

COMMUNICATION WITHDRAWAL IN ADOLESCENT AND
YOUNG ADULT ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

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GARY C. GLICK

Dr. Amanda J. Rose, Thesis Supervisor

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The undersigned, appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

COMMUNICATION WITHDRAWAL IN ADOLESCENT AND
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Presented by Gary C. Glick

A candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

And hereby certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

Professor Amanda Rose

Professor Nicole Campione-Barr

Professor Gustavo Carlo

Professor Laura King

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ABSTRACT

Despite the widely-held notion that communication is essential to the maintenance of adult romantic relationships, few studies have tested whether communication is similarly important to adjustment in the romantic relationships of adolescents. It was hypothesized that because these early relationships are typically shorter and less committed than those of young adults that withdrawing from communication (e.g. becoming silent during a conflict, withholding grievances from partners, responding to partners in perfunctory ways) would contribute less to romantic relationship adjustment in adolescence. Samples of 26 adolescent couples ($N = 52$) and 60 young adult couples ($N = 120$) were recruited to examine withdrawal in late adolescent and young adult romantic relationships. A mixed-method design was employed whereby partners each provided self-report data on withdrawal in general and immediately following a laboratory task designed to examine relationship conflict in “real-time” that was later observationally coded. In addition, self-report measures were developed and administered to both partners in order to assess various reasons why partners might withdraw from communication (e.g., avoid getting hurt, protect the relationship, maintain privacy). No age differences in communication withdrawal emerged; however, several age differences, as well as gender differences, did emerge in the motives individuals cited for why they withdrew from their partners. Although it was hypothesized that withdrawing from communication would be more damaging to the relationships of young adults, withdrawal was linked to poor relationship adjustment regardless of age, suggesting that communication is an important factor to consider in adolescent romantic relationships.

Communication Withdrawal in Adolescent and Young Adult Romantic Relationships

Chapter One

Introduction

The formation and maintenance of virtually all close relationships is driven by communication (Miller, 1976; Wilmot, 1995). Relational communication is inherently dyadic; what one partner says or does influences the way in which the other partner responds. Yet often relational communication “breaks down” when one partner withdraws from communication (e.g. ceases to continue talking, withholds grievances from their partner). Withdrawal may be especially problematic in romantic contexts because it is often perceived as a clear manifestation of a partner’s lack of responsiveness; a longstanding and well-documented harbinger of relationship dissatisfaction, dysfunction, and dissolution (see Reis, 2007; Reis, 2012).

The purpose of the current study is to assess communication withdrawal from a developmental perspective by studying the construct with an adolescent sample, as well as with a young adult sample. Developmental psychologists have increasingly stressed the importance of romantic relationships in adolescence (see Collins, Welsh, & Furman, 2009). Data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (i.e. Add-Health) revealed that over two-thirds of late adolescents report having ever been in a romantic relationship and that almost 60% of these relationships lasted for 11 months or more

(Carver, Joyner, & Udry, 2003), challenging previously-held notions that these relationships are trivial, fleeting, or, deviant. Although research on these relationships has made considerable strides, relatively few studies have examined the specific ways adolescent partners communicate with one another and the outcomes that these communication styles predict. This gap in research is all the more striking because adolescents themselves identify communication as one the most difficult barriers to interacting with opposite-sex peers (Bouchev, 2007; Grover & Nangle, 2003; Nangle & Hansen, 1998).

It also should be stressed that adolescence and young adulthood are periods in which romantic partners are increasingly relied upon for social support (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Furman & Shomaker, 2008; Meeus, Branje, van der Valk, & de Wied, 2007). More broadly, it may be that the romantic relationships of young adults represent a greater investment than those of their adolescent counterparts; they are longer in duration, more likely to include a sexual component, and often marked by higher levels of intimacy and affective intensity (see Furman & Winkles, 2012 for a review). It stands to reason that these age differences might account for differences in the ways that adolescents and young adults communicate with, or avoid communicating with (i.e. withdraw from), romantic partners. Moreover, adolescents and young adults may differ in their reasons for withdrawing from communication with partners.

The current study includes several research aims. The first aim is to compare the levels of communication withdrawal exhibited by adolescents and young adults. The second aim is to examine age differences in the motives that underlie communication withdrawal (e.g., protect one's relationship, impression management, maintain privacy).

Because many of the motives for withdrawal assessed in the present study have not been examined in romantic contexts, associations between each motive and communication withdrawal also will be tested, as well as whether these associations are moderated by age. The third aim of the current study is to examine the associations between communication withdrawal and relationship adjustment (e.g., relationship satisfaction, breakups). Whether these associations are moderated by age also will be tested. Finally, the fourth aim of the present study is to examine whether any of the associations outlined above are moderated by gender.

Past Research on Communication Withdrawal in Romantic Relationships

Individuals' withdrawal from communication with romantic partners has been assessed broadly (e.g., Kurdek, 1994; McIsaac, Connolly, McKenney, Pepler, & Craig, 2008) as well as with constructs designed to capture more nuanced patterns of withdrawal, such as demand-withdraw (e.g., Christensen & Heavey, 1990; Heavey, Layne, & Christensen, 1993), stonewalling (e.g., Gottman, 1994; 1999), self-silencing (e.g., Jack & Dill, 1992; Jack & Ali, 2010), and topic avoidance (e.g., Baxter & Wilmot, 1985; Caughlin & Afifi, 2004).

The majority of past studies that broadly conceptualize withdrawal have been carried out with samples of married couples, using either self-report measures (e.g., Kurdek, 1994; Roberts, 2000) or observational coding schemes (e.g., Gottman & Krokoff, 1989; Gottman & Levenson, 1992). One of the most commonly used observational coding scheme to measure withdrawal is the Couples Interaction Rating System (CIRS; Heavey, Gill, & Christensen, 2002), which codes the degree to which each partner withdraws from communication while discussing issues in their relationship.

Although past observational studies have used the CIRS to code the interactions of married couples (e.g., Christensen & Heavey, 1990, Balderrama-Durbin, Allen, & Rhoades, 2012) and other studies have used similar approaches to assess withdrawal in adolescent romantic relationships (e.g., Darling, Cohen, Burns, & Thompson, 2008; McIssac et al., 2008), no existing research has tested age differences in withdrawal between adolescents and young adults.

The vast majority of empirical studies that have examined withdrawal from a more nuanced perspective in romantic relationships have done so via construct known as demand-withdraw. Demand-withdraw is a dyadic-level pattern of communication in which one person nags or complains (i.e. demand), whereas the other person avoids the issue at hand or withdraws from the discussion (Christensen & Heavey, 1990; Heavey et al., 1993). Demand-withdraw has generally been assessed by either self-report or observational coding, where observers assign ratings of couples' demand and withdraw behaviors during conflict tasks in which each partner identifies a topic in their relationship that they desire change in and are videotaped while discussing them. Each partner is then assigned a series of global codes for each of the two topics, which are then aggregated to form both a "demand" and a "withdraw" score for both the target individual's topic and his or her partner's topic. Most existing research on demand-withdraw has been conducted with dating or married couples (see Eldridge & Christensen, 2002).

It is important to emphasize that demand-withdraw is conceptualized as a dyadic-level communication pattern; therefore, variability in the construct is only detectable at the level of the couple, not the individual. In contrast, communication withdrawal is

conceptualized as an individual-level communication pattern. However, some (but not all) studies of demand-withdraw have conducted a separate set of analyses using only individual-level withdraw scores. Only findings from the demand-withdraw literature that include individual-level withdraw scores, as opposed to those that utilize a dyadic-level demand-withdraw score, will be discussed throughout this review.

Stonewalling is a broad conceptualization of withdrawal in which one partner creates the impression that they are listening to the other partner (via eye contact, concerned facial expressions, head nodding) while responding with only superficial displays of verbal and non-verbal behavior. Stonewallers often “use brief monitoring glances, look away and down, maintain a stiff neck, vocalize hardly at all—in effect, convey the presence of an impassive stone wall” (Gottman, 1999; p. 46). Stonewalling also is characterized by the use of brief vocalizations (i.e. “yeah”, “uh huh”) in response to partners’ prompts for a more in-depth reciprocal discussion. According to Gottman (1994; 1999), stonewalling represents the last in a series of “four horsemen of the apocalypse”, a pattern of conflict that unfolds sequentially with the following four behaviors: 1) criticism, 2) contempt, 3) defensiveness, and 4) stonewalling. At this point, partners are thought to withdraw from communication because they feel disengaged (or simply “burnt out”) as a result of this conflict. The vast majority of research that has examined stonewalling draws from samples of married couples (though see Busby & Holman, 2009 for exception).

Findings that have emerged from studies of topic avoidance also will be discussed. This literature emerged from Baxter and Wilmot’s (1985) seminal study on “taboo topics”, or topics that are perceived by one or both partners as “off-limits” for

discussion. The authors conducted open-ended interviews in which they asked young adults to identify such topics in their relationships, finding that the vast majority of participants reported avoiding at least one topic with their romantic partners, a finding that was replicated by Knobloch and Carpenter-Theune (2004). Ensuing research expanded on the work of Baxter and Wilmot (1985) by further delineating the motives behind topic avoidance and testing associations between topic avoidance and adjustment at the individual and relationship levels (Anderson, Kunkel, & Dennis, 2011; Caughlin & Afifi, 2004; Caughlin & Golish, 2002; Dailey & Palomares, 2004; Roloff & Ifert, 1998) although few studies have examined topic avoidance in adolescence.

Self-silencing occurs when one partner suppresses his or her thoughts, feelings, or opinions out of fear that such self-expression might push the other partner away, consequently leading to the loss of the romantic relationship (Jack, 1991; Jack & Dill, 1992). Some partners might feel as though inhibiting one's thoughts, feelings, or opinions would conceivably help preserve a struggling relationship. However, the act of silencing oneself rests on the notion that inhibiting self-expression is ultimately maladaptive for relationship and individual adjustment, drawing from attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969; 1973; 1980; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007) and cognitive behavioral models of depression (Beck, 1987; Hankin & Abramson, 2001) to bolster this claim. It is important to note that the development of self-silencing also was deeply rooted in the work of feminist scholar Carol Gilligan (e.g. Gilligan, 1982; Gilligan, 1993), who posited that females' sense of self-worth is more strongly linked to the maintenance and success of their intimate relationships than males'. Therefore, self-expression is riskier for women since they are thought to be more vulnerable to the intrapersonal effects of relationship problems. The

interplay between gender, self-silencing, and adjustment will be discussed more in-depth in a subsequent section in order to coincide with hypotheses of the proposed study that pertain to gender.

The present study will review these various conceptualizations of withdrawal and introduce new self-report and observational assessments of the construct, referred to as *communication withdrawal*, developed based on the existing constructs. In addition, a second measure is introduced to delineate the various motives that underlie communication withdrawal (e.g., avoid conflict, protect the relationship, maintain one's privacy) and test the degree to which each of these motives are associated with patterns of withdrawal.

Research Aim 1: Age Differences in Communication Withdrawal

The first aim of the current research is to test whether there are age differences in communication withdrawal. Despite an extensive literature on communication in young adult romantic relationships, relatively few studies have examined communication in adolescent relationships. This is an important topic for research because adolescents report that initiating and maintaining communication is a particularly difficult aspect of interacting with opposite-sex peers (Bouchey, 2007; Grover & Nangle, 2003; Nangle & Hansen, 1998). Further, romantic relationships may be among the first contexts in which heterosexual youth interact closely with opposite-sex peers. As Giordano and colleagues suggest, romantic relationships represent “something of a new ballgame from a developmental standpoint” during the adolescent years (Giordano, 2003; Giordano, Manning, & Longmore, 2006). Given adolescents' relative inexperience in this domain, it may be that their communicative repertoires with opposite-sex peers are limited;

therefore, they may be more likely to withdraw from communication with romantic partners more than young adults.

Adolescents also are more likely to have been dating their partners for shorter periods of time than their young adult counterparts (Giordano, Flannigan, Manning, & Longmore, 2009; Seiffge-Krenke, 2003). As such, young adult relationships may be more stable and committed. However, considerable variability exists in romantic experience exists within populations of both adolescents and young adults alike (Carver et al., 2003). Such experience has been linked to stronger communication skills and decreased anxiety in adolescents' romantic relationships (Collins & Sroufe, 1999; Neider & Seiffge-Krenke, 2001). Not surprisingly, individuals report fewer unexpressed complaints in longer, more committed relationships (Roloff & Solomon, 2002). Moreover, budding relationships are characterized by greater uncertainty (i.e. confidence in whether or not a relationship will be maintained over time; Knobloch & Theiss, 2011), which has been linked to elevated levels of topic avoidance (Theiss & Nagy, 2012; Wilder, 2012). For example, partners might fear that discussing certain topics might incite a breakup if their relationships are fragile and less committed. Finally, an extensive body of research suggests that perceiving one's partner to be responsive and validating is of paramount importance to forging and maintaining stable, long-lasting relationships (see Reis, 2007; 2012 for reviews). Communication withdrawal may impede the development of such positive relationship traits regardless of partners' age. Collectively, these findings suggest that communication withdrawal may have more to do with relationship experience, as opposed to the age of the individuals in the relationship (see Shulman, Mayes, Cohen, Swain, & Leckman, 2008 for a similar argument).

The present study will test whether levels of communication withdrawal differ among adolescents and young adults. Communication withdrawal will be assessed by five different indices: 1) perceptions of one's own withdrawal in the relationship overall, 2) perceptions of one's partner's withdrawal in the relationship overall, 3) perceptions of one's own withdrawal in a conflict task (assessed immediately following the conflict task, 4) perceptions of one's partner's withdrawal in a conflict task (assessed immediately following the conflict task), 5) observed withdrawal during the conflict task.

Hypothesis 1a: Adolescents will report more communication withdrawal than young adults. This effect will emerge for each of the five indices of communication withdrawal.

Hypothesis 1b: Any significant associations in Hypothesis 1a will be partially mediated by the length of time couples have been a relationship, such that communication withdrawal will be higher among couples that report having been together for only a short period of time.

Research Aim 2: Motives for Communication Withdrawal

The second aim of the proposed research is to examine the various motives that compel individuals to withdraw from communication with their romantic partners. Communication researchers have identified a variety of such motives, although these motives vary in the level of empirical and theoretical attention they have received (see Afifi & Guerrero, 2000; Afifi & Afifi, 2009b; Guerrero, Anderson, & Afifi, 2011 for reviews). Although the associations between some of these motives and communication withdrawal have been tested empirically (see Baxter & Wilmot, 1985; Caughlin & Afifi, 2004 for examples), others have not. Many of the motives proposed to explain

communication withdrawal in romantic relationships are based solely on theory (see Afifi & Guerrero, 2000; Afifi & Afifi, 2009b; Guerrero, Anderson, & Afifi, 2011 for reviews) or on empirical studies that have examined other types of relationships (e.g., parent-child, siblings, friendships; see Afifi & Afifi, 2009; Afifi & Guerrero, 1998; Golish & Caughlin, 2002; Guerrero & Afifi, 1995). These data are needed in order to provide validity for the assumption that these motives do in fact underlie communication withdrawal in romantic relationships.

In reviewing this literature, eleven motives for communication withdrawal were identified and assessed in the current study: 1) self-protection, 2) impression management, 3) reducing discomfort, 4) avoiding conflict, 5) relationship protection, 6) relationship dissolution, 7) partner protection, 8) partner unresponsiveness, 9) communication inefficacy, 10) lack of closeness in the relationship, and 11) maintaining privacy. Each of these motives is discussed more in-depth in the following sections.

It also should be noted that no empirical research has directly assessed withdrawal motives in adolescent romantic relationships. Consequently, little is known about developmental differences in motives that underlie communication withdrawal. It may be that some motives require a more refined set of social skills, which adolescents are less likely to possess. For instance, using withdrawal as a tactic that is aimed at accomplishing a particular goal, such as maintaining a relationship, may be a skill is not yet part of adolescents' relationship repertoire. Therefore, the degree to which motives might vary as a function of development will be discussed in describing each of the motives that are proposed to be associated with withdrawal.

Self-protection. One of the most commonly cited motives for communication withdrawal is self-protection (Baxter & Wilmot, 1985; Caughlin & Afifi, 2004). In its purest sense, self-protection concerns the desire to avoid discussions that individuals feel might leave them feeling hurt or vulnerable to emotional distress. In examining this as a motive for topic avoidance, Caughlin and Afifi (2004) stated that self-protection “involves avoiding [discussion] to insulate one-self from potential embarrassment or vulnerability” (p. 483). Yet a review of the individual items reveals a fair amount of heterogeneity; two items assess withdrawal as a means to avoid negative affect (specifically, feeling hurt; i.e., “I might get hurt”, “It brings up a past event that was hurtful”), two assess withdrawal as a means to protect one’s image in the eyes of their partner (i.e., “My partner might look down on me”, “My partner might evaluate or judge my behavior”), and another item assesses withdrawal as a means to avoid discomfort (i.e., “I would feel uncomfortable”). In the present study, each of these motives (i.e., self-protection, impression management, avoiding discomfort) will be addressed separately. Because young adult relationships are characterized by higher levels of commitment and intimacy, partners may anticipate feeling comparatively more hurt in response to conflicts, however, the emotional distress brought about via conflict in adolescent relationships may be especially salient because these relationships are novel and often individuals’ “first” romantic relationships, which may represent a unique impact on adjustment. Therefore, no age differences are expected in the self-protection motive for withdrawal.

Impression management. Past research defines impression management as the degree to which individuals attempt to manage the image that others have of them (see

Leary & Kowalski, 1990). For example, one partner might avoid discussing topics that they feel might make them look unfavorable in the eyes of their partner. If one partner feels as though his or her comments will prompt the other partner to judge or lose respect for him or her it may make the most sense for that partner to simply say nothing at all. In addition, some evidence suggests that partners may use withdrawal as a “face saving” behavior, particularly in confrontations that carry a high-risk of being perceived by one’s partner in a negative light (Wilson, Kunkel, Robson, Olufowote, & Soliz, 2009). Self-protection can then be distinguished from impression management as the former is concerned with withdrawing from communication to protect one’s private self, whereas the latter is concerned with withdraw as a means to protect one’s public self (Fenigstein, Scheier, & Buss, 1975). With respect to age, it may be that adolescents’ heightened levels of self-consciousness lead them to be more concerned with the impression that they give to their partners. In addition, young adults’ increased comfort in romantic settings may give them more confidence in navigating these contexts relative to adolescents. Therefore, it is hypothesized that adolescents will be more likely than young adults to report that their withdrawal is driven by impression management.

Avoiding discomfort. Some individuals also may withdraw from discussions with partners to reduce feelings of discomfort that these discussions incite. Withdrawal as a means to reduce discomfort might sound very similar to withdrawal as a means to protect oneself; however, discomfort may be better conceptualized as broad feelings of uneasiness that individuals experience in real-time, as opposed to feeling hurt. Moreover, when a partner withdraws as a means to alleviate feelings of discomfort, as opposed to withdrawing to reducing the likelihood that he or she will get hurt, such behavior may

reflect a less conscious response that has more to do with physiological arousal. Ekman (1984) referred to this concept as “flooding”, or experiencing a set of emotions that are so prominent and aversive that the individual “shut downs” and refuses to continue talking (also see Gottman, 1999). Discomfort avoidance may be a salient reason why individuals withdraw regardless of age, given that a physiological aversion or uneasiness in response to conflict is more of a universal motive. Therefore, no age differences are expected for this motive.

Conflict avoidance. Some individuals might withdraw from discussions with partners to avoid conflict. This behavior may be linked to broader personality traits or an intense aversion to conflict in general. Roloff & Cloven (1990) found conflict avoidance to be quite common among young adult dating couples, even among those who report high levels of satisfaction in their relationships. Conflict avoidance may be distinguished from withdrawal that is motivated by relationship protection, when partners withhold their opinions or grievances in order to protect a struggling relationship, as opposed to simply avoiding conflict more generally. Young adults are expected to be more likely to avoid conflict, given that they are more concerned with protecting their relatively more intimate relationships.

Relationship protection. Along with self-protection, relationship protection is among the most commonly cited motives for avoiding discussions with romantic partners (Baxter & Wilmot, 1985; Caughlin & Afifi, 2004; Rosenfeld, 1979). Interpersonal bonds that are strong and stable, such as romantic relationships, are likely to be most salient in meeting individual’s belongingness needs (see Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Therefore, the prospect of losing the source with which these needs are met is likely to be salient

enough to prompt individuals to suppress themselves from saying things they might otherwise say out of fear that expressing such comments would damage the relationship. Because the romantic relationships of young adults are generally defined by higher levels of investment (e.g., duration of the relationship, social support derived from the relationship) than adolescent relationships, it may be that young adults are more strongly motivated to protect and maintain their current relationships. Furthermore, withdrawing from communication to avoid “rocking the boat” also may be a tactic that individuals glean from relationship experience, which adolescents are less likely to have.

Relationship dissolution. Although some individuals might use withdrawal as a means to maintain a struggling relationship or avoid a breakup, others may use withdrawal as a means to deliberately create distance between themselves and their partner with the ultimate goal of ending the relationship. Rusbult, Zembrodt, and Gunn (1982) found that some individuals respond to dissatisfaction in their relationships by ignoring, avoiding, or refusing to discuss problems with their partner. More specifically, Afifi and Guerrero (2000) suggest that such avoidance might be motivated by a desire to deescalate intimacy in the relationship, perhaps by avoiding topics such as the future of the relationship or partners’ romantic feelings for one another. Since it may be that intentionally withdrawing from one’s partner to end a relationship reflects a certain level of social skill that young adults are more likely to possess, young adults are proposed to endorse relationship dissolution motives more so than adolescents.

Partner protection. It is important to note that existing research on withdrawal motives has not distinguished between the desires to avoid hurting the relationship and hurting one’s partner on an individual level. Of the four items used by Caughlin and Afifi

(2004) to assess the motive of relationship protection when avoiding certain topics with romantic partners, only two are explicitly relationship-based (i.e., “I don’t want to change the nature of my relationship with my partner”, “I want to protect my relationship with my partner”). The remaining two items assess protecting one’s partner (i.e., “I don’t want to hurt my partner”, “I want to protect my partner”), not one’s relationship. Therefore, partner protection motives are conceptually somewhat different than relationship protection motives because the former is rooted in empathy for one’s partner, as opposed to a desire to maintain the relationship with their partner. Although no prior studies have assessed partner protection as a motive for adolescents’ communication withdrawal, Haugen, Welsh, and McNulty (2008) found no differences in adolescents’ and young adults’ ability to accurately monitor their romantic partners’ discomfort. It also may be that the desire to avoid hurting one’s partner requires that individuals express themselves to partners in ways that are less critical and more constructive, which may require a good deal of self-censorship that adolescents are less likely to possess.

Partner unresponsiveness. Individuals also may fail to disclose information or withdraw from discussions because they feel that their partner will be unresponsive, uninterested, or unhelpful in response to talking about the topic at hand (Afifi & Guerrero, 2000). If adolescents do withdrawal more from communication than young adults, as is predicted, it stands to reason that their partners may withdraw at higher levels as well and that adolescents are aware of this. Therefore, adolescents might be more likely to withdraw from communication with their partners because they are motivated by the perception that their partner will not be responsive.

Communication inefficacy. Communication withdrawal also may be motivated by the perception that one is unskilled at communication with their partner or simply might not know what to say in the midst of a discussion or conflict. One study with young adults found that individuals who perceived themselves as low in communication efficacy were less likely to reveal secrets that they were keeping from their romantic partner (Afifi & Steuber, 2009). Although no empirical studies have directly examined communication inefficacy as a withdrawal motive in romantic relationships, it has been linked to children's levels of withdrawal when talking with their parents (Afifi & Afifi, 2009a). Because adolescents have less experience in romantic relationships they may be less skilled at communicating with their partners (see Brown, Feiring, & Furman, 1999). In fact, adolescents report that communication is among the most challenging aspects of interacting with their romantic partners (Grover & Nangle, 2003). In another study, adolescents who reported less self-disclosure to partners also reported higher levels of their own communication awkwardness (Giordano, Manning, & Longmore, 2010). Therefore, it is likely that adolescents will be more likely than young adults to report a lack of skill or uncertainty in their communication as motive for withdrawal.

Lack of closeness. Another salient motive for communication withdrawal may be a perceived lack of closeness in one's relationship. It may be that individuals do not feel ready to discuss certain topics with partners to whom they do not feel close enough. Although research suggests that a perceived lack of closeness to one's partner is not as frequently cited as other motives for withdrawal (e.g., self-protection, relationship protection, conflict avoidance; Caughlin & Afifi, 2004), it may be more commonly cited among adolescent couples. As discussed earlier, young adults tend to report higher levels

of intimacy and closeness in their romantic relationships than do adolescents (see Furman & Winkles, 2012 for a review). Therefore, adolescents may withdraw from communication in romantic relationships more than young adults because they feel as though their relationship has not developed the intimacy and closeness needed to discuss certain topics with their partners.

Maintaining privacy. According to communication privacy management theory (CPM; Petronio, 1991; 2002), individuals may be motivated to withhold personal information about themselves because revealing this information would leave them feeling vulnerable. Maintaining privacy also could reflect individuals' need to balance their own autonomy with establishing intimacy and relatedness in their romantic relationships (Greenfield, Keller, Fuligni, & Maynard, 2003; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Caughlin and Afifi (2004) found that although privacy management was sometimes cited by young adult dating couples as a motive for topic avoidance, it was cited far less often than more other withdrawal motives (e.g., self-protection, relationship protection, conflict avoidance). However, maintaining one's privacy might be a more salient motive of withdrawal in adolescent romantic relationships, possibly because these relationships are, on average, defined by lower levels of intimacy and closeness.

Summary. The present study will examine age differences in each of these motives, the association between each motive and each of the five indices of communication withdrawal outlined in Research Aim 1, and whether or not these associations are moderated by age (i.e. adolescents vs. young adults). Motives for communication withdrawal will be assessed by three different indices: 1) self-reported withdrawal motives in the relationship in general, 2) self-reported withdrawal motives in

regards to discussing one's own grievances in a conflict discussion (assessed immediately following the conflict discussion), 3) self-reported withdrawal motives in regards to discussing a romantic partner's grievances in a conflict discussion (assessed immediately following the conflict discussion).

Hypothesis 2a: All withdrawal motives will be positively associated with communication withdrawal.

Hypothesis 2b: Although no specific hypotheses are posited, whether or not the association between each motive and communication withdrawal is moderated by age also will be tested.

Hypothesis 2c: Adolescents will be more likely than young adults to endorse impression management, partner unresponsiveness, communication inefficacy, lack of closeness, and privacy maintenance as motives for withdrawal. Young adults will be more likely to cite conflict avoidance, relationship protection, partner protection, and relationship dissolution as motives for withdrawal. No age differences are expected for the self-protection and avoiding discomfort motives.

Research Aim 3: Communication Withdrawal and Relationship Adjustment

Communication patterns that inhibit intimacy and self-disclosure in romantic relationships, such as withdrawal, have been linked to poor relationship adjustment and an increased likelihood of experiencing a breakup (see Gottman, 1994; Noller & Feeney, 1998). In samples of married couples, withdrawal has been linked to relationship dissatisfaction, both concurrently (Heavey et al., 1993) and over time (Heavey, Christensen, & Malamuth, 1995), as well as to divorce (Gottman, 1999; Gottman & Levenson, 2000). Elsewhere, research with young adults suggests that couples who more

frequently avoid discussing certain topics are less satisfied in their relationships (Caughlin & Afifi, 2004; Caughlin & Golish, 2002; Dailey & Palomares, 2004). It may be that communication withdrawal reflects the perception that one's partner is unresponsive, which has been linked to poor romantic relationship quality and romantic breakups among adult partners (see Reis, 2007; Reis, 2012).

Yet it is unclear whether withdrawal is as damaging to adolescent relationships as it is to adult relationships because such age differences have not been tested in previous research. As discussed earlier, intimacy and the degree to which romantic relationships are relied upon for social support increases throughout the transition from adolescence into young adulthood (see Furman & Winkles, 2012). Therefore, communication withdrawal may be perceived as less of a transgression in adolescent relationships because adolescents, on average, do not expect as much intimacy in their romantic relationships. Likewise, adolescents and their partners are likely to be similarly inexperienced at communication, thus less likely to expect one another to be especially skilled at communication in romantic contexts. Finally, adolescent breakups have been shown, on average, to have less to do with a lack of intimacy and/or self-disclosure and more to do with a lack of affiliation and/or companionship (Connolly & McIsaac, 2009). For these reasons, it may be that communication withdrawal is a less reliable barometer of relationship quality in adolescence than it is in young adulthood.

The present study will test the associations between communication withdrawal and relationship adjustment and whether or not these associations are moderated by age (i.e. adolescents vs. young adults). Relationship adjustment will be assessed concurrently with three different indices: (1) positive relationship quality, (2) negative relationship

quality, and (3) concurrent relationship satisfaction. Relationship adjustment also will be assessed six months later by two additional indices: (4) whether or not the relationship is still intact and (5) relationship satisfaction if the relationship is still intact.

Hypothesis 3a: Communication withdrawal will be concurrently associated with lower positive relationship quality, higher negative relationship quality, and lower levels of relationship satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3b: Communication withdrawal will predict an increased likelihood of romantic breakup and decreased relationship satisfaction over time among couples that remain intact.

Hypothesis 3c: Any significant associations in Hypotheses 3a and 3b will be moderated by age, such that communication withdrawal will be a stronger predictor of romantic adjustment for young adults than for adolescents.

Research Aim 4: Communication Withdrawal and Gender

Past research generally finds that males are more likely to withdraw in response to discussions and conflicts with intimate partners (Christensen & Heavey, 1990, Heavey et al., 1995; Woodin, 2011), avoid discussing specific topics (Caughlin & Golish, 2002), self-silence during discussions (Harper, Dickson, & Welsh, 2006, Uebelacker, Courtnage, & Whisman, 2003), and engage in stonewalling (Gottman, 1994; 1999). This pattern has emerged in both samples of adolescent romantic relationships (Harper et al., 2006; Harper & Welsh, 2007), as well as adult relationships (see Sagrestano, Heavey, & Christensen, 2006; Woodin, 2011).

Other evidence suggests that there may be gender differences in the motives that underlie communication withdrawal. For example, men may be more likely to endorse

communication inefficacy as a withdrawal motive. Studies of married couples suggest that women may be better at communicating emotions to their romantic partners than men (Cordova, Gee, & Warren, 2005; Mirgain & Cordova, 2007). Moreover, in an adolescent sample, Giordano, Manning, and Longmore (2006) found that males are more likely to report feeling awkward when talking about their emotions with a romantic partner and less likely to report feeling confident in how they communicate relational concerns to their partner. Therefore, it may be that men are more likely to withdraw from discussions and conflicts in their relationships because they perceive themselves as relatively less skilled in these arenas as compared to their female counterparts (see McGoldrick, Anderson, & Walsh, 1989 for a similar argument).

It also may be that men are more likely to withdraw from partners as a way to reduce heightened levels of discomfort during conflicts relative to females. Gottman and Levenson (1988) proposed that men experience increased arousal relative to women in response to marital conflict, as well as elevated levels of discomfort when discussing emotionally-laden topics. This may, in part, account for why men are more likely to withdraw than women, as withdrawal has been linked to decreases in emotional arousal (Baucom et al., 2011). In addition, Burke et al. (1976) found that married women were more likely than men to report that they avoided disclosing information to their husbands to prevent them from worrying. Conversely, the authors also found that men were more likely than women to avoid disclosure because they felt as though talking with their spouse would not be helpful.

In addition, the association between withdrawal and relationship satisfaction also may be moderated by gender. Afifi and Colleagues proposed the “standards for openness

hypothesis”, whereby women perceive topic avoidance to be more dissatisfying than men, finding that only females’ perceptions of their male partner’s topic avoidance predicted their own relationship dissatisfaction (Afifi, McManus, Steuber, & Coho, 2009; Afifi, Joseph, & Aldeis, 2012). Other research reports that only husbands’ withdrawal in response to their wives’ issues predicts decreases in relationship satisfaction, not wives’ withdrawal in response to their husbands’ issues (Heavey et al., 1995); a finding that also has emerged among young adults (Laurent, Kim, & Capaldi, 2008). In a sample of married couples, Gottman and Levenson (2000) found that only husbands’ stonewalling predicted an increased likelihood of divorce, whereas wives stonewalling did not. Likewise, Baxter (1986) found that young adult women were more likely than their male counterparts to cite lack of communication as a reason for a recent breakup. However, not all existing research supports females’ greater standards for openness in romantic relationships. Some studies find a significant association between withdrawal and relationship dissatisfaction for both genders (Caughlin & Golish, 2002; Ridley, Wilhelm, & Surra, 2001; Roberts, 2000) whereas others find no significant association for either gender (Heavey et al., 1993; Roberts & Krokoff, 1990; Smith, Vivian, & O’Leary, 1990).

Chapter Two

Method

Participants

The current study included 172 participants in 86 heterosexual romantic dyads. Participants were mid-to-late adolescents ($N = 52$) and young adults ($N = 120$). The sample was 83.53% European American, 10.59% African American, 2.18% Asian American, 0.59% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. The remainder of the sample reported more than one race (4.12%). In terms of ethnicity, 6.98% of the sample identified as Hispanic or Latino/a. All participants had to be in a relationship with their current partner that has been intact for at least one month to be eligible to participate in the study. Participants were contacted approximately six months after the initial lab visit to complete a short online follow-up survey. Because the Time 2 data collection for adolescents is still ongoing, only Time 2 data for young adults was used.

Of the young adults assessed at Time 1 ($N = 120$), 79% ($N = 95$) also provided data at Time 2. Representative analyses were conducted on all study variables to test whether the sample of participants who completed the follow-up assessment differed from those that did not. Those who completed the follow-up assessment reported higher levels of positive relationship quality (effect size = .26, $t [1, 170] = 2.35, p < .05$) and relationship satisfaction (effect size = .33, $t [1, 170] = 2.49, p < .05$), as well as lower levels of negative relationship quality (effect size = -.32, $t [1, 170] = 2.28, p < .05$), and lower levels of general withdrawal (effect size = -.27, $t [1, 170] = 2.04, p < .05$) and

observed withdrawal (effect size = $-.65$, $t [1, 170] = 3.70$, $p < .001$). Levels of several withdrawal motives also differed as a function of whether or not participants completed the follow-up assessment. For general withdrawal motives, those who completed the follow-up reported lower levels of avoiding discomfort (effect size = $-.48$, $t [1, 170] = 2.16$, $p < .05$), relationship protection (effect size = $-.51$, $t [1, 170] = 2.41$, $p < .05$), maintaining privacy (effect size = $-.60$, $t [1, 170] = 2.78$, $p < .01$), communication inefficacy (effect size = $-.82$, $t [1, 170] = 3.67$, $p < .001$) and relationship dissolution (effect size = $-.33$, $t [1, 170] = 3.23$, $p < .01$). For withdrawal during the conflict task, those who completed the follow-up assessment reported lower levels of relationship dissolution (effect size = $-.30$, $t [1, 170] = 2.65$, $p < .01$) when discussing their own issues (but not their partner's issues) and lower levels of maintaining privacy (effect size = $-.28$, $t [1, 170] = 2.06$, $p < .05$) when discussing their partner's issues (but not their own issues).

Adolescent participants (aged 15-18; $M = 16.56$, $SD = 1.00$) were currently in a relationship in which both partners were sophomores, juniors, or seniors in high school. Several methods were used to recruit adolescents. First, flyers advertising the study were distributed and posted in public places (e.g., community bulletin boards, coffee shops, libraries) around the city where the study took place. Adolescents also were recruited via University sponsored emails to all members of the University community that list opportunities and events around campus, and Virtual Backpack, a forum for parents of students enrolled in the local public school district. In addition, e-mails describing the study were sent to the directors of several youth organizations encouraging them to share information about the study. Several online advertisements describing the study were

posted on Facebook as well. Finally, upon completing the study, participants were given flyers to hand out to any peers they knew who might be interested in the study.

Young adult participants (aged 18-26; $M = 20.79$, $SD = 1.91$) were not required to be enrolled at the University from which the sample was recruited, though 85.83% of participants reported that they were currently attending classes at the University. Several methods were used to recruit young adults. First, several instructors teaching courses in the Department of Psychology were contacted to ask whether a class visit could be scheduled to make a brief announcement about the project. Young adult participants also were recruited through flyers posted around campus and announcements posted through the University sponsored emails described above. In describing the study, it was explained to students that participation would involve visiting the research lab with a romantic partner of at least one month. Individuals interested in participating were instructed to contact the research lab via e-mail to schedule an appointment.

Procedure

Participation took place at a University research laboratory and included both questionnaire and observational segments. For adolescent participants who were under the age of 18, the romantic partners were e-mailed parental consent forms for their parents to sign prior to their participation in the study. These adolescents were instructed to bring signed consent forms with them to the lab visit. Upon arriving at the lab, the adolescent participants also provided assent to participate unless they were of legal age to provide consent in which case they signed consent forms themselves at this time. At the beginning of the lab visit young adult participants provided informed consent. Both

adolescent and young adult romantic partners were each compensated with a \$20 check for their participation.

Initial questionnaire assessment. After consent to participate in the study was obtained, each participant was directed to a separate room where he or she completed a series of questionnaires. Details of each questionnaire are described in the measures section. The primary investigator was present to answer any questions raised by participants throughout the questionnaire portion of the study.

Observed Plan-a-Party task. Both partners were then escorted to an observation room with a table and two chairs. The observational segment was recorded by cameras mounted on the wall that fed into an adjacent control room. The first conversational task that participants completed involved planning a party that would be fun to have, which lasted seven minutes. The primary function of this task was to serve as a “warm-up” task.

Questionnaires: After Plan-a-Party task. After the plan-a-party task, the participants were escorted back to separate rooms and asked to complete a short questionnaire. The questionnaire asked participants to rate the degree to which they desire change in specific aspects of their relationships. Details of this questionnaire are described in the measures section. Each participant was then asked to identify one issue that they felt was most important to discuss with their partner.

Observed Conflict task. Participants were then asked to discuss each partner’s issue over the course of a 10-minute observational segment. They were instructed that both partners’ issues should be discussed and that they could discuss anything about the issues that they want. They also were told that, if they finish talking about each partner’s

issue, they could talk about something else or play with a jigsaw puzzle placed on the table. This task was the task of interest for the current study.

Post-conflict questionnaire assessment. After the conflict task, each partner responded to an additional series of questionnaires. These items assessed each partner's perceptions of their own withdrawal and their partner's withdrawal during the conflict task. The partners also responded to items that assessed various motives for why they and their partners might have withdrawn from the discussion. These questionnaires are described in greater detail in the measures section.

Observed Ideal Date task. Participants were then brought back to the observation room one more time in order to complete a final 5-minute observational segment. Romantic partners were instructed to plan an ideal date that they would enjoy having with one another. The primary purpose of this task was to foster a positive interaction between the partners in order to end the session on a positive note.

Follow-up questionnaire assessment. Participants were then contacted via e-mail approximately six months after the initial lab visit. They were asked to respond online to a short series of questions pertaining to their present relationship status. This questionnaire is described in detail in the measures section.

Measures: Before Plan-a-Party Task

Demographics questionnaire. Participants reported their age, gender, race, ethnicity, and educational experience (e.g., year in high school or college). This information was used to describe the samples. This adolescent version of this measure is presented in Appendix A. The young adult version of this measure is presented in Appendix B.

Romantic experience questionnaire. Participants then responded to several items that pertained to their experiences in current and past romantic relationships. One of these items assessed how long they and the romantic partner have been together. Participants selected one of four responses that best describe the length of their relationship: (1) one to six months, (2) six months to one year, (3) one year to two years, or (4) two or more years. This measure is presented in Appendix C.

Communication Withdrawal Inventory-Target (CWI-T; developed for the current study). The 18-item CWI-T assessed the degree to which participants' perceive that they withdraw from communication with their current romantic partner. Of the 18 total items, 7 items were taken or modified from existing assessments. These measures include the Silencing the Self Scale (Jack & Dill, 1992; 2 items; e.g., "I don't speak my feelings about topics that lead to conflict or disagreement with my partner", "I state my opinions even when they conflict with my partner's opinions", reverse scored), the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (Kurdek, 1994; 2 items; e.g., "I often reach a point during conflicts with my partner when I just stop talking", "I shut down when my partner and I have a disagreement or conflict"), and the Interaction Response Patterns Scale (Roberts, 2000; 3 items; e.g., "When my partner and I disagree I keep my feelings to myself", "I often tune my partner out when we have a disagreement or conflict", "I often ignore what my partner has to say when we have a conflict or disagreement"). The remaining 11 items were developed based on past theoretical conceptualizations and observational assessments of withdrawal (e.g., Christensen & Heavey, 1990; Gottman, 1994; Roloff & Cloven, 1990). Examples of the items developed for the current study include: "I often reach a point during conflicts when I just stop talking.", "I try not to say

too much when my partner and I disagree” and “When my partner and I disagree I often give short responses like ‘yeah’ or ‘uh-huh’”. Participants rated how strongly they agreed with each statement on a five-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly disagree” (1) to “Strongly agree” (5). The items on the CWI-T displayed high internal reliability ($\alpha = .86$). This measure is presented in Appendix D.

Communication Withdrawal Inventory-Partner (CWI-P; developed for the current study). The 18 items on the CWI also were used to assess the degree to which participants perceive that their partner withdraws from communication with them. Items on the self-report and partner-report versions of the CWI-P were identical except that they were revised to assess the participants’ perceptions of their partners’ behavior rather than their own behavior. For example, the following item on the self-report measure “I don’t speak my feelings about topics that lead to conflict or disagreement with my partner” was revised to be “My partner does not speak his or her feelings about topics that lead to conflict or disagreement with me.” Participants rated how strongly they agree with each items on a five-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly disagree” (1) to “Strongly agree” (5). The items on the CWI-P displayed high internal reliability ($\alpha = .88$). This measure is presented in Appendix E.

Motives for Communication Withdrawal Inventory (MCWI; adapted from Caughlin & Afifi, 2004 for the current study). The 44-item MCWI assessed various motives for why participants withdraw from discussions with their romantic partners. This measure begins with the prompt, “I avoid discussing certain topics with my romantic partner because _____”. Of the 44 items, 10 items were taken verbatim or modified

from Caughlin and Afifi's (2004) Reasons for Avoidance scale. The remaining 34 items were created for use in the present study.

Four items were used to assess each of the 11 motives for withdrawal (Cronbach's alphas are listed in parentheses to illustrate internal reliability for each motive across the four items for that motive). The motives assessed were: self-protection (e.g., "I might get hurt"; $\alpha = .74$), impression management (e.g., "My partner might lose respect for me"; $\alpha = .90$), avoiding discomfort (e.g., "It would make me feel anxious"; $\alpha = .77$), conflict avoidance, (e.g., "It might lead to an argument between me and my partner"; $\alpha = .83$), relationship protection (e.g., "I would be afraid that my partner might break up with me"; $\alpha = .78$), relationship dissolution (e.g., "I just want to passively let my relationship with my partner die out"; $\alpha = .86$), partner protection (e.g., "My partner might get hurt"; $\alpha = .79$), partner unresponsiveness (e.g. "I feel like my partner would not be open to discussing these topics with me"; $\alpha = .67$), communication inefficacy (e.g., "I am not very good at telling my partner how I feel"; $\alpha = .81$), lack of closeness (e.g., "The relationship I have with my partner is not serious enough to talk about these topics"; $\alpha = .76$), and maintaining privacy (e.g., "There is some information that I do not want to share with my partner"; $\alpha = .84$). Participants rated how strongly they agreed with each statement on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly disagree" (1) to "Strongly agree" (5). This measure is presented in Appendix F.

Network of Relationships Inventory: Social Provisions Version (NRI-SPV; Furman & Buhrmester, 2010). The 30-item NRI-SPV assessed participants' romantic relationship quality. Participants rated the degree to which their relationship is defined by seven positive qualities (e.g. companionship, intimate disclosure, instrumental aid,

nurturance, reassurance of worth, reliable alliance, affection) and two negative qualities (e.g. conflict, antagonism). The degree to which romantic relationships are defined by each of these 10 qualities is assessed with three items, which are each rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “Little or none” (1) to “The most” (5). A composite score was computed for positive relationship quality based on the mean of the 21 items that comprise the seven positive quality subscales. This scale displayed excellent internal reliability ($\alpha = .92$). An additional composite score for negative relationship quality was computed based on the mean of the six items that comprise the two negative quality subscales. This scale also was highly reliable ($\alpha = .94$). The complete measure is presented in Appendix G.

Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI; Funk & Rogge, 2007). A 16-item questionnaire was used to assess the degree to which individuals were satisfied with their current romantic relationship. Participants were first asked to indicate the degree of happiness that they feel best describes their relationship on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from (0) “Extremely Unhappy” to (6) “Perfect”. They were then asked to indicate the degree to which the statement, “I have a warm and comfortable relationship with my partner”, describes their relationship on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from (0) “Not at all True” to (5) “Completely True”. Participants also responded to 8 questions (e.g., “How rewarding is your relationship with your partner?”, “In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?”) on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from (0) “Not at all” to (5) “Completely”. Each of the remaining six items asked participants to select the degree to which one of two adjectives best describes their relationship (e.g., “Boring vs. Interesting”, “Miserable vs. Enjoyable”) on a scale from 0 (e.g., “Boring”) to 5 (e.g.,

“Interesting”). These 16 items were taken from a larger 32-item questionnaire and have demonstrated strong psychometric properties in prior studies (see Funk & Rogge, 2007). In the present study, the 16-item CSI displayed excellent internal reliability ($\alpha = .93$). This measure is presented in Appendix H.

Measures: After Plan-a-Party Task

Revised Areas of Change Questionnaire (adapted from Weiss & Birchler, 1975 for the current study). A 26-item revised version of the Areas of Change Questionnaire was administered to assess the degree to which participants desire change in specific aspects of their relationship. Each topic or domain corresponds to a specific item prompted by the phrase “I want my partner to...”. Items are assessed on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from “much more” (-3) to “much less” (3). For example, one item reads, “Spend more time with me”. Participants were then asked to identify one topic from the questionnaire that they felt was most important to talk about with their partner. Although the original version of the Areas of Change questionnaire assessed several of the same topics used in the revised version (e.g., time spent together, time spent with friends, attention to appearance, dating other people, help plan activities we do together) the questionnaire was modified from the original, by adding additional topics, in order to keep the topics consistent with topics included in other questionnaires that are part of a larger data collection in which the current study takes place. This measure is presented in Appendix I.

Measures: After Conflict Task

Communication Withdrawal Inventory-Target: Conflict Task (CWI-T; developed for the current study). The 18-item CWI-T was administered a second time

to assess the degree to which participants' perceived that they withdrew from discussions specifically during the conflict task. The same items were used as those described previously, but the items were re-worded to specifically assess withdrawal during the conflict task that participants just completed. For example, participants responded to the item, "I didn't say too much when my partner and I disagreed" as opposed to the original item, "I don't say too much when my partner and I disagree." The CWI-T, when given after the conflict task, displayed excellent internal reliability ($\alpha = .90$). This measure is presented in Appendix J.

Communication Withdrawal Inventory-Partner: Conflict Task (CWI-P; developed for the current study). The 18-item CWI-P also was administered a second time to assess the degree to which participants' perceived that their partner withdrew specifically from discussions during the conflict task. The items were parallel to those described for the self-report but revised to assess the partner's behavior. For example, the item "I didn't say too much when we disagreed" was changed to "My partner didn't say too much when we disagreed". The CWI-P, when given after the conflict task, displayed excellent internal reliability ($\alpha = .90$). This measure is presented in Appendix K.

Motives for Communication Withdrawal Inventory-Target's Issue: Conflict Task (MCWI-T; adapted from Caughlin & Afifi, 2004 for the current study). The 44-item MCWI was administered again following the conflict task to assess participants' motives for withdrawing from discussions that involved issues that they identified prior to and during the conflict task. This measure began with the prompt, "I avoided discussing my issues with my romantic partner because _____". The items were the same as those included in the previous administration of the MCWI but re-worded to

specifically assess motives for withdraw during the conflict task that participants just completed. For example, “I want to keep my relationship with my partner going smoothly” was changed to “I wanted to keep my relationship with my partner going smoothly”. All 11 motives displayed good internal reliability (all α s > .70). This measure is presented in Appendix L.

Motives for Communication Withdrawal Inventory-Partner’s Issue: Conflict Task (MCWI-P; adapted from Caughlin & Afifi, 2004 for the current study). The 44-item MCWI was administered a second time following the conflict task to assess participants’ motives for withdrawing from discussions that involved issues that their partner identified prior to and during the conflict task. This measure began with the prompt, “I avoided discussing my partner’s issues with him or her because _____”. The items were the same as those included in the previous administration of the MCWI that pertain to discussions of issues that the target identified. All 11 motives displayed good internal reliability (all α s > .80). This measure is presented in Appendix M.

Observational Coding

Each recorded interaction was transcribed verbatim. Transcribers were trained to incorporate transcription symbols to add detail such as verbal inflection and interruptions. All transcripts were checked a second time for accuracy by an additional transcriber. Coders first read each transcript and then watched the videotaped interactions while referring to the written transcript so that any language that was unclear could be clarified.

The Couples Interaction Rating System (CIRS; Heavey, Gill, & Christensen, 2002) was used to code the degree to which each partner withdrew from communication during the conflict task. The CIRS consists of 13 dimensions that each code for a specific

behavior. Past research (e.g., Christensen & Heavey, 1990, Balderrama-Durbin, Allen, & Rhoades, 2012) has utilized a composite withdrawal score based on an average of the 3 of the 13 dimensions: withdrawal (e.g., withdraws from discussion, becomes silent, refuses to discuss a particular topic), avoidance (e.g., changing the subject, minimizing the importance of the problem), and a reverse-coded discussion dimension (e.g., engagement or involvement in the discussion). The dimensions were coded using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “none” (1) to “a lot” (5). Coders assigned a rating for each partner on each of the three dimensions.

Coders were trained using video files from another study that involved a similar conflict task. Then, to compute inter-rater reliability, coders separately rated 15 adolescent dyads and 15 young adult dyads. Interclass correlation coefficients (ICC) were then calculated to assess inter-rater reliability. ICCs were acceptable for the withdrawal (ICC = .69), avoidance (ICC = .76), and discussion (ICC = .78) subscales. This level of inter-rater agreement is similar to that found in other published studies (e.g., Balderrama-Durbin et al., 2012; Vogel et al., 2007). Discrepancies between coders for the observations used to compute inter-rater reliabilities were resolved through discussion between the coders.

Follow-up Assessment

Participants were each contacted individually via e-mail to complete a short follow-up questionnaire approximately six months after they completed the initial study. As the Time 2 data collection for adolescents is still ongoing, only Time 2 data for young adults was used.

The questionnaire was administered via the internet (via Qualtrics; see <https://missouripsych.qualtrics.com/>) and generally took less than five minutes to complete. Participants first responded to a single item to assess whether they were still in a romantic relationship with the person with whom they participated in the lab visit. If the relationship was still intact, each participant completed a 4-item version of the 16-item Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI; Funk & Rogge, 2007) that was administered during the initial lab visit (see Appendix N). This scale displayed high internal reliability ($\alpha = .89$).

Chapter Three

Results

Data Analytic Approach

Multi-level models (MLM) were used to test all hypotheses in the proposed study (using PROC MIXED in SAS). Adolescents and young adults were nested within romantic dyads. A series of two-level random coefficient models were conducted (Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006; Kashy & Donnellan, 2012). MLM has been used in similar research using both individual-level and dyad-level variables in the context of romantic relationships (e.g., Caughlin & Afifi, 2004; Harper & Welsh, 2007; Knobloch & Theiss, 2011). Because romantic partners tend to be similar to one another, it cannot be assumed that data from each partner are independent sources of information (Kenny et al., 2006). Therefore, MLM is preferable to standard data analytic measures (e.g., analysis of variance, regression) because this independence assumption would otherwise be violated (Kenny et al., 2006).

Intraclass correlations (ICCs) were computed to test the degree of similarity between partners on each of the five measures of withdrawal. Partners' reports of their own withdrawal in general were not related to one another ($ICC = -.10$). Likewise, partners' reports of their partners' general withdrawal were not significantly related ($ICC = .11$). However, partners' reports of their own withdrawal specifically in the context of the conflict task were related to one another and their reports of their partners' withdrawal specifically in the context of the conflict task were related to one another

(ICC = .21, $p < .01$; ICC = .30, $p < .0001$, respectively). Partners' observed withdrawal scores also were similar (ICC = .36, $p < .0001$). ICCs also were computed to test for similarity between partners for each of the 11 motives for withdrawal. Each motive was assessed: regarding the relationship in general, regarding the discussion of one's own issues in the conflict task, and regarding the discussion of one's partners' issues during the conflict task. Because each of the 11 motives was assessed three times, 33 ICCs were computed. These results are summarized in Table 1. Out of the 33 effects tested, 20 were positive and significant. The remaining 11 effects were positive but not significant. Last, partners' reports of positive relationship quality (ICC = .47, $p < .0001$), negative relationship quality (ICC = .67, $p < .0001$), Time 1 relationship satisfaction (ICC = .38, $p < .0001$), and Time 2 relationship satisfaction (ICC = .68, $p < .0001$) were similar as well.

Age and Gender Differences in Withdrawal

A series of multi-level models (with participants nested in romantic dyads) were used to test age and gender differences in each of the five measures of withdrawal. In each model, a withdrawal variable served as the dependent variable and was predicted by the main effects of age and gender. Each model was then tested again with the addition of an Age X Gender interaction term. Recall that withdrawal was assessed by five different indices: 1) perceptions of one's own withdrawal in the relationship overall, 2) perceptions of one's partner's withdrawal in the relationship overall, 3) perceptions of one's own withdrawal in the conflict task, 4) perceptions of one's partner's withdrawal in the conflict task, and 5) observed withdrawal during the conflict task. The results are summarized in Table 2. No age or gender differences emerged on any of the withdrawal

measures and no Age X Gender interactions emerged for any of the five withdrawal measures.

Age, Relationship Length, and Withdrawal

Because no age effects were significant, it was not possible to test whether the length of the relationship mediated the effect of age on withdrawal. However, for descriptive purposes, analyses tested: 1) age differences in relationship length and 2) the relation between relationship length and withdrawal. A multi-level model in which relationship length was predicted from age (adolescent versus young adult) indicated that young adults reported longer relationships with their current partner than adolescents ($SPE = .34, t [1, 170] = 4.54, p < .0001$). For each of the five withdrawal variables, multi-level models also were conducted in which the withdrawal variable was predicted from relationship length. The only significant effect was for perceptions of partners' withdrawal in general ($SPE = .13, t [1, 170] = 2.28, p < .05$), with individuals in longer relationships reporting that they perceive that their partners withdraw more in general than individuals in shorter relationships.

Age and Gender Differences in Withdrawal Motives

Analyses next tested age and gender differences in the withdrawal motives. For descriptive purposes, interrelations among the withdrawal motives were computed. Recall that each withdrawal motive was assessed three times: regarding the relationship in general, regarding the discussion of one's own issues during the conflict task, and regarding the discussion of the romantic partner's issues during the conflict task. Table 3 presents the interrelationships among the motives (tested using multi-level models with participants nested in romantic dyads) for motives assessed in the relationship in general,

Table 4 presents the motives assessed regarding the discussion of one's own issues in the conflict task, and Table 5 presents motives assessed regarding the discussion of the partner's issues in the conflict task. When assessed in general, 53 of the 55 interrelationships among motives were significantly and positively related to one another (*SPEs* ranged from .15 to .62). All motives were significantly and positively related to one another when assessed regarding one's own conflict issues (*SPEs* range from .26 to .76) and regarding partners' conflict issues (*SPEs* range from .24 to .77).

A series of multi-level models (with participants nested in romantic dyads) were then used to test age and gender differences in each of the 11 motives for withdrawal. These analyses were conducted separately for each of the three assessments of withdrawal motives (for a total of 33 models). In each model, one of the motives served as the dependent variable and was predicted by the main effects of age and gender. Each model was then tested again with the addition of an Age X Gender interaction term.

Withdrawal Motives – General. Age and gender differences were first tested using the measure that assessed withdrawal motives in the relationships in general. Results for age and gender differences in each withdrawal motive are summarized in Table 6. Age differences emerged for 3 of the 11 motives. Adolescents endorsed the impression management, relationship protection, and partner protection motives more strongly than did young adults. Gender differences emerged for 2 of the 11 motives. Females were more likely than males to report that they withdraw to protect themselves from emotional distress and because they perceive that their partner will not be responsive.

Significant Age X Gender interactions emerged for self-protection, $F(1, 168) = 6.54, p < .05$, impression management, $F(1, 168) = 4.63, p < .05$, and partner protection, $F(1, 168) = 5.49, p < .05$. For self-protection, the gender effect (which was significant for the full sample) was significant for both ages but larger for adolescents (adolescent females: $M = 3.05, SD = 1.24$; adolescent males: $M = 2.04, SD = 0.84$, effect size = -1.01 ; $t[1, 50] = 4.38, p < .001$) than for young adults (young adult females: $M = 2.49, SD = 0.92$; young adult males: $M = 2.20, SD = 0.92$, effect size = $-.29, t[1, 118] = 2.14, p < .05$). The age effect (which was not significant for the full sample) was significant for females (effect size = $-.54; t[1, 84] = 2.45, p < .01$) with adolescent females reporting greater self-protection motives than young adult females. The developmental effect was not significant for males (effect size = $.17; t[1, 84] = 0.79, p = .43$).

For impression management, the age effect (which was significant for the full sample) was significant for females (adolescent females: $M = 2.69, SD = 1.37$; young adult females: $M = 1.84, SD = 1.06$, effect size = $-.86; t[1, 84] = 3.14, p < .01$) with adolescent females reporting greater impression management motives than young adult females. The age effect was not significant for males (adolescent males: $M = 2.03, SD = 0.98$; young adult males: $M = 1.92, SD = 0.98$, effect size = $.11; t[1, 84] = 0.48, p = .64$). The gender effect (which was not significant for the full sample) was significant for adolescents (effect size = $-.66; t[1, 50] = 2.48, p < .05$) with adolescent females reporting greater impression management motives than adolescent males. The gender effect was not significant for young adults (effect size = $-.08; t[1, 118] = 0.49, p = .63$).

For partner protection, the age effect (which was significant for the full sample) was significant for females (adolescent females: $M = 3.55, SD = 1.21$; young adult

females: $M = 2.63$, $SD = 1.06$, effect size = $-.93$; $t [1, 84] = 3.65$, $p < .001$) with adolescent females reporting greater partner protection than young adult females, although this effect was not significant for males (adolescent males: $M = 3.10$, $SD = 1.07$; young adult males: $M = 2.95$, $SD = 1.01$, effect size = $-.17$, $t [1, 84] = 0.75$, $p = .46$). The gender effect (which was not significant for the full sample) was not significant for adolescents (effect size = $-.45$, $t [1, 50] = 1.63$, $p = .12$) or young adults (effect size = $.32$, $t [1, 118] = 1.99$, $p = .05$).

Withdrawal Motives – My Issue. Age and gender differences were then tested using the measure that assessed participants' motives for withdrawal while discussing their own issues during the conflict task. These results are presented in Table 7. No developmental differences emerged. The only gender difference that emerged was for relationship dissolution, with males reporting that they withdrew more than females as a means to end the relationship. In addition, one Age X Gender interaction emerged, which was for the impression management motive, $F (1, 168) = 4.36$, $p < .05$. However, the age effect was not significant for females (adolescent females: $M = 1.82$, $SD = 1.28$; young adult females: $M = 1.33$, $SD = 0.80$, effect size = $.46$, $t [1, 84] = 1.96$, $p = .05$) or males (adolescent males: $M = 1.43$, $SD = 0.72$; young adult males: $M = 1.60$, $SD = 0.92$, effect size = $.18$, $t [1, 84] = 0.92$, $p = .36$) and the gender effect was not significant for adolescents (effect size = $.37$, $t [1, 84] = 1.37$, $p = .19$) or young adults (effect size = $.27$, $t [1, 84] = 1.59$, $p = .12$).

Withdrawal Motives – My Partner's Issue. Age and gender differences were next tested using the measure that assessed motives during the discussion of the partners' issues during the conflict task. These results are presented in Table 8. One age difference

emerged, with adolescents reporting greater partner protection than young adults. Gender differences emerged for self-protection, lack of closeness, and relationship dissolution. Females were more likely than males to report that they withdrew to protect themselves from emotional distress. Males were more likely than females to report that they withdrew due to a lack of closeness in the relationship and as a way to dissolve the relationship.

Three Age X Gender interactions emerged for withdrawal motives when discussing partners' issues. These interactions were significant for the impression management, $F(1, 168) = 6.43, p < .05$, maintain privacy, $F(1, 168) = 4.73, p < .05$, and partner protection motives, $F(1, 168) = 6.86, p < .05$.

For impression management, the age effect (which was not significant for the full sample) was significant for females (adolescent females: $M = 1.88, SD = 1.30$; young adult females: $M = 1.33, SD = 0.62$, effect size = $-.52, t[1, 84] = 2.47, p < .01$) with adolescent females reporting greater impression management motives than young adult females. However, the age effect was not significant for males (adolescent males: $M = 1.38, SD = 0.71$; young adult males: $M = 1.53, SD = 0.86$, effect size = $.16, t[1, 86] = 0.81, p = .42$). The gender effect (which was not significant for the full sample) was not significant for adolescents (effect size = $-.41, t[1, 50] = 2.03, p = .05$) or young adults (effect size = $-.21, t[1, 118] = 1.69, p < .10$).

For the maintaining privacy motive, the age effect (which was not significant for the full sample) was significant for females, (adolescent females, $M = 1.59, SD = 1.03$; young adult females, $M = 1.18, SD = 0.42$; effect size = $-.41, t[1, 84] = 2.77, p < .01$) with adolescent females reporting greater maintaining privacy motives than young adult

females, although the effect was not significant for males (adolescent males: $M = 1.35$, $SD = 0.58$; young adult males: $M = 1.53$, $SD = 0.86$, effect size = .12, $t [1, 84] = 0.77$, $p = .45$). The gender effect (which was not significant for the full sample) was significant for young adults (effect size = .27, $t [1, 118] = 2.49$, $p < .05$) with young adult males reporting greater maintaining privacy motives than young adult females. The gender effect was not significant for adolescents (effect size = -.26, $t [1, 52] = 0.99$, $p = .33$).

For partner protection, the age effect (which was significant for the full sample) was significant for females (adolescent females: $M = 2.40$, $SD = 1.30$, young adult females: $M = 1.65$, $SD = 0.92$, effect size = .76, $t [1, 84] = 3.09$, $p < .01$), with adolescent females reporting greater partner protection motives than young adult females. The age effect was not significant for males (adolescent males: $M = 1.80$, $SD = 1.00$; young adult males: $M = 1.91$, $SD = 1.06$, effect size = .10, $t [1, 84] = 0.41$, $p = .69$). The gender effect (which was not significant for the full sample) was not significant for adolescents (effect size = -.60, $t [1, 50] = 1.84$, $p = .07$) or young adults (effect size = .27, $t [1, 118] = 1.75$, $p = .08$).

Associations between Withdrawal and Motives for Withdrawal

A series of multilevel models were conducted to test the associations between each withdrawal motive and global levels of withdrawal. First, a set of analyses were conducted to test associations between each of the 11 motives assessed regarding the relationship in general and self-reported withdrawal assessed regarding the relationship in general. These results are summarized in Table 9. Strong positive associations emerged between each of the eleven motives and self-reported withdrawal (all p 's < .0001).

Each of the 11 models tested above were then repeated with the addition of interaction terms between the motive and age or gender, as well as a 3-way Motive X Age X Gender interaction term. Of the 33 interactions (3 interaction terms were included in each of the 11 models) only 1 reached significance. This was a 3-way interaction among partner protection, age, and gender, $F(1, 164) = 4.53, p < .05$. Analyses conducted separately by gender and age group indicated that the association between the partner protection motive and withdrawal was significant among young adult males ($SPE = .30; t[1, 58] = 4.58, p < .0001$), but not for young adult females ($SPE = .12; t[1, 58] = 1.57, p = .12$), adolescent males ($SPE = .02; t[1, 24] = 0.22, p = .83$), or adolescent females ($SPE = .12; t[1, 24] = 1.63, p = .12$).

Additional analyses tested the associations: 1) between participants' motives for withdrawal during the discussion of their own issues during the conflict task and their self-reported withdrawal during the conflict task (11 models tested) and, 2) between participants' motives for withdrawal during the discussion of their partners' issues during the conflict task and their self-reported withdrawal during the conflict task (11 models tested). These results are summarized in Tables 10 and 11. A strong positive association emerged between the motive and self-reported withdrawal in each of the 22 models (all p 's < .0001).

Each of the 22 models tested above were then repeated with the addition of interaction terms between the motive and age or gender, as well as a 3-way Motive X Age X Gender interaction term. Only 2 of the 66 interactions (3 interaction terms in each of the 22 models) reached significance. These were a 3-way interaction among impression management when discussing one's own issue, age, and gender, $F(1, 164) =$

4.52, $p < .05$, and a 2-way interaction between impression management when discussing the partners' issues, $F(1, 164) = 4.09$, $p < .05$. When discussing one's own issues, the association between the impression management motive and self-reported withdrawal during the conflict task was significant among young adult males ($SPE = .31$; $t[1, 58] = 4.46$, $p < .0001$), young adult females ($SPE = .35$; $t[1, 58] = 5.49$, $p < .0001$), and adolescent males ($SPE = .15$; $t[1, 24] = 2.28$, $p < .05$), but not among adolescent females ($SPE = .12$; $t[1, 24] = 1.39$, $p = .18$). When discussing the partners' issues, the significant association between the impression management motive and self-reported withdrawal during the conflict task was stronger for young adults ($SPE = .41$; $t[1, 118] = 6.12$, $p < .0001$) than for adolescents ($SPE = .18$; $t[1, 50] = 2.70$, $p < .01$).

A final set of analyses was conducted to test the associations: 1) between withdrawal motives for discussing one's own issues during the conflict task and observed withdrawal during the conflict task (11 models) and 2) between withdraw motives for discussing the partners' issues during the conflict task and observed withdrawal during the conflict task (11 models). These results are summarized in Tables 10 and 11. In all models tested, each withdrawal motive was significantly related to observed withdrawal ($p < .05$).

Each of the 22 models was then repeated with the addition of interaction terms between withdrawal and age or gender, as well as a 3-way Motive X Age X Gender interaction term. None of the interactions were significant.

Concurrent Associations between Withdrawal and Relationship Adjustment

A specific type of multilevel model, the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM), was used to test the associations between withdrawal and relationship

adjustment. Recall that withdrawal was assessed by five different indices: 1) perceptions of one's own withdrawal in the relationship overall, 2) perceptions of one's partner's withdrawal in the relationship overall, 3) perceptions of one's own withdrawal immediately following the conflict task, 4) perceptions of one's partner's withdrawal immediately following the conflict task, and 5) observed withdrawal during the conflict task. Concurrent relationship adjustment was assessed by three different indices: 1) positive relationship quality, 2) negative relationship quality, and 3) relationship satisfaction. A separate APIM was constructed to test the associations between each measure of withdrawal and each of the relationship adjustment indices, for a total of 15 APIMs. The results of these models are summarized in Table 12. Each of the 15 models included an actor effect (i.e., the association between Partner A's withdrawal variable and Partner A's report of relationship adjustment) and a partner effect (i.e., the association between Partner A's withdrawal variable and Partner B's report of relationship adjustment).

Actor effects were highly significant in all 15 models ($p < .01$). Participants who reported that they withdrew more from their partners also reported lower levels of positive relationship quality and relationship satisfaction, as well as higher levels of negative relationship quality. These effects were significant when: self-reported withdrawal was assessed regarding the relationship in general, self-reported withdrawal was assessed in regards to the conflict task, and observed withdrawal was assessed in the conflict task. Furthermore, individuals' reports of their partners' withdrawal in general and in the conflict task were related to their reporting lower positive relationship quality and relationship satisfaction, as well as higher levels of negative relationship quality.

Of the 15 partner effects, 12 were significant. Individuals with partners who reported higher levels of withdrawal in the relationship in general reported lower levels of positive relationship quality and relationship satisfaction. Individuals with partners who reported higher levels of withdrawal in the conflict task and whose partners were observed to withdraw more during the conflict task reported lower positive relationship quality and relationship satisfaction and also reported greater negative relationship quality. In addition, individuals whose partners perceived that they withdrew in general reported greater negative relationship quality. Similarly, individuals whose partners perceived that they withdrew during the conflict task reported lower positive relationship quality, lower satisfaction, and greater negative relationship quality.

Each of the 15 Actor-Partner Interdependence Models were then repeated with the addition of interaction terms to test whether the main effects of withdrawal on relationship adjustment varied as a function of age, gender, or an Age X Gender interaction. For each model, these three interaction terms were tested for both the actor withdraw variable and the partner withdrawal variable. Because six interaction terms were tested for 15 models, 90 interactions were tested overall. Of these 90 interactions tested, only 2 were significant. The association between individuals' partners' reports of their withdrawal in general and the individuals' reports of positive relationship quality was moderated by gender, $F(1, 164) = 7.13, p < .01$. Males whose partners perceived that they withdrew more reported lower levels of positive relationship quality ($SPE = -.22; t[1, 86] = 3.01, p < .01$), but this relation was not significant for females ($SPE = .08; t[1, 86] = 0.85, p = .40$). In addition, a significant three-way interaction emerged among age, gender, and partners' reports of general withdrawal in predicting negative

relationship quality, $F(1, 164) = 2.09, p < .05$. Adolescent females and young adult males whose partners perceived them as withdrawing in general reported greater negative relationship quality (adolescent females, effect size = .45; $t[1, 24] = 2.20, p < .05$; young adult males, effect size = .51; $t[1, 24] = 3.60, p < .001$). This association was not significant for adolescent males (effect size = .10; $t[1, 24] = 0.68, p = .51$) or young adult females (effect size = .13; $t[1, 57] = 0.92, p = .36$).

Prospective Associations between Withdrawal (Time 1) and Relationship

Adjustment (Time 2)

Time 2 data was collected approximately six months after Time 1. Because the Time 2 data collection for adolescents is still ongoing, only Time 2 data for young adults was used in this set of analysis. Multilevel models were first used to test the prospective associations between Time 1 withdrawal and Time 2 romantic breakup. Sixteen of the 95 young adults who participated at the Time 2 assessment (17%) reported that the romantic relationship had broken up since Time 1. It was not possible to conduct multilevel models in which Time 2 break-up status was predicted from each partner's withdrawal variables. Break-up status is considered a Level 2 variable because the score for break-up status is the same for both members of the dyad. The withdrawal scores are Level 1 variables because the withdrawal scores differ across the two members of the dyad. In multilevel modeling, the dependent variable must be a Level 1 variable. Therefore, to test the association between withdrawal and breakup status in these analyses, the withdrawal (Level 1) variable was treated as the dependent variable and the breakup status (Level 2) variable was treated as the independent variable. Also, because the breakup status variable was the same for both partners, it was not possible (or meaningful) to consider

both actor and partner effects. To clarify, although it was meaningful to consider how Partner A's withdraw was (differentially) associated with Partner A's perception of relationship satisfaction and Partner B's perception of relationship satisfaction, this approach would not be meaningful when breakup is the relationship variable because it is the same for both partners. Therefore, these models simply tested breakup as a predictor of each of the five withdrawal variables. However, Time 1 withdrawal was not associated with Time 2 romantic breakup status for any of the five models (*SPEs* range from .04 to .12). Each model was repeated with the inclusion of the interaction between the withdraw variable and gender but no significant gender interactions emerged.

Models were then tested in which Time 2 relationship satisfaction served as the dependent variable for participants who reported that their relationships had remained intact at Time 2 ($N = 79$). Because a brief 4-item version of the Couple's Satisfaction Inventory (CSI; Funk & Rogge, 2007) was used in the Time 2 assessment in place of the 16-item version of the CSI used at Time 1, only these four items from Time 1 were controlled for in these analyses. Specifically, Time 2 relationship satisfaction (4 items) was predicted from Time 1 relationship satisfaction (4 items, included as a control) and the withdrawal variables. Five models were conducted, one for each Time 1 assessment of withdrawal. Each model tested an actor effect (i.e., association between Partner A's Time 1 withdraw variable and Partner A's report of Time 2 relationship satisfaction) and a partner effect (i.e., association between Partner A's Time 1 withdraw variable on Partner B's report of Time 2 relationship satisfaction).

The results of these models are presented in Table 13. Two actor effects emerged as significant. Young adults who reported greater withdrawal in the relationship in

general at Time 1 reported decreased relationship satisfaction at Time 2. In addition, young adults who reported that their partners exhibited more withdrawal in the relationship in general at Time 1 also reported decreased relationship satisfaction at Time 2. An additional partner effect also was significant. Young adults whose partners perceived them as withdrawn in the relationship in general at Time 1 reported decreased relationship satisfaction at Time 2. Each model was repeated with the inclusion of the interaction between the withdrawal variable and gender but no significant gender interactions emerged.

Chapter Four

Discussion

The current study provided a multi-method examination of communication withdrawal in adolescent and young adult romantic relationships. Eleven motives proposed to be related to individuals' withdrawal from partners were identified based on the existing research literature and assessed. Several of these motives varied as a function of age and gender, suggesting individual differences in the reasons that prompt withdrawal. Although the reasons why individuals reported that they withdrew from discussions with their partners often varied as a function of age or gender, the negative associations between communication withdrawal and relationship adjustment generally did not vary as a function of age or gender. Collectively, these findings draw attention both to the importance of acknowledging the impact of communication withdrawal in romantic relationships, even in adolescence, and distinguishing among the reasons why individuals might hold back from their partners.

Motives, Communication Withdrawal, and Romantic Relationship Adjustment

The results from the study that were most consistent with hypotheses emerged for: (1) the associations between withdrawal motives and withdrawal and (2) the associations between withdrawal and relationship adjustment. For the current study, a new measure of withdrawal motives (the Motives for Communication Withdrawal Inventory, MCWI) was developed. The new measure of withdrawal motives was needed because many of the motives assessed in the present study had not been tested empirically in romantic

contexts in any existing measures, despite having often been proposed as theoretically relevant (see Afifi & Guerrero, 2000; Afifi & Afifi, 2009b; Guerrero et al., 2011 for reviews). Importantly, the new measure indicated good internal reliability (11 motives were assessed across three contexts and 32 of the 33 alphas were $> .70$).

More importantly, the results indicated that each of the withdrawal motives was strongly related to withdrawal. In fact, every motive was associated with each assessment of withdrawal (i.e., self-reported withdrawal in general and after a conflict task and observed withdrawal). Conceptually, these findings are important because they are consistent with the idea that each motive suggests an underlying reason why individuals withdraw from communication. In addition, finding significant associations between the motives and the withdrawal assessment supports the validity of the new motives measure.

Future research is now needed to replicate and extend these findings. Although each of the withdrawal motives assessed in the present study was associated with withdrawal, these assessments were concurrent and prospective studies are needed to confirm the temporal ordering of the associations. It also will be useful to explore whether the 11 motives might be better represented by fewer scores. In the current study, all 11 motives were assessed and examined separately. As a first test of the associations between these motives and withdrawal, it was of interest to consider the unique associations of each motive (e.g., to determine whether any of the specific motives were not related to withdrawal). However, future work may indicate that the 11 motives can be better represented by fewer higher-order factors, which could provide more parsimonious results.

The current study also supported hypotheses that withdrawal from communication would be associated with poorer relationship adjustment. In the concurrent analyses, these effects were found for both adolescents and young adults. Across every assessment of withdrawal, heightened withdrawal was associated with individuals' reports of lower positive quality and satisfaction, as well as higher levels of negative relationship quality. These effects emerged regardless of whether withdrawal was assessed with self-reports of general behavior, self-reports of behavior during the conflict task, or observation during the conflict task. In addition, individuals who reported higher levels of their partners' withdrawal (in general and in the conflict task) reported lower levels of positive relationship quality and relationship satisfaction, as well as higher levels of negative relationship quality. Almost all of the partner effects were significant as well. Adolescents and young adults whose partners reported withdrawing from communication in general and in the conflict task and who were observed to withdraw during the conflict task reported lower positive relationship quality and satisfaction and higher negative relationship quality. Finding these significant results was notable given that it is more difficult to detect partner effects than actor effects. This is especially true when there is no shared method variance, such as in the association between partners' observed withdrawal and individuals' self-reported relationship adjustment.

These effects speak to the robust nature of the relationship between withdrawing from communication and relationship problems. The findings fit with a wealth of past research documenting the impact of withdrawal on relationship adjustment among young adult dating and married couples (Heavey et al., 1993; Heavey et al., 1995; Caughlin & Afifi, 2004; Caughlin & Golish, 2002; Dailey & Palomares, 2004). Moreover, this study

is among the first to suggest that withdrawal has a similarly negative association with relationship quality and satisfaction among adolescents.

Importantly, among young adults, several prospective effects of withdrawal on relationship adjustment also emerged. Individuals who reported that they withdrew more in general and who were perceived by their partners as withdrawing more in general reported decreased relationship satisfaction over time. In addition, individuals who perceived their partners as more withdrawn reported decreased satisfaction over time. Notably, self-reports and observations of withdrawal during the conflict task did not predict changes in satisfaction over time. The assessment of withdrawal in general may represent a more general, consistent pattern of withdrawal behavior as compared to the assessment conducted in response to a single laboratory task.

Despite the findings for relationship satisfaction, the degree to which young adults withdrew during the initial assessment did not predict their likelihood of breaking up over six months. Breakups may be less sensitive to communication withdrawal than changes in relationship satisfaction because breakups are dichotomous outcomes and because they are subject to the influence of a wider range of factors beyond communication. Partners might move away from each other or realize that they are not compatible or attracted to one another, despite relatively healthy patterns of communication. Moreover, less than one-fifth of the young adult couples who completed the six-month follow-up reported a breakup; this figure will increase over longer periods of time, which may strengthen the ability to detect an association between communication withdrawal and breakups.

Additional work on the prospective effects of withdrawal on relationship adjustment is needed. The adolescent data need to be considered in order to test

developmental differences in the degree to which withdrawal impacts relationships over time. In addition, for both adolescents and young adults, transactional processes may be present. The young adult data support the idea that communication withdrawal affects relationship satisfaction. In addition, low relationship satisfaction may predict increased withdrawal over time. Past research with young adult and married samples suggests that such transactional processes are present (Heavey et al., 1995; Gottman, 1999), and these processes need to be tested in adolescence as well.

The Roles of Age and Gender

Age and gender were hypothesized to impact romantic partners' tendency to withdraw, motives for withdrawal and the associations among motives, withdrawal, and relationship adjustment. However, despite hypotheses that adolescents would withdraw from communication more than young adults and that males would withdraw more than females, no age or gender differences were found for withdrawal. Additional work is needed to replicate and help to explain these unexpected findings.

In terms of age differences, adolescents were expected to withdraw more than young adults due to adolescents' relatively low levels of relationship experience. However, in the current study, the age difference and experience difference between adolescents and young adults was relatively small. Including a sample of adolescents who are even younger and newer to dating than those in the current study might be necessary for detecting age-group differences in communication withdrawal.

In terms of gender, it is important to note that the current study assessed withdrawal from communication about conflicts without specifying which partner raised the conflict topic. Past research suggests that females may exhibit more withdrawal than

males when discussing males' issues, but males may exhibit more withdrawal than females when discussing females' issues (Klinetob & Smith, 1996; Kluwerm de Dreu, & Buunk, 1998; Sagrestano, Heavey, & Christensen, 1998). Not making this distinction may have masked gender differences in withdrawal in the present study.

Although romantic partners withdrew to the same degree across age and gender, there were age and gender differences in romantic partners' motives for communication withdraw. In terms of age, adolescents were hypothesized to endorse 5 of the 11 motives more strongly than young adults: the motives of impression management, maintaining privacy, partner unresponsiveness, communication inefficacy, and lack of closeness. Some support for these hypotheses was found for impression management and maintaining privacy. Among females, adolescents were more likely than young adults to endorse the motives of impression management (in general and in response to the partner's issue) and maintaining privacy (in response to the partner's issue). Greater impression management motives among adolescent females may reflect their relatively high levels of self-consciousness (Rankin, Lane, Gibbons, & Gerrard, 2004). For example, adolescent females may be motivated to withdrawal in order to avoid making a comment that would make them look foolish in the eyes of their partner. Young adult females may care relatively less about such issues. Similarly, adolescent girls may be motivated to maintain privacy more than young adult women because they are more self-conscious and want to avoid feeling embarrassed for revealing something that may be off-putting to partners.

Furthermore, despite hypotheses that adolescents would endorse communication inefficacy, partner unresponsiveness, and lack of closeness more than young adults, no

age differences emerged for any of these motives. Because adolescents are likely less skilled than young adults at communicating, it was hypothesized that adolescents would be motivated by communication inefficacy more than young adults. However, adolescents' conflicts may be more simplistic and centered on less complex topics than young adults' conflicts. If this is the case, then navigating these discussions may require a less refined repertoire of social skills for adolescents as compared to young adults. Alternatively, the lack of age differences found for these three motives may be due to the relatively small age difference between the adolescents and young adults. Perhaps younger adolescents need to be considered in order to detect age group differences in communication inefficacy, partner unresponsiveness, and lack of closeness motives.

Young adults were expected to endorse four other motives more strongly than adolescents: relationship protection, partner protection, conflict avoidance, and relationship dissolution motives. However, adolescents endorsed the motives of relationship protection (in general) and partner protection (females only, in general and in response to the partner's issues) more strongly than young adults. Young adults were proposed to endorse these two motives more strongly than adolescents because young adult romantic relationships are defined by greater intimacy (Giordano et al., 2009; Seiffge-Krenke, 2003). However, adolescents may feel more uncertainty in whether their relationships can be maintained and may be motivated to withdraw in order to protect their relationships. Similarly, adolescents may be more motivated than young adults to withdraw to protect their partner if they are concerned that hurting the partner would "rock the boat" and threaten the relationship, which they perceive to be fragile. If this is the case, it is not clear why the developmental effects for partner protection emerged only

for females. One possibility is that adolescent males are less likely than adolescent females to recognize the potential importance of partner protection for preserving a fragile relationship.

In addition, although young adults were hypothesized to endorse conflict avoidance and relationship dissolution motives more than adolescents, no age differences emerged for either motive. These motives were thought to reflect more conscious attempts to use withdrawal in specifically tactical ways to either preserve or end a relationship, which might involve skills that adolescents have not yet developed. However, adolescent participants in the current study may have had enough relationship experience to possess these skills, and younger adolescents may need to be considered in order to detect age-group differences.

Last, no hypotheses regarding age differences were put forth for the motives of self-protection or avoiding discomfort. In fact, no age differences emerged for avoiding discomfort. However, among females, adolescents were more likely than young adults to endorse self-protection motives. Although this finding was unexpected it may be that adolescent females are especially cautious of anticipated distress in early relationships due to their relatively heightened vulnerability to interpersonal stressors (Hankin, Mermelstein, & Roesch, 2007).

In terms of gender, only two hypotheses were put forth. Males were proposed to endorse avoiding discomfort and communication inefficacy motives more than females. However, no gender differences emerged for these motives. In terms of avoiding discomfort, past research with married couples suggests that husbands display increased physiological arousal in response to conflict; thus they were hypothesized to be more

motivated to withdraw in order to reduce this discomfort (see Gottman & Levenson, 1988; Baucom et al., 2011). However, work by Kiecolt-Glaser and colleagues suggests that females may be more adversely affected by hostility in relationships than males (see Kiecolt-Glaser, Malarkey, Cacioppo, & Glaser, 1994; Kiecolt-Glaser et al., 1996). Perhaps the motive of avoiding discomfort captures both motivations to avoid physiological discomfort (more common among males) and emotional distress (more common among females), which may explain why a gender difference for this motive was not found. Regarding communication inefficacy, males were hypothesized to endorse this motive more strongly than females given past research suggesting that females are more skilled at expressing their emotions to their partners (McGoldrick et al., 1989). However, males may not be more likely than females to be motivated to withdraw because they do not know what to say. Instead, males' communication inefficacy may be reflected by actively expressing themselves in less effective ways as opposed to their withdrawing because they do not know what to say.

Although no hypotheses regarding gender differences were put forth for the motives of dissolving the relationship, lack of closeness, or maintaining privacy, males were more likely than females to endorse the relationship dissolution motive (in response to their own and their partner's issues), the lack of closeness motive (in response to the partner's issue), and the maintaining privacy motive (young adults only, in response to the partners' issue). In terms of the relationship dissolution motive, Rusbult et al. (1982), found that males are more likely than females to ignore or refuse to discuss certain issues with their partners when they are dissatisfied. Thus, the gender difference for the relationship dissolution motive may be driven by romantically dissatisfied men. Males'

greater endorsement of the lack of closeness motive may be rooted in gender differences in self-disclosure. Females are generally more open than males with their partners. Males may only “catch-up” to females’ disclosure in relationships that are uniquely close and intimate and be motivated to withdraw in most other relationships. The finding for the maintain privacy motive may reflect a similar process. Males may be more motivated to maintain their privacy because they are less open with their partners. However, it is unclear why this gender difference would emerge only for young adults.

Finally, females were more likely than males to endorse the self-protection motive (when assessed in general and in response to the partners’ issues) and the partner unresponsiveness motive (when assessed in general). Among adolescents, females also were more likely than males to endorse the impression management motive (when assessed in general). In terms of self-protection, as discussed earlier, females are more vulnerable than males to expressions of overt hostility (see Kiecolt-Glaser et al., 1994; Kiecolt-Glaser et al., 1996). In addition, females may feel more empathetic distress for partners than males, in which they “take on” partners’ problems and experience the partners’ distress as their own (Smith & Rose, 2011). Females may be motivated to withdraw more than males in order to protect themselves from distress that they anticipate for these reasons. The findings for the partner unresponsiveness motive fits with research indicating that wives are more than twice as likely as husbands to avoid disclosing to partners because they believed that their male partners will be unresponsive (Burke et al., 1976). In terms of the impression management motive, as stated earlier, adolescent females report especially high self-consciousness, which may motivate them to withdraw in order to maintain a positive image.

Notably, few age or gender differences were detected when withdrawal motives were assessed in regards to discussing one's own issues as opposed to when they were assessed in general or in regards to the partners' issues. Perhaps when individuals respond to questions about why they withdraw from their partner in general in conflict situations, they tend to envision situations in which the conflict focuses on partners' issues. This would fit with research indicating that individuals withdraw during conflicts more when their partner raises a problem than in conflicts about their own problems (Klinetob & Smith, 1996; Kluwerm de Dreu, & Buunk, 1998; Sagrestano, Heavey, & Christensen, 1998). This could help to explain the similar findings that emerged across the general assessment of motives and the assessment of motives in response to partners' issues. In contrast, if withdrawal is less common in conflicts over individuals' own issues, they may be less cognizant of their withdrawal in these contexts and report on their motivations less accurately.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although the present study advances the understanding of communication withdrawal in romantic relationships in a number of ways, several limitations also should be noted. First, with respect to development, despite hypotheses, there were no motives that young adults endorsed more strongly than adolescents. The assessment of withdrawal motives used in the present study may not be capturing the reasons for withdrawal that are especially common among young adults. Future studies might consider incorporating more qualitative designs (e.g., focus groups, open-ended responses to a conflict task) in order to provide a more valid and refined set of motives in order to better capture the reasons why young adults withdraw from communication.

Video-recall may be particularly useful for assessing individual differences in withdrawal motives. In prior video-recall studies, the interactions of adolescent and young adults couples are recorded in a laboratory setting and subsequently played back to the participants, who then report on their perceptions of how they behaved or felt during these interactions (see Darling & Clarke, 2009; Smith, Welsh, & Fite, 2010; Welsh & Dickson, 2005; for examples). This method is useful for capturing behaviors and feelings that participants may have been less aware of while the interactions were occurring. Moreover, the video-recall method can capture participants' subjective understanding of their own interactions, which may differ from those of objective coders (Welsh & Dickson, 2005). Given that withdrawal is a relatively passive form of communication, as compared to expressions of demand or anger, video-recall may be especially well-suited to capture withdrawal and the motives that may explain it.

It also should be noted that, although the observational component of the present study strengthens the validity of the present findings in some ways (e.g., avoiding shared-method variance, incorporating the perspective of an unbiased third-party), it does not allow for the assessment of behaviors that would only be possible in naturalistic settings, such as physically leaving the space in which the conflict takes place (see Roberts, 2000 for a similar argument). It may be that daily diary methods or ambulatory assessments that record conflicts in "real-time" can help capture a broader range of communication withdrawal.

In addition, the sample of individuals who participated in the study could be broadened in order to better represent the romantic relationships of adolescents and young adults. The racial and ethnic makeup of the sample was relatively homogeneous

and likely more educated than the rest of the population (given that the sample was recruited from a college town). In addition, only late adolescents (sophomores, juniors, and seniors in high school) were recruited to participate in the study; exploring these research questions among a sample of younger adolescents would be useful. Further, the present study only recruited heterosexual couples. Future research should examine whether the findings, specifically regarding gender differences, extend to the relationships of individuals who do not identify as heterosexual.

Finally, the communication processes that characterize early romantic relationships may differ in contexts where these relationships are less normative. Parents who disapprove of their adolescents' romantic participation may be especially unlikely to consent to their children's research participation, resulting in less information about the romantic relationships of adolescents from families in which romantic relationships are considered less acceptable.

Moreover, although adolescent and young adult romantic relationships are relatively normative experiences in most North American and European countries, this may not be the case elsewhere in the world. It also may be that gender differences in withdrawal and the motives that account for it are stronger in cultures that are less gender equitable. For example, culturally-sanctioned power inequalities may lead females to hold back feelings and opinions from their male partners (Jack & Ali, 2010). In fact, in a study of Pakistani couples, husband-demand/wife-withdrawal was more common than wife-demand/husband-withdrawal (Rehman & Holtzworth-Munroe, 2006); a finding that has not emerged in samples of western couples. More research examining the communication processes of non-western couples is needed to address this topic.

Summary

Collectively, the pattern of findings in the current study suggests that although the reasons for behind communication withdrawal may sometimes vary by gender and age, withdrawal may be indicative of poor relationship adjustment across both genders and across adolescence and young adulthood. Although it was hypothesized that withdrawal would be less damaging to adolescent relationships, withdrawal was associated with relationship maladjustment regardless of age. This underscores the significance of acknowledging the importance of communication in adolescent relationships, in addition to the well-documented role it plays in the relatively longer, more committed relationships of young adults.

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Table 1

Intraclass Correlation Coefficients between Partners' Withdrawal Motives

	General	After Conflict Task (My Issue)	After Conflict Task (My Partner's Issue)
Withdrawal Motives (<i>N</i> = 172)	<i>ICC</i>	<i>ICC</i>	<i>ICC</i>
Self-Protection	.25***	.18*	.02
Impression Management	.27***	-.06	.28***
Avoid Discomfort	.23**	-.19*	.17*
Conflict Avoidance	.13	.10 .18*	
Relationship Protection	.26***	.14	.15
Relationship Dissolution	.36****	.11	.26***
Partner Protection	.26***	-.01	.18*
Partner Unresponsiveness	.18*	.10	.24**
Communication Inefficacy	.19* .13		.27***
Lack of Closeness	.46****	.63****	.50****
Maintain Privacy	.06	.08	-.04

Notes. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; **** $p < .0001$.

Table 2

Age and Gender Differences in Measures of Withdrawal

Measure of Withdrawal	Age				Gender			
	Adolescents (<i>N</i> = 52)	Young Adults (<i>N</i> = 120)			Males (<i>N</i> = 86)	Females (<i>N</i> = 86)		
	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>SPE</i>	<i>t</i> -value	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>SPE</i>	<i>t</i> -value
Self-Report (General)	2.17 (0.62)	2.12 (0.60)	-.02	0.28	2.17 (0.58)	2.10 (0.62)	.06	0.68
Perceived Partner (General)	2.13 (0.65)	2.21 (0.65)	.06	0.74	2.20 (0.63)	2.17 (0.67)	.02	0.29
Self-Report (Conflict Task)	1.70 (0.54)	1.70 (0.65)	-.02	0.25	1.69 (0.52)	1.72 (0.70)	-.02	0.33
Perceived Partner (Conflict Task)	1.64 (0.52)	1.68 (0.62)	.04	0.44	1.67 (0.58)	1.68 (0.60)	-.01	0.09
Observational (Conflict Task)	2.30 (0.46)	2.26 (0.47)	.02	0.18	2.33 (0.50)	2.22 (0.43)	.12	1.64

Table 3

Interrelations between Withdrawal Motives – General

	SP	IM	AD	CA	RP	RD	PP	PU	CI	LC	RD
Self-Protection											
Impression Management	.59****										
Avoid Discomfort	.55****	.47****									
Conflict Avoidance	.50****	.53****	.54****								
Relationship Protection	.55****	.73****	.46****	.64****							
Relationship Dissolution	.18*	.13	.22**	.15*	.18*						
Partner Protection	.50****	.50****	.43****	.57****	.59****	.10					
Partner Unresponsiveness	.44****	.41****	.31****	.42****	.39****	.15*	.35****				
Communication Inefficacy	.41****	.50****	.53****	.54****	.50****	.28***	.47****	.40****			
Lack of Closeness	.28***	.32****	.43****	.24**	.35****	.54****	.24**	.28***	.44****		
Maintain Privacy	.42****	.45****	.58****	.45****	.44****	.49****	.34****	.27***	.50****	.62****	

Notes. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; **** $p < .0001$.

Table 4

Interrelations between Withdrawal Motives during Conflict – My Issue

	SP	IM	AD	CA	RP	RD	PP	PU	CI	LC	RD
Self-Protection											
Impression Management	.56****										
Avoid Discomfort	.61****	.58****									
Conflict Avoidance	.70****	.62****	.67****								
Relationship Protection	.67****	.76****	.65****	.76****							
Relationship Dissolution	.34****	.27***	.30****	.26***	.45****						
Partner Protection	.76****	.62****	.57****	.72****	.70****	.30****					
Partner Unresponsiveness	.59****	.39****	.50****	.56****	.48****	.27***	.51****				
Communication Inefficacy	.55****	.47****	.70****	.68****	.60****	.30****	.57****	.58****			
Lack of Closeness	.48***	.53****	.55****	.48****	.62****	.59****	.47**	.45***	.48****		
Maintain Privacy	.56****	.62****	.60****	.57****	.72****	.57****	.54****	.31***	.49****	.68****	

Notes. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; **** $p < .0001$.

Table 5

Interrelations between Withdrawal Motives during Conflict – My Partner’s Issues

	SP	IM	AD	CA	RP	RD	PP	PU	CI	LC	RD
Self-Protection											
Impression Management	.60****										
Avoid Discomfort	.73****	.66****									
Conflict Avoidance	.70****	.64****	.77****								
Relationship Protection	.61****	.74****	.64****	.75****							
Relationship Dissolution	.32****	.32****	.33****	.24**	.40****						
Partner Protection	.75****	.63****	.67****	.78****	.70****	.34****					
Partner Unresponsiveness	.64****	.54****	.62****	.62****	.60****	.39****	.65****				
Communication Inefficacy	.55****	.59****	.70****	.72****	.64****	.29****	.64****	.54****			
Lack of Closeness	.49****	.58****	.52****	.52****	.66****	.63****	.50****	.57****	.57****		
Maintain Privacy	.57****	.64****	.62****	.61****	.72****	.53****	.58****	.45****	.60****	.70****	

Notes. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; **** $p < .0001$.

Table 6

Age and Gender Differences in Withdrawal Motives – General

Withdrawal Motives	Adolescents	Young Adults			Males	Females		
	(<i>N</i> = 52)	(<i>N</i> = 120)			(<i>N</i> = 86)	(<i>N</i> = 86)		
	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>SPE</i>	<i>t</i> -value	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>SPE</i>	<i>t</i> -value
Self-Protection	2.54 (1.17)	2.35 (0.93)	-.09	1.24	2.15 (0.90)	2.66 (1.05)	-.25	3.81***
Impression Management	2.36 (1.23)	1.88 (1.02)	-.20	2.64**	1.95 (0.98)	2.10 (1.22)	-.07	0.90
Avoid Discomfort	2.41 (1.00)	2.36 (1.03)	-.03	0.33	2.26 (1.08)	2.43 (0.93)	-.11	1.47
Conflict Avoidance	2.95 (1.16)	2.86 (1.11)	-.05	0.57	2.89 (1.14)	2.89 (1.10)	.00	0.01
Relationship Protection	2.74 (1.06)	2.29 (0.97)	-.21	2.78**	2.49 (0.99)	2.36 (1.04)	.06	0.83
Relationship Dissolution	1.17 (0.41)	1.19 (0.56)	-.04	0.46	1.23 (0.50)	1.14 (0.45)	.10	1.32
Partner Protection	3.32 (1.16)	2.79 (1.04)	-.24	3.25**	2.99 (1.03)	2.90 (1.18)	.04	0.56
Partner Unresponsiveness	2.13 (0.84)	1.87 (0.79)	-.14	1.87	1.83 (0.69)	2.07 (0.91)	-.15	2.05*
Communication Inefficacy	2.38 (1.06)	2.19 (1.05)	-.09	1.21	2.26 (1.05)	2.22 (1.06)	.03	0.27
Lack of Closeness	1.48 (0.65)	1.44 (0.65)	.00	0.08	1.47 (0.68)	1.44 (0.62)	.03	0.42
Maintain Privacy	1.97 (1.01)	1.90 (0.98)	-.04	0.46	1.99 (1.04)	1.86 (0.92)	.11	1.53

Notes. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 7

Age and Gender Differences in Withdrawal Motives during Conflict – My Issue

Withdrawal Motives	Adolescents (<i>N</i> = 52)		Young Adults (<i>N</i> = 120)		Males (<i>N</i> = 86)	Females (<i>N</i> = 86)	<i>SPE</i>	<i>t</i> -value
	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>SPE</i>	<i>t</i> -value	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)		
Self-Protection	1.80 (0.97)	1.73 (0.89)	-.05	0.66	1.72 (0.89)	1.77 (0.75)	-.03	0.38
Impression Management	1.63 (1.05)	1.47 (0.87)	-.07	0.92	1.55 (0.86)	1.48 (0.99)	.04	0.47
Avoid Discomfort	2.09 (1.06)	2.13 (1.19)	-.00	0.05	1.99 (1.04)	2.23 (1.25)	-.10	1.43
Conflict Avoidance	2.27 (1.24)	2.09 (1.15)	-.09	1.13	2.13 (1.14)	2.15 (1.19)	.00	0.06
Relationship Protection	1.77 (0.98)	1.74 (0.88)	-.04	0.45	1.83 (0.89)	1.67 (0.93)	.09	1.23
Relationship Dissolution	1.12 (0.39)	1.20 (0.52)	.08	1.02	1.28 (0.60)	1.08 (0.31)	.20	2.82**
Partner Protection	1.98 (1.14)	1.70 (1.06)	-.03	0.32	1.92 (1.04)	1.92 (1.13)	.00	0.00
Partner Unresponsiveness	1.85 (0.87)	1.71 (0.83)	-.08	1.10	1.67 (0.91)	1.83 (0.76)	-.10	1.25
Communication Inefficacy	1.95 (1.03)	1.88 (1.12)	-.04	0.43	1.87 (1.03)	1.93 (1.15)	-.03	0.36
Lack of Closeness	1.34 (0.58)	1.22 (0.70)	-.10	1.46	1.37 (0.68)	1.28 (0.65)	.10	1.36
Maintain Privacy	1.52 (0.82)	1.45 (0.82)	-.05	0.56	1.56 (0.96)	1.38 (0.72)	.11	1.53

Notes. ***p* < .01.

Table 8

Age and Gender Differences in Withdrawal Motives during Conflict – My Partner’s Issue

Withdrawal Motives	Adolescents (<i>N</i> = 52)		Young Adults (<i>N</i> = 120)		Males (<i>N</i> = 86)	Females (<i>N</i> = 86)	<i>SPE</i>	<i>t</i> -value
	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>SPE</i>	<i>t</i> -value	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)		
Self-Protection	1.93 (1.16)	1.66 (0.81)	-.13	1.73	1.53 (0.74)	1.94 (0.75)	-.20	2.86**
Impression Management	1.64 (1.07)	1.43 (0.76)	-.12	1.61	1.49 (0.82)	1.49 (0.91)	.00	0.04
Avoid Discomfort	2.00 (1.10)	1.91 (1.11)	-.05	0.58	1.80 (1.10)	2.07 (1.19)	-.12	1.64
Conflict Avoidance	2.12 (1.18)	1.86 (1.01)	-.15	1.91	1.88 (0.97)	1.99 (1.15)	-.06	0.69
Relationship Protection	1.78 (1.00)	1.60 (0.78)	-.10	1.39	1.73 (0.82)	1.59 (0.88)	.09	1.13
Relationship Dissolution	1.12 (0.39)	1.20 (0.53)	.08	0.95	1.28 (0.59)	1.07 (0.33)	.22	3.10**
Partner Protection	2.12 (1.20)	1.78 (1.00)	-.18	2.32*	1.88 (1.04)	1.88 (1.10)	.00	0.12
Partner Unresponsiveness	1.61 (0.69)	1.53 (0.82)	-.07	0.86	1.50 (0.68)	1.61 (0.88)	-.07	0.92
Communication Inefficacy	1.84 (0.96)	1.72 (0.99)	-.09	1.21	1.79 (0.95)	1.72 (1.01)	.05	0.65
Lack of Closeness	1.32 (0.58)	1.24 (0.69)	-.08	1.08	1.37 (0.69)	1.20 (0.54)	.15	2.57*
Maintain Privacy	1.48 (0.85)	1.32 (0.62)	-.10	1.38	1.42 (0.70)	1.31 (0.68)	.09	1.14

Notes. **p* < .05; ***p* < .01.

Table 9

Associations between Self-Reported General Withdrawal and Motives for Withdrawal – General

	Self-Reported Withdrawal (General)	
Motives for Withdrawal – General	<i>SPE</i>	<i>t value</i>
Self-Protection	.35	5.47****
Impression Management	.34	4.82****
Avoid Discomfort	.37	5.44****
Conflict Avoidance	.56	9.25****
Relationship Protection	.44	7.01****
Relationship Dissolution	.39	6.06****
Partner Protection	.31	4.48****
Partner Unresponsiveness	.29	4.07****
Communication Inefficacy	.51	8.11****
Lack of Closeness	.29	4.29****
Maintain Privacy	.44	6.59****

Notes. **** $p < .0001$.

Table 10

Associations between Withdrawal during Conflict Task and Motives for Withdrawal – My Issue

	Self-Reported Withdrawal (<i>N</i> = 172)		Observed Withdrawal (<i>N</i> = 172)	
Motives for Withdrawal - My Issue	<i>SPE</i>	<i>t value</i>	<i>SPE</i>	<i>t value</i>
Self-Protection	.54	8.05****	.18	2.78**
Impression Management	.47	6.88****	.18	2.83**
Avoid Discomfort	.56	8.36****	.15	2.85**
Conflict Avoidance	.58	8.79****	.14	2.76**
Relationship Protection	.58	8.77****	.24	3.71***
Relationship Dissolution	.37	5.04****	.13	2.90**
Partner Protection	.47	6.74****	.15	2.70**
Partner Unresponsiveness	.57	8.80****	.19	2.68**
Communication Inefficacy	.64	10.75****	.25	4.63****
Lack of Closeness	.52	7.65****	.31	3.40***
Maintain Privacy	.46	6.49****	.33	4.63****

Notes. ***p* < .01; ****p* < .001; *****p* < .0001.

Table 11

Associations between Withdrawal during Conflict Task and Motives for Withdrawal – My Partner’s Issue

	Self-Reported Withdrawal (<i>N</i> = 172)		Observed Withdrawal (<i>N</i> = 172)	
Motives for Withdrawal (My Partner’s Issue)	<i>SPE</i>	<i>t value</i>	<i>SPE</i>	<i>t value</i>
Self Protection	.47	6.86****	.15	2.37*
Impression Management	.45	6.50****	.21	3.03**
Avoid Discomfort	.49	7.16****	.15	2.63**
Conflict Avoidance	.55	8.23****	.18	3.16**
Relationship Protection	.43	6.33****	.22	3.08**
Relationship Dissolution	.13	3.50***	.25	2.39**
Partner Protection	.42	6.09****	.20	3.50**
Partner Unresponsiveness	.61	9.75****	.25	3.30**
Communication Inefficacy	.58	9.14****	.29	4.81****
Lack of Closeness	.45	6.40****	.32	3.34***
Maintain Privacy	.41	5.80****	.32	3.71***

Notes. **p* < .05; ***p* < .01; ****p* < .001; *****p* < .0001.

Table 12

Concurrent Actor and Partner Effects of Measures of Withdrawal on Relationship Adjustment

	Target's Positive Relationship Quality (NRI) (<i>N</i> = 172)		Target's Negative Relationship Quality (NRI) (<i>N</i> = 172)		Target's Relationship Satisfaction (CSI) (<i>N</i> = 172)	
	<i>SPE</i>	<i>t</i> -value	<i>SPE</i>	<i>t</i> -value	<i>SPE</i>	<i>t</i> -value
Target's Withdrawal (Actor Effect)						
Self-Report (General)	-.33	5.09****	.32	4.85****	-.37	5.49****
Perceived Partner (General)	-.20	3.00**	.38	6.34****	-.33	4.82****
Self-Report (Conflict Task)	-.33	4.97****	.25	3.62***	-.22	3.35**
Perceived Partner (Conflict Task)	-.28	3.99***	.24	3.49***	-.30	4.08***
Observational (Conflict Task)	-.32	4.55****	.32	4.84****	-.33	4.60****
Partner's Withdrawal (Partner Effect)						
Self-Report (General)	-.21	3.01**	.10	1.52	-.23	3.24**
Perceived Partner (General)	-.08	1.13	.30	4.27****	-.12	1.78
Self-Report (Conflict Task)	-.29	4.16****	.17	2.51*	-.32	4.65****
Perceived Partner (Conflict Task)	-.23	3.15**	.19	2.83**	-.23	3.26**
Observational (Conflict Task)	-.18	2.57**	.19	2.85**	-.18	2.70**

Notes. **p* < .05; ***p* < .01; ****p* < .001; *****p* < .0001.

Table 13

Prospective Actor and Partner Effects of Time 1 Measures of Withdrawal on Time 2 Relationship Satisfaction (Only Young Adult Sample)

	Time 2 Target's Relationship Satisfaction (CSI-B) (<i>N</i> = 79)	
Target's Withdrawal (Actor Effect)	<i>SPE</i>	<i>t</i> -value
Self-Report (General)	-.21	3.04**
Perceived Partner (General)	-.18	2.70**
Self-Report (Conflict Task)	-.04	0.47
Perceived Partner (Conflict Task)	-.01	0.11
Observational (Conflict Task)	-.06	0.61
Partner's Withdrawal (Partner Effect)	<i>SPE</i>	<i>t</i> -value
Self-Report (General)	-.03	0.29
Perceived Partner (General)	-.21	3.00**
Self-Report (Conflict Task)	-.12	1.59
Perceived Partner (Conflict Task)	-.09	1.19
Observational (Conflict Task)	-.06	0.71

Notes. ***p* < .01.

Appendix A

Information Sheet: Adolescents

Please note that you should feel free to skip items that you feel are sensitive or uncomfortable to answer.

Name: _____

Age: _____ Birthdate: ____ / ____ / ____ Sex (check one): ___Female ___
Male

1. What is your ethnicity?

_____ Hispanic or Latino
_____ Not Hispanic or Latino

2. What is your race? (*check all categories that apply*)

_____ American Indian / Alaskan Native _____ Black or African American
_____ Asian _____ White or Caucasian
_____ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

3. What is your academic year?

_____ Sophomore _____ Junior
_____ Senior _____ Other, please explain:

Appendix B

Information Sheet: Young Adults

Please note that you should feel free to skip items that you feel are sensitive or uncomfortable to answer.

Name: _____

Age: _____ Birthdate: ____ / ____ / ____ Sex (check one): ___Female ___
Male

1. What is your ethnicity?

_____ Hispanic or Latino
_____ Not Hispanic or Latino

2. What is your race? (check all categories that apply)

_____ American Indian / Alaskan Native _____ Black or African American
_____ Asian _____ White or Caucasian
_____ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

3. Do you attend MU?

_____ Yes _____ No

4. If not, do you attend another college or university?

_____ Yes _____ No

5. What is your academic year?

_____ Freshman _____ Sophomore
_____ Junior _____ Senior
_____ Graduated _____ Other, please explain:

Appendix C

My Relationships

1. **My romantic partner and I have been together for:**
 1-6 months
 6 months-1 year
 1-2 years
 2 or more years

2. **Would you consider your current romantic relationship to be exclusive? (*this means that neither of you are dating or seeing other people*).**
 Yes No

3. **Is your current romantic relationship the first romantic relationship you have had?**
 Yes No

4. **If not, how many serious romantic relationships have you had prior to dating your current partner? _____**

5. **Is your relationship with your current partner the longest romantic relationship that you have ever been in?**
 Yes No

6. **If not, how long was the longest romantic relationship that you have been in?**
 1-6 months
 6 months-1 year
 1-2 years
 2 or more years

Appendix D

When I Hold Back

The following items have to do with how you communicate with your partner. Keep in mind that each item is about you, not about your partner. Please indicate on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) how much you agree with each statement.

		Strongly Disagree		Strongly Agree
1.	I don't speak my feelings about topics that lead to conflicts or disagreements with my partner.	1	2 3 4 5	
2.	I often reach a point during conflicts or disagreements with my partner when I just stop talking.	1	2 3 4 5	
3.	When my partner and I disagree I often give short responses like "yeah" or "uh-huh".	1	2 3 4 5	
4.	I state my opinions even when they conflict with my partner's opinions.	1	2 3 4 5	
5.	I give my partner the silent treatment when he/she brings up certain topics.	1	2 3 4 5	
6.	I don't say too much when my partner and I disagree.	1	2 3 4 5	
7.	I often withdraw from disagreements with my partner.	1	2 3 4 5	
8.	I avoid telling my partner things that might lead to a conflict or disagreement.	1	2 3 4 5	
9.	When my partner and I have disagreements I am involved and engaged in the discussion.	1	2 3 4 5	
10.	When my partner and I disagree I keep my feelings to myself.	1	2 3 4 5	
11.	I often change the subject when my partner and I disagree.	1	2 3 4 5	
12.	When my partner and I disagree I keep my feelings bottled up.	1	2 3 4 5	
13.	I avoid discussing certain topics with my partner.	1	2 3 4 5	
14.	I tune my partner out when we have a disagreement.	1	2 3 4 5	
15.	I shut down when my partner and I argue or disagree.	1	2 3 4 5	
16.	I often don't say anything when my partner makes comments that upset me.	1	2 3 4 5	
17.	I tell my partner when he or she does something to upset me.	1	2 3 4 5	
18.	I often ignore what my partner has to say when we disagree.	1	2 3 4 5	

Appendix E

When My Partner Holds Back

The following items have to do with how your partner communicates with you. Keep in mind that each item is about your partner, not about you. Please indicate on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) how much you agree with each statement.

		Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree
1.	My partner does not speak his or her feelings about topics that lead to conflicts or disagreements with me.	1	2 3 4 5
2.	My partner often reaches a point during conflicts or disagreements with me when he or she just stops talking.	1	2 3 4 5
3.	When my partner and I disagree he or she often gives short responses like “yeah” or “uh-huh”.	1	2 3 4 5
4.	My partner states his or her opinions even when they conflict with my opinions.	1	2 3 4 5
5.	My partner gives me the silent treatment when I bring up certain topics.	1	2 3 4 5
6.	My partner does not to say too much when we disagree.	1	2 3 4 5
7.	My partner often withdraws from disagreements with me.	1	2 3 4 5
8.	My partner avoids telling me things that might lead to a conflict or disagreement.	1	2 3 4 5
9.	When my partner and I have disagreements my partner is involved and engaged in the discussion.	1	2 3 4 5
10.	When we disagree my partner keeps his or her feelings to himself or herself.	1	2 3 4 5
11.	My partner often changes the subject when we disagree.	1	2 3 4 5
12.	When we disagree my partner keeps his or her feelings bottled up.	1	2 3 4 5
13.	My partner avoids discussing certain topics with me.	1	2 3 4 5
14.	My partner tunes me out when we have a disagreement.	1	2 3 4 5
15.	My partner shuts down when we argue or disagree.	1	2 3 4 5
16.	My partner often does not say anything when I make comments that upset him or her.	1	2 3 4 5
17.	My partner tells me when I do something to upset him or her	1	2 3 4 5
18.	My partner often ignores what I have to say when we disagree.	1	2 3 4 5

Appendix F

Why I Hold Back

We would also like to know the reasons why you choose to avoid discussing the topics that you do with your romantic partner. The scale ranges from 1 to 5 with 1 being that you strongly disagree with the statement and 5 being strongly agree with the statement.

I AVOID DISCUSSING CERTAIN TOPICS WITH MY ROMANTIC PARTNER BECAUSE...

		Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree
1.	I might get hurt.	1	2 3 4 5
2.	My partner may not respond or say anything in return.	1	2 3 4 5
3.	My partner might look down on me.	1	2 3 4 5
4.	I would feel uncomfortable.	1	2 3 4 5
5.	I would be afraid that my partner might break up with me.	1	2 3 4 5
6.	I want to keep my privacy.	1	2 3 4 5
7.	I want to avoid conflict.	1	2 3 4 5
8.	I don't know what to say to my partner.	1	2 3 4 5
9.	I am not emotionally close enough to my partner.	1	2 3 4 5
10.	My partner might get hurt.	1	2 3 4 5
11.	I don't want my relationship with my partner to get any more serious.	1	2 3 4 5
12.	It might bring up a past event that was hurtful to me.	1	2 3 4 5
13.	My partner will just try to change the subject.	1	2 3 4 5
14.	My partner might judge me.	1	2 3 4 5
15.	It would put me on edge.	1	2 3 4 5
16.	It would damage my relationship with my partner.	1	2 3 4 5
17.	The information is none of my partner's business.	1	2 3 4 5
18.	I don't want to make my partner angry with me.	1	2 3 4 5
19.	I don't know how to express what I am feeling to my partner.	1	2 3 4 5
20.	My partner and I have not been together long enough.	1	2 3 4 5

I AVOID DISCUSSING CERTAIN TOPICS WITH MY ROMANTIC PARTNER BECAUSE...

		Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree
21.	It might bring up a past event that was hurtful to my partner.	1	2 3 4 5
22.	I just want to passively let my relationship with my partner die out.	1	2 3 4 5
23.	It is emotionally painful for me to discuss.	1	2 3 4 5
24.	I feel like there is nothing I can say to change my partner's mind.	1	2 3 4 5
25.	My partner might think less of me.	1	2 3 4 5
26.	It feels awkward or weird to discuss these topics with my partner.	1	2 3 4 5
27.	I want to keep my relationship with my partner going smoothly.	1	2 3 4 5
28.	My partner might ask me things that I don't want him/her to know.	1	2 3 4 5
29.	It might lead to an argument between me and my partner.	1	2 3 4 5
30.	I am not very good at telling my partner how I feel.	1	2 3 4 5
31.	The relationship I have with my partner is not serious enough.	1	2 3 4 5
32.	It might be emotionally painful for my partner to discuss.	1	2 3 4 5
33.	I am planning on breaking up with my partner.	1	2 3 4 5
34.	My partner might say something hurtful.	1	2 3 4 5
35.	I feel like my partner would not be open to discussing these topics.	1	2 3 4 5
36.	My partner might lose respect for me.	1	2 3 4 5
37.	It would make me feel anxious.	1	2 3 4 5
38.	It might prevent our relationship from becoming more serious.	1	2 3 4 5
39.	There are some things that I do not want to share with my partner.	1	2 3 4 5
40.	My partner and I might disagree over these topics.	1	2 3 4 5
41.	I am not very good at responding to my partner when we disagree.	1	2 3 4 5
42.	I am not ready to talk about these topics with my partner.	1	2 3 4 5
43.	I might say something hurtful to my partner.	1	2 3 4 5
44.	I don't plan on being in a relationship with my partner much longer.	1	2 3 4 5

Appendix G

My Relationship With My Partner

Now we would like you to answer the following questions about you and your romantic partner. For each item, please circle the number that best describes your relationship.

1. How often do you spend fun times with your partner?

1	2	3	4	5
Little or None	Somewhat	Very Much	Extremely Much	The Most

2. How much do you and your partner get upset with or mad at each other?

1	2	3	4	5
Little or None	Somewhat	Very Much	Extremely Much	The Most

3. How much does your partner teach you how to do things that you don't know?

1	2	3	4	5
Little or None	Somewhat	Very Much	Extremely Much	The Most

4. How much do you and your partner get on each other's nerves?

1	2	3	4	5
Little or None	Somewhat	Very Much	Extremely Much	The Most

5. How often do you tell your partner things that you don't want others to know?

1	2	3	4	5
Little or None	Somewhat	Very Much	Extremely Much	The Most

6. How much do you help your partner with things she/he can't do by her/himself?

1	2	3	4	5
Little or None	Somewhat	Very Much	Extremely Much	The Most

7. How much does your partner like or love you?

1	2	3	4	5
Little or None	Somewhat	Very Much	Extremely Much	The Most

8. How much does your partner treat you like you're admired and respected?

1	2	3	4	5
Little or None	Somewhat	Very Much	Extremely Much	The Most

9. Who tells the other person what to do more often, you or your partner?

1	2	3	4	5
S/he Always Does	S/he Often Does	About the Same	I Often Do	I Always Do

10. How sure are you that this relationship will last no matter what?

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____
Little or None Somewhat Very Much Extremely Much The Most

11. How often do you and your partner go places and do things together?

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____
Little or None Somewhat Very Much Extremely Much The Most

12. How often do you and your partner get mad at or get in fights with each other?

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____
Little or None Somewhat Very Much Extremely Much The Most

13. How much does your partner help you figure out or fix things?

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____
Little or None Somewhat Very Much Extremely Much The Most

14. How much do you and your partner get annoyed with each other's behavior?

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____
Little or None Somewhat Very Much Extremely Much The Most

15. How often do you tell your partner everything that you are going through?

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____
Little or None Somewhat Very Much Extremely Much The Most

16. How much do you protect and look out for your partner?

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____
Little or None Somewhat Very Much Extremely Much The Most

17. How much does your partner really care about you?

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____
Little or None Somewhat Very Much Extremely Much The Most

18. How much does your partner treat you like you're good at many things?

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____
Little or None Somewhat Very Much Extremely Much The Most

19. Between you and your partner, who tends to be the boss in this relationship?

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____
S/he Always Does S/he Often Does About the Same I Often Do I Always Do

20. How sure are you that your relationship will last in spite of fights?

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____
Little or None Somewhat Very Much Extremely Much The Most

21. How often do you play around and have fun with your partner?

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____
Little or None Somewhat Very Much Extremely Much The Most

22. How often do you and your partner get mad at or get in fights with each other?

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____
Little or None Somewhat Very Much Extremely Much The Most

23. How much does your partner help you when you need to get something done?

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____
Little or None Somewhat Very Much Extremely Much The Most

24. How much do you and your partner hassle or nag one another?

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____
Little or None Somewhat Very Much Extremely Much The Most

25. How often do you share secrets and private feelings with your partner?

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____
Little or None Somewhat Very Much Extremely Much The Most

26. How much do you take care of your partner?

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____
Little or None Somewhat Very Much Extremely Much The Most

27. How much does your partner have a strong feeling of affection (loving or liking) toward you?

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____
Little or None Somewhat Very Much Extremely Much The Most

28. How much does your partner like or approve of the things you do?

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____
Little or None Somewhat Very Much Extremely Much The Most

29. In your relationship with your partner, who tends to take charge and decide what should be done?

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____
S/he Always S/he Often About the I Often I Always
Does Does Same Do Do

30. How sure are you that your relationship will continue in the years to come?

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____
Little or None Somewhat Very Much Extremely Much The Most

Appendix H

How I Feel About Our Relationship

1. Please indicate the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship.

Extremely Unhappy	Fairly Unhappy	A Little Unhappy	Happy	A Little Happy	Extremely Happy	Perfect
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

2. In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?

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

3. Our relationship is strong.

Not at all True	A Little True	Somewhat True	Mostly True	Almost Completely True	Completely True
0	1	2	3	4	5

4. My relationship with my partner makes me happy.

Not at all True	A Little True	Somewhat True	Mostly True	Almost Completely True	Completely True
0	1	2	3	4	5

5. I have a warm and comfortable relationship with my partner.

Not at all True	A Little True	Somewhat True	Mostly True	Almost Completely True	Completely True
0	1	2	3	4	5

6. I really feel like part of a team with my partner.

Not at all True	A Little True	Somewhat True	Mostly True	Almost Completely True	Completely True
0	1	2	3	4	5

7. How rewarding is your relationship with your partner?

Not at all	A Little	Somewhat	Mostly	Almost Completely	Completely
0	1	2	3	4	5

8. How well does your partner meet your needs?

Not at all	A Little	Somewhat	Mostly	Almost Completely	Completely
0	1	2	3	4	5

9. To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?

Not at all	A Little	Somewhat	Mostly	Almost Completely	Completely
0	1	2	3	4	5

10. In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?

Not at all	A Little	Somewhat	Mostly	Almost Completely	Completely
0	1	2	3	4	5

For each of the following items, select the answer that best describes how you feel about your relationship. Base your responses on your first impressions and immediate feelings.

- | | | | | |
|------------|------------------|---|-----------|---------------------|
| 11. | Boring | 0 | 1 2 3 4 5 | Interesting |
| 12. | Good | 0 | 1 2 3 4 5 | Bad |
| 13. | Empty | 0 | 1 2 3 4 5 | Full |
| 14. | Fragile | 0 | 1 2 3 4 5 | Sturdy |
| 15. | Hopeful | 0 | 1 2 3 4 5 | Discouraging |
| 16. | Miserable | 0 | 1 2 3 4 5 | Enjoyable |

Appendix I

Areas of Change

In every relationship there are behaviors one or both partners seek to change. Behaviors may occur either too often or not often enough. For example a partner may be dissatisfied because the other does not do something enough; the desired change would be for this behavior to occur more often. On the other hand, one might be dissatisfied because the partner spends too much time doing something; in this case the desired change would be for this behavior to occur less often. In other words, a person's dissatisfaction with partner performance of a particular behavior can be expressed as a desire for a behavior to occur either more or less often.

The following are typical behaviors which can cause relationship dissatisfactions. As you read each item, decide whether you are satisfied with your partner's performance described in that item. If you are satisfied with your partner's performance or if an item is not relevant to you, circle zero point on the scale, meaning "NO CHANGE DESIRED."

If you are 'not satisfied' with your partner's performance in a particular item, indicate the direction of change in behavior you would like to see. If you would prefer to see a particular behavior occur less often, circle on the "minus" half of the rating scale and indicate how much less you would like this behavior to occur. If you would prefer to see a particular behavior more often, circle on the "plus" half of the rating scale to indicate how much more you would like this behavior to occur.

I WANT MY PARTNER TO...

1. ...spend time with me.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
<hr/> much less	<hr/> less	<hr/> somewhat less	<hr/> 0	<hr/> somewhat more	<hr/> more	<hr/> much more

2. ...talk about the "label" (e.g., dating, girlfriend/boyfriend) that defines our relationship.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
<hr/> much less	<hr/> less	<hr/> somewhat less	<hr/> 0	<hr/> somewhat more	<hr/> more	<hr/> much more

3. ...spend time with his or her friends.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
<hr/> much less	<hr/> less	<hr/> somewhat less	<hr/> 0	<hr/> somewhat more	<hr/> more	<hr/> much more

I WANT MY PARTNER TO...

4. ...let me use birth control and/or contraceptives.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much less	less	somewhat less		somewhat more	more	much more

5. ...let me plan activities or things for us to do.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much less	less	somewhat less		somewhat more	more	much more

6. ...date other people and/or allow me to date other people.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much less	less	somewhat less		somewhat more	more	much more

7. ...spend time with me and my friends.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much less	less	somewhat less		somewhat more	more	much more

8. ...go further sexually with me.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much less	less	somewhat less		somewhat more	more	much more

9. ...pay attention to my appearance and/or looks.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much less	less	somewhat less		somewhat more	more	much more

10. ...spend time with his or her family.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much less	less	somewhat less		somewhat more	more	much more

11. ...talk about the number of sexual partners that I have had.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much less	less	somewhat less		somewhat more	more	much more

I WANT MY PARTNER TO...

12. ...talk about the future of our relationship.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much less	less	somewhat less		somewhat more	more	much more

13. ...spend time with me and his/her friends.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much less	less	somewhat less		somewhat more	more	much more

14. ...spend time with me and my family.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much less	less	somewhat less		somewhat more	more	much more

15. ...pay attention to his or her appearance and/or looks.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much less	less	somewhat less		somewhat more	more	much more

16. ...talk about past romantic relationships that I have had.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much less	less	somewhat less		somewhat more	more	much more

17. ...talk about things that he/she does to upset me.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much less	less	somewhat less		somewhat more	more	much more

18. ...be ok when I spend time with my friends of the opposite gender.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much less	less	somewhat less		somewhat more	more	much more

19. ...use birth control and/or contraceptives.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much less	less	somewhat less		somewhat more	more	much more

I WANT MY PARTNER TO...

20. ...talk about the romantic feelings that we have towards each other.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much less	less	somewhat less		somewhat more	more	much more

21. ...plan activities or things for us to do.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much less	less	somewhat less		somewhat more	more	much more

22. ...talk about past romantic relationships that he/she has had.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much less	less	somewhat less		somewhat more	more	much more

23. ...talk about things that I do to upset me him/her.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much less	less	somewhat less		somewhat more	more	much more

24. ...spend time with his or her friends of the opposite gender.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much less	less	somewhat less		somewhat more	more	much more

25. ...be ok when I spend time with my friends.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much less	less	somewhat less		somewhat more	more	much more

26. ...talk about the number of sexual partners that he/she has had.

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
much less	less	somewhat less		somewhat more	more	much more

Appendix J

When I Held Back

The following items have to do with how you communicated with your partner just now while talking about the issues that you and your partner raised. Keep in mind that each item is about you, not about your partner. Please indicate on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) how much you agree with each statement.

		Strongly Disagree		Strongly Agree
1.	I did not speak my feelings about topics that led to conflicts or disagreements with my partner.	1	2 3 4 5	
2.	I often reached a point during conflicts or disagreements with my partner when I just stopped talking.	1	2 3 4 5	
3.	When my partner and I disagreed I often gave short responses like “yeah” or “uh-huh”.	1	2 3 4 5	
4.	I stated my opinions even when they conflicted with my partner’s opinions.	1	2 3 4 5	
5.	I gave my partner the silent treatment when he/she brought up certain topics.	1	2 3 4 5	
6.	I didn’t say too much when my partner and I disagreed.	1	2 3 4 5	
7.	I often withdrew from disagreements with my partner.	1	2 3 4 5	
8.	I avoided telling my partner things that might have led to a conflict or disagreement.	1	2 3 4 5	
9.	When my partner and I disagreed I was involved and engaged in the discussion.	1	2 3 4 5	
10.	When my partner and I disagreed I kept my feelings to myself.	1	2 3 4 5	
11.	I often changed the subject when my partner and I disagreed.	1	2 3 4 5	
12.	When my partner and I disagreed I kept my feelings bottled up.	1	2 3 4 5	
13.	I avoided discussing certain topics with my partner.	1	2 3 4 5	
14.	I tuned my partner out when we disagreed.	1	2 3 4 5	
15.	I shut down when my partner and I argued or disagreed.	1	2 3 4 5	
16.	I often didn’t say anything when my partner made comments that upset me.	1	2 3 4 5	
17.	I told my partner when he or she did something to upset me.	1	2 3 4 5	
18.	I often ignored what my partner had to say when we disagreed.	1	2 3 4 5	

Appendix K

When My Partner Held Back

The following items have to do with how your partner communicated with you just now while talking about the issues that you and your partner raised. Keep in mind that each item is about your partner, not about you. Please indicate on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) how much you agree with each statement.

		Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree
1.	My partner did not speak his or her feelings about topics that led to conflicts or disagreements with me.	1	2 3 4 5
2.	My partner often reached a point during conflicts or disagreements with me when he or she just stopped talking.	1	2 3 4 5
3.	When my partner and I disagreed he or she often gave short responses like “yeah” or “uh-huh”.	1	2 3 4 5
4.	My partner stated his or her opinions even when they conflicted with my opinions.	1	2 3 4 5
5.	My partner gave me the silent treatment when I brought up certain topics.	1	2 3 4 5
6.	My partner did not say too much when we disagreed.	1	2 3 4 5
7.	My partner often withdrew from disagreements with me.	1	2 3 4 5
8.	My partner avoided telling me things that might have led to a conflict or disagreement.	1	2 3 4 5
9.	When my partner and I disagreed my partner was involved and engaged in the discussion.	1	2 3 4 5
10.	When we disagreed my partner kept his or her feelings to himself or herself.	1	2 3 4 5
11.	My partner often changed the subject when we disagreed.	1	2 3 4 5
12.	When we disagreed my partner kept his or her feelings bottled up.	1	2 3 4 5
13.	My partner avoided discussing certain topics with me.	1	2 3 4 5
14.	My partner tuned me out when we disagreed.	1	2 3 4 5
15.	My partner shut down when we argued or disagreed.	1	2 3 4 5
16.	My partner often did not say anything when I made comments that upset him or her.	1	2 3 4 5
17.	My partner told me when I did something to upset him or her	1	2 3 4 5
18.	My partner often ignored what I have to say when we disagreed.	1	2 3 4 5

Appendix L

Why I Held Back When Discussing My Issues

We would also like to know the reasons why you may have chosen to avoid discussing the issues that you raised. For this next scale, keep the discussion that you just had with your partner in mind. Think about why you avoided discussing issues related to the topics that you wanted to talk about, NOT issues related to the topics that your partner wanted to talk about. The scale ranges from 1 to 5 with 1 being that you strongly disagree with the statement and 5 being strongly agree with the statement.

I AVOIDED DISCUSSING MY ISSUES WITH MY ROMANTIC PARTNER BECAUSE...

		Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree
1.	I might have gotten hurt.	1	2 3 4 5
2.	My partner might not have responded or said anything in return.	1	2 3 4 5
3.	My partner might have looked down on me.	1	2 3 4 5
4.	I would have felt uncomfortable.	1	2 3 4 5
5.	I was afraid that my partner might break up with me.	1	2 3 4 5
6.	I wanted to keep my privacy.	1	2 3 4 5
7.	I wanted to avoid conflict.	1	2 3 4 5
8.	I didn't know what to say to my partner.	1	2 3 4 5
9.	I am not emotionally close enough to my partner.	1	2 3 4 5
10.	My partner might have gotten hurt.	1	2 3 4 5
11.	I don't want my relationship with my partner to get any more serious.	1	2 3 4 5
12.	It might have brought up a past event that was hurtful to me.	1	2 3 4 5
13.	My partner would have just tried to change the subject.	1	2 3 4 5
14.	My partner might have judged me.	1	2 3 4 5
15.	It would have put me on edge.	1	2 3 4 5
16.	It would have damaged my relationship with my partner.	1	2 3 4 5
17.	The information was none of my partner's business.	1	2 3 4 5
18.	I didn't want to make my partner angry with me.	1	2 3 4 5
19.	I didn't know how to express what I was feeling to my partner.	1	2 3 4 5

I AVOIDED DISCUSSING MY ISSUES WITH MY ROMANTIC PARTNER BECAUSE...

		Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree
20.	My partner and I have not been together long enough.	1	2 3 4 5
21.	It might have brought up a past event that was hurtful to my partner.	1	2 3 4 5
22.	I just want to passively let my relationship with my partner die out.	1	2 3 4 5
23.	It was emotionally painful for me to discuss.	1	2 3 4 5
24.	I felt like there was nothing I could say to change my partner's mind.	1	2 3 4 5
25.	My partner might have thought less of me.	1	2 3 4 5
26.	It would have felt awkward or weird to discuss those topics.	1	2 3 4 5
27.	I wanted to keep my relationship with my partner going smoothly.	1	2 3 4 5
28.	My partner might have asked me things that I don't want him or her to know.	1	2 3 4 5
29.	It might have led to an argument between me and my partner.	1	2 3 4 5
30.	I am not very good at telling my partner how I feel.	1	2 3 4 5
31.	The relationship I have with my partner is not serious enough.	1	2 3 4 5
32.	It might have been emotionally painful for my partner to discuss.	1	2 3 4 5
33.	I am planning on breaking up with my partner.	1	2 3 4 5
34.	My partner might have said something hurtful.	1	2 3 4 5
35.	I felt like my partner would not be open to discussing these topics.	1	2 3 4 5
36.	My partner might have lost respect for me.	1	2 3 4 5
37.	It would have made me feel anxious.	1	2 3 4 5
38.	It might have prevented our relationship from becoming more serious.	1	2 3 4 5
39.	There are some things that I did not want to share with my partner.	1	2 3 4 5
40.	My partner and I might have disagreed over these topics.	1	2 3 4 5
41.	I am not very good at responding to my partner when we disagree.	1	2 3 4 5
42.	I am not ready to talk about these topics with my partner.	1	2 3 4 5
43.	I might have said something hurtful to my partner.	1	2 3 4 5
44.	I don't plan on being in a relationship with my partner much longer.	1	2 3 4 5

Appendix M

Why I Held Back When Discussing My Partner's Issues

We would also like to know the reasons why you may have chosen to avoid discussing the issues that your partner raised. For this next scale, keep the discussion that you just had with your partner in mind. Think about why you avoided discussing issues related to the topics that your partner wanted to talk about, NOT issues related to the topics that you wanted to talk about. The scale ranges from 1 to 5 with 1 being that you strongly disagree with the statement and 5 being strongly agree with the statement.

I AVOIDED DISCUSSING MY PARTNER'S ISSUES WITH HIM OR HER BECAUSE...

		Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree
1.	I might have gotten hurt.	1	2 3 4 5
2.	My partner might not have responded or said anything in return.	1	2 3 4 5
3.	My partner might have looked down on me.	1	2 3 4 5
4.	I would have felt uncomfortable.	1	2 3 4 5
5.	I was afraid that my partner might break up with me.	1	2 3 4 5
6.	I wanted to keep my privacy.	1	2 3 4 5
7.	I wanted to avoid conflict.	1	2 3 4 5
8.	I didn't know what to say to my partner.	1	2 3 4 5
9.	I am not emotionally close enough to my partner.	1	2 3 4 5
10.	My partner might have gotten hurt.	1	2 3 4 5
11.	I don't want my relationship with my partner to get any more serious.	1	2 3 4 5
12.	It might have brought up a past event that was hurtful to me.	1	2 3 4 5
13.	My partner would have just tried to change the subject.	1	2 3 4 5
14.	My partner might have judged me.	1	2 3 4 5
15.	It would have put me on edge.	1	2 3 4 5
16.	It would have damaged my relationship with my partner.	1	2 3 4 5
17.	The information was none of my partner's business.	1	2 3 4 5
18.	I didn't want to make my partner angry with me.	1	2 3 4 5
19.	I didn't know how to express what I was feeling to my partner.	1	2 3 4 5

I AVOIDED DISCUSSING MY PARTNER'S ISSUES WITH HIM OR HER BECAUSE...

		Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree
20.	My partner and I have not been together long enough.	1	2 3 4 5
21.	It might have brought up a past event that was hurtful to my partner.	1	2 3 4 5
22.	I just want to passively let my relationship with my partner die out.	1	2 3 4 5
23.	It was emotionally painful for me to discuss.	1	2 3 4 5
24.	I felt like there was nothing I could say to change my partner's mind.	1	2 3 4 5
25.	My partner might have thought less of me.	1	2 3 4 5
26.	It would have felt awkward or weird to discuss those topics.	1	2 3 4 5
27.	I wanted to keep my relationship with my partner going smoothly.	1	2 3 4 5
28.	My partner might have asked me things that I don't want him or her to know.	1	2 3 4 5
29.	It might have led to an argument between me and my partner.	1	2 3 4 5
30.	I am not very good at telling my partner how I feel.	1	2 3 4 5
31.	The relationship I have with my partner is not serious enough.	1	2 3 4 5
32.	It might have been emotionally painful for my partner to discuss.	1	2 3 4 5
33.	I am planning on breaking up with my partner.	1	2 3 4 5
34.	My partner might have said something hurtful.	1	2 3 4 5
35.	I felt like my partner would not be open to discussing these topics.	1	2 3 4 5
36.	My partner might have lost respect for me.	1	2 3 4 5
37.	It would have made me feel anxious.	1	2 3 4 5
38.	It might have prevented our relationship from becoming more serious.	1	2 3 4 5
39.	There are some things that I did not want to share with my partner.	1	2 3 4 5
40.	My partner and I might have disagreed over these topics.	1	2 3 4 5
41.	I am not very good at responding to my partner when we disagree.	1	2 3 4 5
42.	I am not ready to talk about these topics with my partner.	1	2 3 4 5
43.	I might have said something hurtful to my partner.	1	2 3 4 5
44.	I don't plan on being in a relationship with my partner much longer.	1	2 3 4 5

Appendix N

Follow-up Questionnaire (Intact Partner)

1. Are you still in a romantic relationship with the person that you came to the lab with 6 months ago?

_____ Yes _____ No

2. Please indicate the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship?

Extremely Unhappy	Fairly Unhappy	A Little Unhappy	Happy	A Little Happy	Extremely Happy	Perfect
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

3. I have a warm and comfortable relationship with my partner.

Not at all True	A Little True	Somewhat True	Mostly True	Almost Completely True	Completely True
0	1	2	3	4	5

4. How rewarding is your relationship with your partner?

Not at all	A Little	Somewhat	Mostly	Almost Completely	Completely
0	1	2	3	4	5

5. In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?

Not at all	A Little	Somewhat	Mostly	Almost Completely	Completely
0	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix O

Follow-up Questionnaire (New Partner)

1. **Are you still in a romantic relationship with the person that you came to the lab with 6 months ago?**

Yes No

2. **Who initiated the breakup with your former partner?**

I did My partner did Our breakup was mutual

3. **Are you currently in a romantic relationship with someone else?**

Yes No

4. **How long have you been dating your current romantic partner?**

Months

5. **Would you consider your current romantic relationship to be exclusive? (*this means that neither of you are dating or seeing other people*).**

Yes No

6. **Please indicate the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your current relationship.**

Extremely Unhappy	Fairly Unhappy	A Little Unhappy	Happy	A Little Happy	Extremely Happy	Perfect
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

7. **I have a warm and comfortable relationship with my partner.**

Not at all True	A Little True	Somewhat True	Mostly True	Almost Completely True	Completely True
0	1	2	3	4	5

8. **How rewarding is your relationship with your partner?**

Not at all	A Little	Somewhat	Mostly	Almost Completely	Completely
0	1	2	3	4	5

9. **In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?**

Not at all	A Little	Somewhat	Mostly	Almost Completely	Completely
0	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix P

Follow-up Questionnaire (Single Participants)

1. **Are you still in a romantic relationship with the person that you participated in our study with _____ months ago?**
 Yes No

2. **Who initiated the breakup with your former partner?**
 I did My partner did Our breakup was mutual

3. **Are you currently in a romantic relationship with someone else?**
 Yes No

VITA

Gary Glick was born in Elk Grove Village, Illinois and received his high school diploma at Waubonsie Valley High School in Aurora, Illinois in 2002. He then attended Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa where he completed his B.S. in psychology and sociology with honors in 2006. After working as a research assistant for two years in the Center for Social Development and Education at the University of Massachusetts – Boston he was admitted as a graduate student in the Department of Psychological Sciences at the University of Missouri in 2008. He completed his M.A. in psychology in 2011 and his Ph.D. in psychology in 2014, both at the University of Missouri.