *

12. The average citizen can have an influence in government decisions.

This world is run by the few people in power, and there is not much the little guy can do about it. *

13. When I make plans, I am almost certain that I can make them work.

It is not always wise to plan too far ahead because many things turn out to be a matter of good or bad fortune. *

14. There are certain people who are just no good.

There is some good in everybody.

(Filler Question)

15. In my case getting what I want has little or nothing to do with luck.

Many times we might just as well decide what to do by flipping a coin. *

16. Who gets to be the boss often depends on who was lucky enough to be in the right place first. *

Getting people to do the right thing depends upon ability, and luck has little or nothing to do with it.

17. As far as world affairs are concerned, most of us are the victims of forces we can neither understand, nor control. *

By taking an active part in political and social affairs the people can control world events.

18. Most people don't realize the extent to which their lives are controlled by accidental happenings. *

There really is no such thing as "luck."

19. One should always be willing to admit mistakes.

It is usually best to cover up one's mistakes.

(Filler Question)

20. It is hard to know whether or not a person really likes you. *

How many friends you have depends upon how nice a person you are.

21. In the long run the bad things that happen to us are balanced by the good ones. *

Most misfortunes are the result of lack of ability, ignorance, laziness, or all three.

22. With enough effort we can wipe out political corruption.

It is difficult for people to have much control over the things politicians do in office. *

23. Sometimes I can't understand how bosses come to give out the recognition they do. *

There is a direct relationship between how hard I work and the recognition I receive from my boss.

24. A good leader expects people to decide for themselves what they should do.

A good leader makes it clear to everybody what their jobs are.

(Filler Question)

25. Many times I feel that I have little influence over the things that happen to me. *

I do not believe that chance or luck plays an important role in my life.

26. People are lonely because they don't try to be friendly.

There's not much use in trying too hard to please people. If they like you, they like you. *

27. There is too much emphasis on athletics in society.

Team sports are an excellent way to build character.

(Filler Question)

28. What happens to me is my own doing.

Sometimes I feel that I don't have enough control over the direction my life is taking. *

29. Most of the time I can't understand why politicians behave the way they do. *

 In the long run the people are responsible for bad government on a national as well as on a local

level.

Appendix B

Modified Thomas-Kilman Survey to Assess Conflict Styles

All items are on a five-point Likert-type scale. A one denotes "strongly disagree" and a five denotes "strongly agree." The following identifies the conflict style items: Integrating (items 1, 4, 5, 12, 22, 23, 28); Obliging (items 2, 10, 11, 13, 19, 24); Dominating (items 8, 9, 18, 21, 25); Avoiding (items 3, 6, 16, 17, 26, 27); Compromising (items 7, 14, 15, 20).

1. I try to investigate an issue with my partner to find a solution acceptable to us.

2. I generally try to satisfy the needs of my partner.

3. I attempt to avoid being "put on the spot" and try to keep my conflict with my partner to myself.

4. I try to integrate my ideas with those of my partner to come up with a decision jointly.

5. I try to work with my partner to find solutions to a problem which satisfy our expectations.

6. I usually avoid open discussion of my differences with my partner.

7. I try to find a middle course to resolve an impasse.

8. I use my influence to get my ideas accepted.

9. I use my authority to make a decision in my favor.

10. I usually accommodate the wishes of my partner.

11. 1 give in to the wishes of my partner.

12. I exchange accurate information with my partner to solve a problem together.

13. I usually allow concessions to my partner.

14. I usually propose a middle ground for breaking deadlocks.

15. I negotiate with my partner so that a compromise can be reached.

16. I try to stay away from disagreement with my partner.

17. I avoid an encounter with my partner.

18. I use my expertise to make a decision in my favor.

19. I often go along with the suggestions of my partner.

20. I use "give and take" so that a compromise can be made.

21.1 am generally firm in pursuing my side of the issue.

22. I try to bring all our concerns out in the open so the issues can be resolved in the best

possible way.

23. I collaborate with my partner to come up with decisions acceptable to us.

24. I try to satisfy the expectations of my partner.

25. I sometimes use my power to win a competitive situation.

26. I try to keep my disagreement with my partner to myself in order to avoid hard feelings.

27. I try to avoid unpleasant exchanges with my partner.

28. I try to work with my partner for a proper understanding of a problem.