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ABSTRACT

A study explored psychometric relationships among three dialectical tensions (connection/autonomy, openness/closedness, and novelty/predictability). A confirmatory factor analysis using 694 undergraduate students (347 romantic dyads) culled from various courses in a large midwestern metropolitan university confirmed the existence and independence of each of the dialectical poles. Each pole of the dialectical tension was positively correlated with the other pole, indicating that the conceptualization of the poles as mutually negating "opposites" received no support. The examination of the relationship with satisfaction within the romantic relationships indicated that the existence of the dialectical tensions are positively correlated. Findings may not be surprising, because as a relationship progresses the level of tension should increase. However, it is the successful negotiation of management of the dialectical tension (rather than avoidance of the tension) between conflicting desires that should provide the basis of relational satisfaction. A combination of demographic and dialectical tension measures generated strong (individual level Multiple R=.76, dyadic level Multiple R=.79) predictions of relational satisfaction. Future research should consider the process issues in relational development--both longitudinal designs and designs to test various process models need to be developed to reveal possibilities. (Contains 7 tables of data and 15 references.) (Author/NKA)

# DIALETICAL THEORY: TESTING THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN TENSIONS AND RELATIONAL SATISFACTION

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# ABSTRACT

## DIALECTICAL THEORY: TESTING THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN TENSIONS AND RELATIONAL SATISFACTION

This paper explores the psychometric relationships among three dialectical tensions (connection-autonomy, openness-closedness, novelty-predictability). A confirmatory factor analysis using 694 individuals (347 romantic dyads) confirms the existence and independence of each of the dialectical poles. Each pole of the dialectical tension was positively correlated with the other pole, indicating that the conceptualization of the poles as mutually negating "opposites" receives no support. The examination of the relationship with satisfaction within the romantic relationships indicates that the existence of the dialectical tensions are **positively** correlated. The findings may not be surprising, because as a relationship progresses the level of tension should increase. However, it is the successful negotiation or management of the dialectical tension (rather than avoidance of the tension) between conflicting desires that should provide the basis of relational satisfaction. A combination of demographic and dialectical tension measures generated strong (individual level Multiple R = .76, dyadic level Multiple R = .79) predictions of relational satisfaction.

Dialectical theory represents a break from the traditional use of information valence theories to explain the development of interpersonal relationships. Most approaches to a theory of interpersonal communication and interpersonal relationships incorporate information acquisition and evaluation as a basis for understanding interpersonal communication and relationships (e.g., Uncertainty Reduction Theory, Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Social Penetration Theory, Altman & Taylor, 1973, Miller & Steinberg, 1975, Social Exchange Theory, Roloff, 1981). These theories begin with the assumption that an increase in the level of information obtained by a person provides the basis for evaluating the rewards of continued association. A positive valence from the information received indicates the potential for the development of the relationship, while a negative valence provides the basis for termination of the interaction and forestalls the development of the relationship. Communication functions as the key process of the development of information resources and the basis for conclusions reached by the person.

Dialectical theory suggests that the development and maintenance of relationships comes from handling the conflicting tensions of a relationship. The changes within the relationship occur as the couple tries to resolve the tensions (Knapp & Vangelisti, 1996). As Montgomery points out, "The dialectical assumption that change is at the heart of social processes contradicts the emphasis on stability and consistency that exists in most conceptualizations of relationship maintenance" (1993, p. 205). The type of tensions and their importance vary from relationship to relationship (Baxter, 1988). Communicating about the tensions or issues relating to the tensions, move a couple towards either greater or reduced levels of intimacy depending on the outcome of the interaction. For example, a member of a dyad introducing a discussion about the need for autonomy creates the basis for relational change. While rewards and costs play an obvious part in evaluation, the person is negotiating tensions that

cannot be eliminated or ignored. Dialectical theory posits that the conflicting tensions felt by the individual about relationships require an assessment of gains and costs. The entry, maintenance, and disintegration of a relationship comes from the management of these tensions.

Currently the "corpus of empirically based work is still quite limited" (Baxter, 1990, p. 69). However, the body of work involving an empirical exploration of dialectical theory continues to grow (Sabourin & Stamp, 1995). Little work exists that examines either the relationship of dialectical tensions to each other, or the relationship with the satisfaction felt within a relationship. This investigation explores the relationships among dialectical tensions as well as the relationships of tensions to relational satisfaction.

## THE RELATIONSHIP OF DIALECTICAL TENSIONS

Dialectical tensions represent the opposing forces that exist that a person involved in a relationship. The pressure from of simultaneous opposing forces stimulates relational change (Baxter, 1988; Baxter & Simon, 1993; Montgomery, 1993; Rawlins, 1989). In essence, partners in a relationship try to find ways of balancing and negotiating these processes to resolve the tensions in positive ways. For example, the tensions arise from the fundamental problems that come from the conflict between independence and interdependence. At some level, a person entering a personal relationship sacrifices independence for an more interdependent web of considerations. A decision by one member of a relationship often effects the other member, and therefore, the ability to make decisions independently becomes reduced. This cost of independence comes with the advantages of sharing such decisions (interdependence) with someone sharing that interdependence. The relational partner provides support and help in attaining goals.

Dialectics explores the management of the tensions within a relationship caused by competition between desires for independence and

interdependence. Relationships require interdependence. For example, the desire to be connected to another person provides a sense of security and stability, however, the gain felt by the person is measured by the loss of autonomy. Predictability and stability become enhanced but at a loss of spontaneity and novelty. Being open to another person brings with it the inability to remain closed. Partners in relationships feel as though the other person should share all important activities or information with the partner.

As Baxter and Simon (1993) point out, "although dialectical contradictions are conceived as logical and semantic oppositions, the two poles of a given contradiction are in constant motion with respect to one another at the experimental level" (p. 228). The poles do not represent fixed points or values like those in a personality trait or even a state. Rather the evaluations of the poles vary based on the management of the relationship. Management is an ongoing process of relational maintenance. The values of the poles and tensions constantly shift in response to events and situations.

The psychometric issues of measurement create a bit of confusion. Generally, the notion of opposing forces or poles is used psychometrically to indicate variables that correlate negatively. That is, as the value of one variable increases the value of the other variable diminishes. For example, as a person responds with increasing indications of connectedness in the relationship, one would reasonably expect the evaluation of autonomy to diminish. The psychometric implication of this condition would then be a **negative correlation** between the dialectical poles. As one pole (openness) increases, the value of the other pole (closedness) decreases.

Another issue surfaces with the concept that dialectical tensions are bipolar. Dialectical tensions may simply represent opposite ends of the same continuum. If this is the case, then the tension is simply

unidimensional, and any measurement addresses the opposite ends of the continuum. Actually, the bipolar tensions are names for a single process, but indicate different ends of the psychometric spectrum. For example, suppose using a credibility scale, a person is given the item, "The communicator is honest." The response to this item should be the opposite of the item, "The communicator is a liar." In this scheme, the terms "honest" and "liar" should be considered as stemming from one underlying dimension, even though the terms reflect opposite ends of that dimension. The problem is that the description of dialectical tensions as opposites creates the psychometric image of unidimensionality. The notion of tension, however, may or may not require that property to be true. This person is managing the tension and maintaining an acceptable balance. A formal test of the factor structure using confirmatory factor analysis would permit formal tests of this, as would examination of the correlations between the scales.

However, a converse case can be made. One can argue that both forces are simultaneously brought into play in a relationship, and that as one value increases, the other value will increase as well. Consider the comments of a person who claims "I feel secure in my relationship. I feel like I can be myself, that I am with someone and at the same time not constrained." In other words, a person in a satisfied relationship often does not experience an existing tension. In fact, the person defines the relationship as reducing the tension. This position argues that a satisfied relationship allows both a high degree of autonomy and a high degree of connection. A relationship with low satisfaction would have partners feeling both low autonomy and low connection. In both cases, the investigation should demonstrate a **high positive correlation** between dialectical poles. Similarly, the test of the measurement model should demonstrate that the poles are independent but connected.

A third outcome could be suggested as well: No relationship will exist. Suppose an investigator takes a cross-sectional random sample of existing relationships; in which case values for any given pole should be random as well: For some persons in relationships, the values are in opposition, for other persons the values are in collusion (combining to form the relationship). The net result is that across the sample, the correlation between dialectical poles would be zero or near zero. The relationships with values in opposition will balance out the relationships in which values the values are collusive. This is equivalent to saying that the deviations in any distribution should sum to zero. Assuming that the values are flexible and highly variable, the **overall** average effect should be close to zero.

The critical feature involves a sample diverse enough in age and relational type (dating, engaged, married, etc.) and length (new, short term, and long term) to provide a data base permitting a complete examination. A strong relationship (either positive or negative) would not indicate that all persons find the values negating or in agreement at all times, however, a positive or negative value would present evidence that the average value was consistent in some direction.

The key is to consider the measurement issues involving dimensionality first. Only after a solution to the measurement issues surrounding dialectical tensions is determined can a researcher consider how the tensions might be associated with various outcomes. It is important the measurement of dialectical tensions reflect the actual conceptual system.

## THE RELATIONSHIP OF DIALECTICAL TENSION TO RELATIONAL SATISFACTION

One aspect of examining dialectical tensions is the relationship of satisfaction to the dialectical poles. One key question considers whether a particular pole becomes dominant. When this occurs, "It is the

domination of one dialectical pole by the opposite pole that sets in motion effort to achieve equilibrium; thus, domination is the catalyst for dialectical change" (Baxter & Simon, 1993, p. 228). Dialectics assume that relational partners manage the tension by not permitting either pole of the opposing force to dominate the relationship. The assumption is that the person in a relationship strives to maintain some sense of balance between the opposing forces.

The logical outcome suggests a loss equilibrium causes a person to evaluate a relationship as unsatisfactory. Tension, the values and desires felt by each of the contradicting poles, causes unhappiness. As the level of tension increases, the contradiction is felt more by the person and the contradiction acts to create unhappiness and dissatisfaction with the relationship. Given this line of thought, one would expect that high levels of agreement with either dialectical pole would lead to dissatisfaction with the relationship. This dissatisfaction occurs if tension increases between the dialectical poles.

One argument might state that the failure to balance or adequately address the issues of tension within the relationship leads to dissolution. This counter proposition argue that how a person perceives that tension rather than the level of the tension is what results in dissatisfaction. In this case, it is possible that the dialectical poles (connection/autonomy for example) are seen in collusion (positively correlated), and that the tension comes from being unable to have a relationship with both aspects balanced. Under these conditions, one expects that as both tensions increase, the relationship becomes more satisfactory. This investigation will consider how levels of dialectical tension are related to levels of relational satisfaction.

## METHODS

### Participants

Participants in this investigation came from a variety of sources: an introductory interpersonal communication course, a public speaking course, a course in organizational communication, a marital and family communication course at a large public midwestern university in a metropolitan area (the university students received extra credit for participation). In addition, participants were sought from an advertising agency and a law firm. The total sample was 347 couples (694 persons).

## Instruments

### Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Participants provided a variety of descriptive information about themselves and their relationships. Participants indicated biological gender (male or female), age, the racial or ethnic group to which they belonged, sexual preference (heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, other), the length of the relationship (under a month, 1-6 months, 6-12 months, 1-3 years, 3-5 years, 5+ years), and the nature of the relationship (dating relationship, exclusive/committed, engaged to be married, married).

The average age of the sample was 28 (range 18-73) indicating that even though the bulk of the participants came from college, these were older than the average expected age of college students. The 694 participants reported themselves as 548 (79.0%) white, 60 (8.6%) black, 34 (4.9%) Asian, 24 (3.5%) Hispanic, 7 (1.0%) native American, 10 (1.4%) other (all indicat d a racial mixture), and 11 (1.6%) did not indicate a racial grouping. 671 (96.9%) of the respondents indicated they were heterosexual, 11 (1.6%) indicated a homosexual preference, 11 (1.6%) indicated a bisexual orientation, and 1 (0.1%) indicated an alternative preference (voyeurism).

The data on the relational demographics demonstrates diversity among the relationships of the participants. The length of the relationships varied with 16 (4.4%) under one month, 40 (11.5%) from 1 to 6 months long, 46 (13.4%) from six to one year, 84 (24.3%) from 1 to 3 years, 57 (16.4%)

three to five years, and 104 (30.0%) more than five years in length. The nature of the relationships varied as well. Forty Eight (13.5%) reported causal dating, 138 (39.9%) were exclusive/committed, 45 (10.8%) engaged, 116 (33.5%) were married, and 8 (2.3%) indicated some other type of relationship. For the purposes of this analysis, the scale was treated as measuring a form of commitment or intensity of the relationship.

The demographic information indicate a diverse sample on many different aspects of the potential differences. The one weakness of the sample was only a 3% representation of homosexual/bisexuals. However, given the dispute about size of this lifestyle group it is unknown whether the percentage provides representative validity. The nature of the relationship information indicates a variable range in the type and nature of the relationships within the sample.

Measuring Dialectal Tension

Dialectical tensions were measured using the instrument developed by Baxter and Simon (1993). The instrument provides measurement for six endpoints of three different dialectical poles (connection-autonomy, openness-closedness, and predictability-novelty). Two aspects of the issues surrounding the measure of dialectical tensions were examined. First, the psychometric issues surrounding measurement were assessed, and secondly the nature of the psychometric relationship is explored. The earlier Baxter and Simon (1993) analysis relies on an oblique rotation using principle components. Such a procedure capitalizes on an atheoretical dust-bowl empirical approach to measurement (Hunter, 1980). The appropriate follow-up approach (confirmatory factor analysis) requires a theoretical a priori specification of associations and relies on a least squares solution to examine the measurement model. If the theoretical premises are correct regarding the measurement issues, then the model should meet appropriate tests. The tests for such a model are outlined in the communication literature (Levine & McCroskey, 1990).

The second measurement issue concerns the nature of the relationship among the dialectical poles. Baxter and Simon (1993) do not report the relationships among the measures of dialectical tension. This investigation examines the relationship between the dialectical poles.

Measuring Relational Satisfaction

Relational satisfaction was measured using an adaptation of the marital quality questionnaire developed by Norton (1983). The scale and the results of the associated confirmatory factor analysis appear in Table 1. The analysis shows an acceptable alpha reliability (alpha = .93). Also, the test of internal consistency demonstrates that the level of departure from the model remains within tolerance limits ($X^2_{(119)} = 110,5$ $p > .05$).

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Insert Table 1 about here

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## Procedure

### Statistical Analysis

Measurement Model

The measurement model assumptions were assessed using the program PACKAGE (Hunter & Cohen, 1969). The procedure compared a single-factor solution versus a two-factor solution. A single-factor solution treats all the items of a tension (connection/autonomy, closedness/openness, novelty/predictability) as a single scale. The two-factor solution considers each end of the tension as a separate scale.

The test of the measurement model uses a least squares approach to confirmatory factor analysis (Levine & McCroskey, 1990). Using the derived factor loadings, an expected matrix of correlations is computed. The expected correlation matrix is compared to the actual correlation matrix for the data. The differences between each value can be squared and summed to form the basis of a chi-square estimate. If the model is consistent

with the data, then the chi-square statistic will be nonsignificant. A significant chi-square statistic indicates that the sum of the difference (error) between the expected and actual matrix is more than would be expected due to random sampling error. A second test requires that the confidence interval for each individual correlation fall within the average expected error for that matrix. Using the average of the expected correlation matrix, a confidence interval is calculated for the estimate of the correlations. Each comparison between an expected and actual correlation should generate a value equal to or less than the expected confidence interval (actually, since the confidence interval is set at .05, 95% of the intervals should be equivalent or less than the interval). If more than 5% of the values are greater than the confidence interval, there is too much error when comparing the values.

Testing Relationships Using Individual Level Data

To test the relationship between dialectical tensions and relational satisfaction, two tests were conducted. First, zero order correlations were computed between the dialectical tension scores. Positive correlations indicate that the dialectical pole increases as satisfaction increases. On the other hand, a negative correlation indicates that as the dialectical pole increases, the level of satisfaction diminishes. In addition, each dialectical pole and several of the demographic features were used in a multiple regression equation to examine the contribution each variable makes in the analysis.

Testing Relationships Using Dyadic Level Data

This analysis uses the same procedures as the individual level analysis with respect to the zero order correlations and multiple regression procedures. However, this procedure takes the two scores for each member of the dyad will be combined to produce a single score for each dialectical pole.

## RESULTS

### Mea urement Model Outcomes

Connection/Autonomy Tension Pair

The examination of the relationship between the connection/autonomy dialectical pair confirmed the existence of two separate scales. The data for this test appears in Table 2. A test of the one-factor model (treating all items on each tension as part of the same scale) finds a poor fit for the internal consistency of the model ($X^2_{(27)} = 1028.06$, $p < .05$). The total amount of deviation is significant as well as a comparison of the individual correlations to the expected model. Of the 28 comparisons for individual correlations, 14 are greater than the confidence interval. This indicates that a one-factor model did not fit the data.

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Insert Table 2 about here

When considering a two-factor model that treats each dialectical pole as a separate scale, the results demonstrated that the total amount of error when comparing expected and actual correlations provides a nonsignificant internal consistency value for both the connection scale ($X^2_{(5)} = 2.06$, $p > .05$) and the autonomy scale ($X^2_{(5)} = 5.45$, $p > .05$). When examining the individual deviations of correlations for that amount of error, comparing actual and expected values demonstrates no values in either the connection or autonomy scale greater than expected due to sampling error.

Open/Closed Tension Pair

The examination of the relationship between the Openness/Closedness dialectical pair confirmed the existence of two separate scales. The data for this test appears in Table 3. A test of the one-factor model (treating all items on each tension as part of the same

scale) fails to fit for the internal consistency of the model ($X^2_{(14)}$= 62.87, $p < .05$). The total amount of deviation is significant as well as a comparison of the individual correlations to the expected model. Of the 15 comparisons for individual correlations, 5 are greater than the confidence interval. This indicates that a one-factor model did not fit the data.

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Insert Table 3 about here

A two-factor demonstrates that the total amount of error when comparing expected and actual correlations provides a nonsignificant internal consistency value for both the closedness scale ($X^2_{(3)}$= 0.24, $p > .05$) and the openness scale ($X^2_{(6)}$= 12.39, $p < .05$). The second chi-square is past the critical value, an examination of the error matrix demonstrates that one of the 6 values is out of the .95 confidence interval for an equal matrix. Given that no other value for the individual variables exceeds this value on the row or column of the matrix, it may indicate random error. Deletion of this value reduces the chi-square to within error tolerance. A full two-factor solution using a .05 probability level across all six scales uses 37 correlations and therefore should produce 1/20 values outside tolerance limits. That means 2 values should be beyond the confidence interval using a .05 level. This value indicates the first such value, should more than two occur then a reassessment is needed of the factor structure. When examining the individual deviations of correlations for that amount of error, comparing actual and expected values demonstrated no values in either the connection or autonomy scale greater than expected due to sampling error.

Novelty/Predictability Tension Pair

The examination of the relationship between the novelty/predictability dialectical pair confirmed the existence of two

separate scales. The data for this test appears in Table 4. A test of the one-factor model (treating all items on each tension as part of the same scale) finds a poor fit for the internal consistency of the model ($X^2_{(35)}$= 168.51, $p < .05$). The total amount of deviation is significant as well as a comparison of the individual correlations to the expected model. Of the 36 comparisons for individual correlations, 24 are greater than the confidence interval. This indicates that a one-factor model did not fit the data.

Insert Table 4 about here

When considering a two-factor model that treats each tension as a separate scale, the results demonstrate that the total amount of error when comparing expected and actual correlations provides a nonsignificant internal consistency value for both the novelty scale ($X^2_{(5)}$= 1.23, $p > .05$) and the openness scale ($X^2_{(9)}$= 12.39, $p < .05$). The second chi-square is past the critical value, an examination of the error matrix demonstrates that one of the 10 values is past the .95 confidence interval for an equal matrix. Given that no other value for the individual variables exceeds this value on the row or column of the matrix, it may indicate random error. Deletion of this value reduces the chi-square to within error tolerance. This indicates the second such value within the matrices. As a result of normal random sampling error, this value could fall outside the expected correlation confidence interval. When examining the individual deviations of correlations for that amount of error, comparing actual and expected values demonstrates no values in either the connection or autonomy scale greater than expected due to sampling error.

Relationships Between the Tensions

The next step assessed the relationships among the dialectical tensions. See Table 5 for the correlation matrix for the scales for each tension. The correlation matrix demonstrates that **all** correlations are significantly ($p < .05$) positive. That is, as one level of tension increases, the other tension increases. The correlations do not support the idea of mutually negating forces, nor do the correlations provide evidence for zero or near zero relationships.

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Insert Table 5 about here

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Dialectical Tension and Relational Satisfaction

Analysis Using Individual Level Data

The analysis using individual level data demonstrates the relationships of the dialectical poles to relational satisfaction. The summary of all the results in this section appear in Table 6.

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Insert Table 6 about here

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The analysis indicates that each dialectical pole is positively correlated with relational satisfaction. Using multiple regression and adding age, biological gender, length or relationship, and nature of relationship generates a significant multiple correlation ($R = .76$, $F_{(8,688)} = 118.90$, $p < .05$). The significant predictors of satisfaction (in order) were autonomy, predictability, connectedness, nature of the relationship, novelty, age, length of relationship, and degrees of closedness. Both gender and openness did not generate significant coefficients. The results indicate the importance of dialectical tension and that demographic features to relational satisfaction.

Analysis Using Dyadic Level Data

Analysis was conducted at the level of the dyads. The zero order correlations demonstrated a significant association between dialectical

tensions and satisfaction. Using multiple regression and adding length of relationship and nature of relationship generates significant multiple correlation ($R = .79$, $F_{(8,334)} = 71.82$, $p < .05$). The significant predictors of satisfaction (in order) were autonomy, predictability, novelty, connectedness, novelty, and degrees of closedness. For the most part, the dyadic results demonstrate replication of the individual analysis. Dialectical tensions were significant predictors of relational satisfaction.

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Insert Table 7 about here

## DISCUSSION

The results present a mixed picture for dialectical theory. The confirmatory factor analysis confirms the existence of the defined factor structure. The scales represent six different endpoints of dialectical tensions. The failure of the single-factor model to fit the data indicates that one cannot consider the poles of a dialectical tension simply as opposite ends of a single continuum. The consistency with a two-factor model indicates that each end of the pole represents a separate psychometric dimension as perceived by the relational partners. This separation requires that each part of the tension be measured independently.

The underlying results of the psychometric investigation using confirmatory factor analysis contradict the expectation of negative correlations between dialectical tension. Finding positive relationships between the tensions indicates that while tension exists, it is not the case that one should characterize them as "negating" forces. While the forces might be in competition and increase tension within the relationship, the tensions are not necessarily contradictory. Resolution is obviously necessary for the relationship to continue, particularly if

one is satisfied with the relationship. By resolution, the forces do not go away, instead they are viewed as part of the relationship and harnessed to generate part of the energy of the relationship.

The results of the correlation with relational satisfaction find a positive relationship with each aspect of the tension. This indicates that as a person rates the aspect of the tension more highly, s/he will find the relationship more satisfying. The satisfaction levels indicate that the person within the relationship is managing the dialectical tension to produce outcomes desirable on both components, and that a tradeoff per se does not exist. The next step in research would be to consider how couples manage these felt tensions successfully to make the relationship one with high levels of satisfaction.

This analysis was replicated at the level of the dyad. As the dyad rates the existence of the dialectical tensions more highly, they find the relationship more satisfactory. The results indicate that the persons within the relationship are finding a satisfactory means of balancing between the poles simultaneously.

The multiple regression results indicate that autonomy and predictability are the most important predictors of relational satisfaction. The equations generate very high multiple correlation coefficients (individual Multiple R = .76, dyadic Multiple R = .79). Those are very large effects for multiple regression coefficients. This indicates the dialectical poles combined with demographic characteristics provide good predictors of relational satisfaction.

This investigation contains several limitations that deserve consideration. The reliance on a primary subject pool of college students creates the potential of results that are not generalizable to the rest of the population. However, there is no indication in the data set that the kinds of relationships or reactions to relationships differ for this population than for other possible populations. However, this sample did

contain a great deal of diversity, so the ability to generalize is greater than for a typical sample of 18-22 year old college-age sophomores.

The data is cross-sectional, and the forces under consideration are clearly longitudinal within the context of a relationship. The question concerns the adequacy of using cross-sectional data within the context of longitudinal issues. Consider the nature of sampling for the dyads within the analysis. The dyads exhibit great heterogeneity with respect to length and nature of the relationship. In other words, the relationships are all at different points on the relationship scale. If arguments about the need for longitudinal data were correct, then all the correlations observed should be zero. While longitudinal data would demonstrate how the forces change in time within a relationship, it is only cross-sectional data that can evaluate the correlation between the dialectical poles. Only cross-sectional data can accumulate the quantity of data spread across a diverse sample to permit a reasonable assessment of the **average** relationship between the dialectical tensions.

Future research should consider the process issues in relational development. This investigation provides strong evidence for the importance of dialectical issues in dealing with relational satisfaction but does not provide a strong basis for isolating the processes within the relationship that generate these outcomes. Both longitudinal designs and designs to test various process models need to be developed to reveal possibilities.

This investigation provides for some recasting of familiar issues in dialectical theory, particularly, the idea of how tensions combine or interact within the context of a relationship. The feeling of tension within a relationship does exist, but resolution of that tension does not indicate a negating force for a satisfactory relationship. A satisfactory relationship ids built upon opposing forces and the partners ability to

combine the forces in a manner that creates a sense of reinforcement rather than opposition.

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Table 1

Confirmatory Analysis for Relationship Satisfaction Scale

1. We have a good relationship
2. My relationship with my partner is very stable.
3. Our relationship is strong.
4. My relationship with my partner makes me happy.
5. I really feel like a part of a team with my partner
6. My partner and I seriously discuss our relationship.
7. I often consider ending this relationship.
8. I am satisfied with the major aspects of this relationship.
9. I feel like this relationship is a mistake.
10. My partner and I are very similar in our attitudes towards most things.
11. My partner and I share outside interests.
12. I am satisfied with the minor aspects of this relationship.
13. I am committed to making this relationship last.
14. I give this relationship as much energy as I do my work or school.
15. I believe my partner gives this relationship as much energy as that person does work or school.

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. | 78 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. | 78 | 84 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. | 72 | 69 | 68 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5. | 68 | 72 | 70 | 68 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6. | 45 | 42 | 47 | 42 | 47 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7. | 49 | 57 | 50 | 55 | 48 | 28 | | | | | | | | | |
| 8. | 66 | 68 | 66 | 67 | 61 | 45 | 54 | | | | | | | | |
| 9. | 46 | 51 | 45 | 49 | 45 | 34 | 53 | 53 | | | | | | | |
| 10. | 42 | 38 | 39 | 36 | 41 | 30 | 31 | 36 | 25 | | | | | | |
| 11. | 37 | 34 | 33 | 34 | 36 | 23 | 34 | 30 | 22 | 51 | | | | | |

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 12. | 54 | 56 | 54 | 51 | 49 | 27 | 37 | 52 | 32 | 32 | 32 | | | | |
| 13. | 59 | 66 | 65 | 58 | 58 | 37 | 55 | 57 | 50 | 39 | 32 | 51 | | | |
| 14. | 39 | 45 | 45 | 42 | 41 | 38 | 32 | 40 | 36 | 26 | 24 | 38 | 55 | | |
| 15. | 47 | 50 | 49 | 42 | 50 | 43 | 27 | 46 | 31 | 26 | 26 | 38 | 38 | 53 | |

N = 694

Table 2

Measurement Model Test for Connection/Autonomy Tensions*

Items for Each Scale (C=Connection, A=Autonomy)

C1. The relationship is detracting form things we need or want to do as separate individuals.

C2. Our relationship is suffocating us as individuals.

C3. Our relationship hinders our freedom to things as separate individuals.

C4. Our individual identities have become lost as a result of our relationship.

A1. Our relationship suffers because of our individual goals or needs.

A2. We really do not know each other.

A3. We live separate lives.

A4. We do not spend enough time together.

Correlation Matrix (Decimals omitted) (N=694)

| | C1 | C2 | C3 | C4 | A1 | A2 | A3 | A4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| C1 | | | | | | | | |
| C2 | 51 | | | | | | | |
| C3 | 56 | 63 | | | | | | |
| C4 | 40 | 57 | 55 | | | | | |
| A1 | 38 | 43 | 37 | 37 | | | | |
| A2 | 29 | 33 | 28 | 25 | 42 | | | |
| A3 | 26 | 24 | 18 | 15 | 38 | 50 | | |
| A4 | 8 | 6 | 8 | 11 | 32 | 22 | 27 | |
| Single Scale Solution Loading | 62 | 71 | 67 | 60 | 68 | 57 | 48 | |
| Two Scale Solution Loadings-Fac 1 | 64 | 80 | 82 | 67 | 53 | 39 | 28 | 11 |
| Fac 2 | 42 | 44 | 38 | 37 | 64 | 66 | 67 | 41 |

Correlation between Fac1 and Fac2 = .55

Fac1 alpha = .82 Fac2 Alpha = .69

Table 3

Measurement Model Test for Closedness and Openness Tensions*

Items for Each Scale (C=Closedness, O=Openness)

C1. We keep too many secrets from each other.

C2. We need to be more direct with each other in saying what's on our minds.

C3. We need to be more direct with each other in saying what's on our minds.

O1. We are too honest with each other.

O2. We tell each other too many of our private thoughts.

O3. We know things about the other we would rather not know.

O4. We need to express more openly to other what we are thinking.

Correlation Matrix (Decimals omitted) (N=694)

| | C1 | C2 | C3 | O1 | O2 | O3 | O4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| C1 | | | | | | | |
| C2 | 78 | | | | | | |
| C3 | 37 | 36 | | | | | |
| O1 | 22 | 22 | 44 | | | | |
| O2 | 17 | 14 | 17 | 36 | | | |
| O3 | 11 | 15 | 17 | 39 | 66 | | |
| O4 | 17 | 19 | 35 | 49 | 38 | 41 | |
| Single Scale Solution Loadings | 27 | 34 | 51 | 69 | 60 | 64 | 65 |
| Two Scale Solution Loadings-Fac 1 | 88 | 87 | 43 | 41 | 22 | 20 | 33 |
| Fac 2 | 25 | 26 | 42 | 60 | 71 | 76 | 62 |

Closedness Alpha = .75 Openness alpha = .77

Correlation between Fac1 and Fac2 = .43

Table 4

Measurement Model Test for Novelty and Predictability Tensions*

Items for Each Scale (N=Novelty, P=Predictability)

N1. We plan things too much in our relationship.

N2. We aren't spontaneous enough.

N3. It seems like the excitement has left our relationship.

N4. Our relationship feels boring right now.

P1. Our relationship has too many surprises in it.

P2. Our relationship would be better off right now with more planning and more regular routines.

P3. Our relationship isn't predictable enough for our needs right now.

P4. Our relationship has too many uncertainties in it right now.

P5. We never seem to do anything different, new, or interesting in our relationship.

Correlation Matrix (Decimals omitted) (N=694)

| | N1 | N2 | N3 | N4 | P1 | P2 | P3 | P4 | P5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N1 | | | | | | | | | |
| N2 | 33 | | | | | | | | |
| N3 | 37 | 42 | | | | | | | |
| N4 | 39 | 36 | 54 | | | | | | |
| P1 | 13 | 17 | 26 | 32 | | | | | |
| P2 | 15 | 5 | 9 | 19 | 33 | | | | |
| P3 | 11 | 14 | 18 | 24 | 59 | 45 | | | |
| P4 | 19 | 22 | 28 | 36 | 57 | 28 | 50 | | |
| P5 | 23 | 22 | 32 | 41 | 51 | 21 | 39 | 74 | |
| Single Scale Solution Loadings | 41 | 41 | 55 | 64 | 66 | 37 | 58 | 73 | 70 |
| Two Scale Solution Loadings-Fac 1 | 55 | 56 | 73 | 70 | 35 | 19 | 26 | 41 | 46 |
| Fac 2 | 24 | 24 | 33 | 45 | 76 | 43 | 72 | 81 | 68 |

Closedness Alpha = .73  Openness alpha = .81

Correlation between Fac1 and Fac2 = .43

Table 5

Correlations Among Poles of Dialectical Tensions

| | 1. | 2. | 3. | 4. | 5. | 6. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Connectedness | | | | | | |
| 2. Autonomy | .39 | | | | | |
| 3. Predictablity | .47 | .35 | | | | |
| 4. Novelty | .49 | .58 | .54 | | | |
| 5. Openness | .45 | .31 | .33 | .45 | | |
| 6. Closedness | .34 | .45 | .41 | .50 | .33 | |

N=694

all correlations significant at $p < .01$

Table 6

Dyad Level Data on Satisfaction and Dialectical Poles

Correlation with Dependent Variable

| | Novelty | Predictability | Open | Closed | Autonomy | Connectedness |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Satisfaction | .59 | .50 | .38 | .46 | .64 | .51 |

(N=694, all correlations significant at $p < .01$)

Regression Results for Satisfaction

| Variable | Standardized Coefficient | t value |
|---|---|---|
| Autonomy | .33 | 10.22* |
| Predictability | .20 | 6.26* |
| Connectedness | .17 | 5.53* |
| Nature of Relat | .13 | 3.52* |
| Novelty | .13 | 3.71* |
| Age | -.13 | 4.37* |
| Length | .11 | 3.08* |
| Closed | .08 | 2.60* |
| Openness | .03 | 1.14 |
| Gender | .04 | 1.48 |

*indicates significant at $p < .05$

Table 7

Dyad Level Data on Satisfaction and Dialectical Poles

Correlation with Dependent Variable

| | Novelty | Predictability | Open | Closed | Autonomy | Connectedness |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Satisfaction | .66 | .53 | .43 | .53 | .69 | .55 |

(N=347, all correlations significant at $p < .01$)

Regression Results for Satisfaction

| Variable | Standardized Coefficient | t value |
|---|---|---|
| Autonomy | .36 | 7.81* |
| Predictability | .20 | 4.38* |
| Novelty | .14 | 2.55* |
| Connectness | .13 | 2.89* |
| Closed | .09 | 2.06* |
| Nature | .07 | 1.60 |
| Length | .06 | 1.35 |
| Open | .05 | 1.30 |

*indicates significant at $p < .05$