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Relational Quality Indicators and Love Styles as Predictors of Negative Relational Maintenance Behaviors in Romantic Relationships

Alan K. Goodboy, Scott A. Myers, & Members of Investigating Communication

This study examined whether relational quality indicators (i.e., relationship satisfaction, commitment, control mutuality, liking, respect) predict romantic partners' use of negative relational maintenance behaviors (i.e., jealousy induction, avoidance, spying, infidelity, destructive conflict, allowing control) and whether love predicts the use of negative relational maintenance behaviors after controlling for relational quality. Participants were 205 individuals currently involved in a romantic relationship. Results indicated that (a) negative maintenance behaviors are used in low-quality relationships, and (b) the negative relational maintenance behaviors of jealousy induction, avoidance, spying, infidelity, and destructive conflict were predicted by love styles after controlling for relational quality.

Keywords: Commitment; Love Styles; Negative Maintenance; Relational Maintenance; Relationship Satisfaction

To maintain their romantic relationships, relational partners often use relational maintenance behaviors. Relational maintenance behaviors, which are considered to be the actions and activities relational partners use to sustain desired relational

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definitions (Canary & Stafford, 1994), can emerge in the form of both positive behaviors (Stafford & Canary, 1991) and negative behaviors (Dainton & Gross, 2008). Using the romantic relationship as a research focus, researchers generally have concentrated their efforts on the study of positive relational maintenance behaviors and their association with relational characteristics such as relational satisfaction, commitment, liking, and control mutuality (Stafford, 2003; Stafford & Canary, 1991, 2006). However, because romantic partners also report using negative behaviors as an additional way to maintain their relationships, this study was undertaken and had two goals: (a) to extend the research on relational maintenance by examining the link between a relational partner's use of negative relational maintenance behaviors and perceived relational quality indicators (i.e., relationship satisfaction, commitment, control mutuality, liking, respect) and (b), because relational partners' communicative behaviors are influenced by their ways of loving (Marston & Hecht, 1994), to examine whether a relational partner's self-reported love style predicts the reported use of negative relational maintenance behaviors after controlling for perceived relational quality. By doing so, it will be possible to garner a more representative picture of the role that the use of negative relational maintenance behaviors plays in romantic relationships.

Review of Literature

The study of relational maintenance behaviors gained prominence in 1991 when Stafford and Canary (1991; Canary & Stafford, 1992) identified five relational maintenance behaviors (i.e., positivity, openness, assurances, networks, and tasks) used by marital partners. One issue with the study of relational maintenance behaviors, however, is that it typically has focused on the everyday, prosocial behaviors that enhance the quality of romantic relationships (Canary & Stafford, 1994; Stafford & Canary, 1991) despite evidence that not all relational partners employ such prosocial behaviors to maintain their relationships. For example, Ayres (1983) identified *avoidance* as one of three behaviors used to maintain a relationship, while Dindia and Baxter (1987) and Dainton and Stafford (1993) identified forms of *avoidance* and *antisocial strategies* (e.g., argument, insolence, lack of self-disclosure) as behaviors romantic partners use to maintain their relationships. Additionally, Messman, Canary, and Hause (2000) found that *avoidance* and *indirectness* are two strategies individuals use to maintain platonic friendships, whereas Guerrero and Chavez (2005) found that cross-sex friends use *antisocial behavior* as one way to maintain their friendships.

More recently, Dainton and Gross (2008) asked 188 undergraduate and graduate students to "describe any negative behaviors that [they] have used for the sake of the relationship" (p. 182). Participants reported using *jealousy induction* (i.e., intentionally making a partner romantically jealous), *avoidance* (i.e., avoiding a partner or topic), *spying* (i.e., seeking information about a partner), *infidelity* (i.e., engaging in extradyadic relationships), *destructive conflict* (e.g., controlling a partner through fighting), and *allowing control* (i.e., focusing on the partner instead of other activities or responsibilities).

Interestingly, a wealth of interpersonal communication research exists that focuses on negative behaviors (sometimes referred to as “dark side” behaviors) couples use. These behaviors include avoidance, deception, transgressions, distributive conflict, and abuse (see Cupach & Spitzberg, 1994; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1998). Although many of these behaviors are not considered maintenance behaviors, they do serve a maintenance function for some romantic couples. For example, previous research has indicated that antisocial strategies such as arguments, ultimatums, and extreme tests are used as relational maintenance and/or repair strategies (Baxter & Dindia, 1990; Dindia & Baxter, 1987). Because relational maintenance “indicates an important, albeit broad and complex, set of phenomena that necessarily implicate communicative processes at work” (Canary & Zelle, 2000, p. 306), it is imperative that researchers not only operationally distinguish between typical aversive behaviors and antisocial or negative maintenance behaviors used in romantic relationships, but also (for the sake of conceptual clarity) clearly identify the definition of maintenance that is guiding the research.

The definition of maintenance guiding this study is based on Dindia and Canary’s (1993) idea that relational partners engage in relational maintenance behaviors “to keep a relationship in existence” (p. 163). As Dindia (2003) noted, when relational partners keep a relationship in existence, it is merely maintained and not terminated.

This definition of relational maintenance does not imply anything about the dimensions or qualities of the relationship that are maintained . . . relational maintenance means that the relationship is maintained, not that relational satisfaction is maintained, or that a particular stage of the relationship is maintained, or that any other quality of the relationship, such as liking, is maintained. (p. 4)

As such, the use of negative relational maintenance behaviors may be one way in which relational partners are able to keep a relationship in existence because by engaging in these behaviors, partners are able to reconcile their individual needs with their desire to remain involved in the relationship, albeit through questionable interpersonal behavior. Indeed, the negative behaviors proposed by Dainton and Gross (2008) are maintenance behaviors in the sense that the desire to continue the existing relationship is supplemented by performing these aversive behaviors. Previous research informs this contention as jealousy induction may be used as a mate retention tactic (Buss, 1988); destructive conflict beliefs are associated with self-focused and partner-focused relationship goals (Simon, Kobielski, & Martin, 2008); spying/surveillance may serve as a method of coping with relational uncertainty (Bevan & Tidgewell, 2009); partner avoidance can actually increase wives’ satisfaction (Caughlin, 2002); allowing control may fulfill a partner’s primary interpersonal need for control (Schutz, 1966); and infidelity may allow for a partner’s physical and emotional needs to be fulfilled outside of the relationship (Roscoe, Cavanaugh, & Kennedy, 1988) allowing for the current (and lacking) relationship to remain “in existence.” Although these maintenance behaviors collectively share some level of dysfunction, research suggests that partners do use them strategically to attend to their individual needs or to feel better about their relationship. Accordingly, although

aversive relational behaviors have previously been given different labels such as antisocial maintenance behaviors (Baxter & Dindia, 1990), negative maintenance behaviors constitute yet another label of aversive behaviors that couples may use to keep a relationship in existence.

As Stafford (2003) noted, “The majority of [relational maintenance] studies have examined the associations between original [positive] maintenance behaviors and commitment, liking, control mutuality, and relationship satisfaction” (p. 67) and the research findings suggest that quality romantic relationships are maintained via positive relational maintenance. However, Dainton and Gross (2008) found that not only do inverse relationships exist between negative maintenance behaviors and relationship satisfaction, but several negative maintenance and positive maintenance behaviors were also associated inversely, suggesting that negative maintenance behaviors are a symptom of low-quality relationships whereas high-quality relationships are predicted by positive maintenance behaviors. In an effort to maintain this research tradition and elaborate on the findings obtained by Dainton and Gross, this study examined global relationship satisfaction, along with commitment, control mutuality, liking, and respect as relational characteristics to assess the relational qualities that might be associated with the use of negative maintenance behaviors.

Relational satisfaction is considered an attitude toward the quality of the relationship (Dainton, Stafford, & Canary, 1994). *Commitment* refers to a psychological attachment in which a partner intends to continue in a relationship indefinitely (Canary & Stafford, 1994). *Control mutuality* involves how much relational partners agree about who has the right to exert influence and power in the relationship (Stafford & Canary, 1991). *Liking* is considered the degree of positive evaluation and respect toward another person (Rubin, 1973). *Respect* consists of a partner’s affect, cognition, and behavioral tendencies that promote equality/mutuality and caring/supportiveness in a relationship (Hendrick & Hendrick, 2006). Because dissatisfied romantic partners should be more likely to use negative maintenance behaviors (Dainton & Gross, 2008) and such behaviors have the potential to harm the relationship and may be reactions to problems in a relationship, the following hypothesis is posited:

- H: Romantic partners’ perceptions of their own use of negative maintenance behaviors (i.e., jealousy induction, avoidance, spying, infidelity, destructive conflict, allowing control) will be associated inversely with relational quality indicators (i.e., relationship satisfaction, commitment, control mutuality, liking, respect).

As Dainton et al. (1994) noted, “It is peculiar that research on relational maintenance has overlooked love” (p. 89). In terms of positive maintenance, husbands report stronger feelings of love when they receive assurances, positivity, and share tasks, whereas wives report that love is a function of positivity and assurances (Dainton et al.); however, not all romantic partners experience love in the same manner (Barelds & Barelds-Dijkstra, 2007). Based on Lee’s (1973) typology, Hendrick and Hendrick (1986) operationalized six love styles: eros (i.e., passionate love), ludus

(i.e., game-playing love), storge (friendship-based love), mania (i.e., possessive love), pragma (i.e., logical love), and agape (i.e., selfless love). The eros and agape love styles typically foster relationship satisfaction, the tendency to fall in love, and relational intensification (Fricker & Moore, 2002; Hendrick, Hendrick, & Adler, 1988; Levine, Aune, & Park, 2006). However, the ludus love style typically produces lower quality romantic relationships characterized by dissatisfaction, cheating, and defeatist attitudes toward romance (Fricker & Moore, 2002; Hahn & Blass, 1997; Wiederman, 1999). Similarly, the mania love style produces troubled relationships plagued by depression, self-esteem problems, and the use of relationship endurance tests (Arnold & Thompson, 1996; Hendrick & Hendrick, 1986; Levine et al., 2006). Although pragma and storge lovers use both comforting and regulative communication skills in relationships (Kunkel & Burleson, 2003), research suggests that these lovers use unique relational intensification strategies (Levine et al., 2006).

To date, scant research has examined how love styles influence the maintenance of relationships and virtually no research has focused specifically on negative relational maintenance behaviors. Considering that previous research suggests that partners with certain love styles may be prone to experience relational (dis)satisfaction (e.g., Fricker & Moore, 2002), variance explained by relational quality indicators may supersede variance explained by love styles. Because Fricker and Moore revealed that relationship satisfaction was associated positively with eros, storge, and agape love but associated negatively with ludus love, relational quality and love styles are interdependent. That is, love styles may not account for unique variance beyond relational satisfaction, commitment, control mutuality, liking, and respect as examined in the hypothesis. Therefore, the following research question is posed:

- RQ: After controlling for relational quality indicators (i.e., relational satisfaction, commitment, control mutuality, liking, respect), to what extent do love styles (i.e., eros, ludus, storge, pragma, mania, agape) predict romantic partners' perceptions of their own use of negative maintenance behaviors (i.e., jealousy induction, avoidance, spying, infidelity, destructive conflict, allowing control)?

Method

Participants

A network sample was used as undergraduate students enrolled in one of two sections of a communication research methods class at a mid-Atlantic university were voluntary solicited to give questionnaires to individuals currently in a romantic relationship. Student recruiters were instructed to distribute this questionnaire to individuals who were in a committed romantic relationship for a minimum of 2 months. After several weeks of recruitment, 205 romantic partners (53 men, 152 women), whose ages ranged from 18 to 60 years ($M = 23.74$, $SD = 9.07$), returned a completed questionnaire. Of these romantic partners, 44 were in a dating relationship (21%), 122 were in a serious committed relationship (60%), 6 were engaged (3%), 31 were married (15%), and 2 participants (1%) did not report their status.

Participants reported on a current romantic partner whose ages ranged from 17 to 65 years ($M=24.42$, $SD=9.26$). The length of romantic relationships ranged from 2 months to 37 years ($M=50.15$ months; 4.18 years, $SD=86.43$ months; 7.20 years).

Procedures and Instrumentation

Participants completed a questionnaire in reference to their current romantic partner consisting of the Negative Maintenance Scale (Dainton & Gross, 2008), Love Attitudes Scale-Short Form (Hendrick, Hendrick, & Dicke, 1998), Quality Marriage Index (Norton, 1983), Measure of Commitment Scale (Stafford & Canary, 1991), Measure of Control Mutuality Scale (Canary & Cupach, 1988), Liking Scale (Rubin, 1973), the Respect Toward Partner Scale (Hendrick & Hendrick, 2006), and a number of demographic questions.

The *Negative Maintenance Scale* is 20 items and asks respondents to indicate how frequently they use six negative behaviors, specifically for the purpose of maintaining their relationship: jealousy induction (2 items), avoidance (4 items), spying (3 items), infidelity (2 items), destructive conflict (4 items), and allowing control (5 items). Responses were solicited using a 7-point Likert response format ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7). Obtained Cronbach alphas for each subscale were: *jealousy induction* (e.g., "I flirt with others to make my partner jealous"; $M=4.43$, $SD=2.89$, $\alpha=.88$), *avoidance* (e.g., "I avoid my partner when I do not want to deal with him/her"; $M=14.64$, $SD=4.92$, $\alpha=.65$), *spying* (e.g., "I check his/her email or cell phone for messages"; $M=6.97$, $SD=3.81$, $\alpha=.73$), *infidelity* (e.g., "I have affairs with other people so I can stay satisfied with my relationship"; $M=3.20$, $SD=2.06$, $\alpha=.59$), *destructive conflict* (e.g., "I start arguments with my partner"; $M=11.27$, $SD=5.14$, $\alpha=.78$), and *allowing control* (e.g., "I break plans with my friends to spend more time with my partner"; $M=12.89$, $SD=5.71$, $\alpha=.76$).

The *Love Attitudes Scale-Short Form* includes 18 items and consists of six subscales (3 items each) that measure each love style: eros, ludus, storge, mania, pragma, and agape. Responses were solicited using a 5-point Likert response format ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). Obtained Cronbach alphas for each subscale were: *eros* ($M=12.46$, $SD=1.99$, $\alpha=.69$), *ludus* ($M=7.36$, $SD=2.91$, $\alpha=.64$), *storge* ($M=9.55$, $SD=3.48$, $\alpha=.87$), *pragma* ($M=9.29$, $SD=2.78$, $\alpha=.73$), *mania* ($M=8.50$, $SD=2.65$, $\alpha=.64$), and *agape* ($M=10.35$, $SD=2.67$, $\alpha=.81$).

The *Quality Marriage Index* includes six items and measures the degree to which a spouse experiences marital satisfaction. The first five items utilize a Likert response format ranging from *very strongly disagree* (1) to *very strongly agree* (7) while the last item measures the overall degree of happiness in the marriage using a scale ranging from *very unhappy* (1) to *perfectly happy* (10). This scale was slightly modified to reflect all romantic relationships instead of solely marital relationships ($M=38.41$, $SD=7.45$; $\alpha=.95$).

Each of the remaining relational quality indicator scales used a 5-point Likert response format ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). The *Measure of Commitment Scale* includes six items and asks participants to indicate their level of

commitment toward a targeted partner. This scale was shortened to five items (see Stafford & Canary, 1991) ($M=21.55$, $SD=4.19$; $\alpha=.90$).

The *Measure of Control Mutuality* scale includes six items and measures the degree to which an agreement is made about who will have more influence in a relationship. Five items were included for analysis (see Stafford, Dainton, & Haas, 2000) ($M=19.61$, $SD=3.84$; $\alpha=.89$).

The *Liking Scale* includes 13 items that ask respondents to indicate their general feelings of liking toward a partner. This scale was shortened to five items (see Stafford & Canary, 1991) ($M=21.09$, $SD=3.94$; $\alpha=.89$).

The *Respect Toward Partner Scale* includes six items and measures the degree to which an individual respects a significant other ($M=26.51$, $SD=3.65$; $\alpha=.87$).

Results

Prior to data analysis, a Pearson correlation matrix was computed among all variables (see Table 1). The hypothesis predicted that relational quality indicators would be related inversely to the perceived use of negative relational maintenance behaviors with a romantic partner. Although all relational quality indicators were correlated inversely (ranging from $-.12$ to $-.47$) with all negative relational maintenance behaviors (see Table 1), results of multiple regression analyses revealed that commitment ($\beta=-.24$, $p<.001$) significantly predicted jealousy induction, $F(5, 199)=8.81$, $p<.001$, $R^2=.18$; control mutuality predicted ($\beta=-.32$, $p<.01$) spying, $F(5, 199)=3.94$, $p<.01$, $R^2=.09$; satisfaction ($\beta=-.26$, $p<.05$) and commitment ($\beta=-.28$, $p<.01$) predicted infidelity, $F(5, 199)=14.13$, $p<.001$, $R^2=.26$; control mutuality ($\beta=-.27$, $p<.01$) predicted destructive conflict, $F(5, 199)=6.36$, $p<.001$, $R^2=.14$; and satisfaction ($\beta=-.33$, $p<.05$) and respect ($\beta=.22$, $p<.05$) predicted allowing control, $F(5, 199)=5.27$, $p<.001$, $R^2=.12$. Although a significant model was obtained for avoidance, $F(5, 199)=4.54$, $p<.01$, $R^2=.10$, none of the relational quality indicators remained significant predictors.

The research question inquired if love styles were able to predict respondents' perceived use of negative relational maintenance behaviors after controlling for relational quality indicators. This research question was examined using hierarchical multiple regression analyses. Relational quality indicators that were significant predictors in the hypothesis testing were entered as the first block to control for variance for relational quality effects and the six love styles were entered as the second block of predictor variables. Overall, results indicated that the addition of the love style variables improved the ability of the regression models to predict the use of negative relational maintenance behaviors beyond variance explained in step one. Significant models were obtained for jealousy induction, $F(7, 193)=14.17$, $p<.001$, $R^2=.34$; avoidance, $F(6, 194)=5.23$, $p<.001$, $R^2=.14$; spying, $F(7, 193)=7.33$, $p<.001$, $R^2=.21$; infidelity, $F(8, 192)=15.61$, $p<.001$, $R^2=.39$; destructive conflict, $F(7, 193)=5.36$, $p<.001$, $R^2=.16$; and allowing control, $F(8, 192)=4.03$, $p<.001$, $R^2=.14$. Table 2, which includes Beta weights and t-values, shows which predictor variables were significant in each model.

Table 1 Intercorrelations Between Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Negative RMB																
1. Jealousy Induction	—															
2. Avoidance	.31***	—														
3. Spying	.34***	.14*	—													
4. Infidelity	.48***	.20**	.20**	—												
5. Destructive Conflict	.34***	.35***	.34***	.42***	—											
6. Allowing Control	.30***	.21**	.21**	.37***	.38***	—										
Relational Quality Indicators^a																
7. Satisfaction	-.32***	-.27***	-.19**	-.47***	-.29***	-.28***	—									
8. Commitment	-.42***	-.22**	-.12*	-.47***	-.18*	-.13*	.71***	—								
9. Control Mutuality	-.27***	-.29***	-.30***	-.37***	-.35***	-.27***	.72***	.52***	—							
10. Liking	-.33***	-.25***	-.18*	-.42***	-.29***	-.21**	.77***	.74***	.66***	—						
11. Respect	-.32***	-.29***	-.20**	-.36***	-.21**	-.12*	.72***	.63***	.64***	.74***	—					
Love Styles																
12. Eros	-.27***	-.28***	.00	-.34***	-.14*	-.13*	.62***	.60***	.43***	.63**	.56***	—				
13. Ludus	.48***	.19**	.22*	.52***	.23**	.19**	-.32***	-.40***	-.31***	-.32***	-.31***	-.29***	—			
14. Storge	-.14*	-.14*	-.13*	-.17***	-.04	-.10	.25***	.19*	.25***	.27***	.17*	.18*	-.07	—		
15.Pragma	-.10	-.16*	.14*	-.05	-.01	.03	.10	.14*	.06	.17*	.16*	.21**	.07	.26***	—	
16. Mania	.18*	.16*	.30***	.21**	.25***	.21**	-.21**	-.07	-.21**	-.11	-.15*	-.06	.21**	-.09	.10	—
17. Agape	-.27***	-.14*	-.10	-.12	-.01	.10	.24**	.28***	.17**	.24**	.28***	.27***	-.13*	.17*	.17*	.24**

^aBecause of the high correlations between some Relational Quality Indicators, we checked for multicollinearity. No evidence for multicollinearity was found. Satisfaction (VIF = 3.63, Tolerance = .28), Commitment (VIF = 2.52, Tolerance = .40), Control Mutuality (VIF = 2.32, Tolerance = .43), Liking (VIF = 2.64, Tolerance = .28), Respect (VIF = 2.64, Tolerance = .38).

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. One-tailed.

Table 2 Hierarchical Regression Analysis

Variables entered	Jealousy induction		Avoidance		Spying		Infidelity		Destructive conflict		Allowing control	
	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t
Step One												
Satisfaction	—	—	—	—	—	—	-.27	-3.12**	—	—	-.40	-4.11***
Commitment	-.42	-6.56***	—	—	—	—	-.28	-3.20**	—	—	—	—
Control Mutuality	—	—	—	—	-.30	-4.38***	—	—	-.34	-5.11***	—	—
Liking	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Respect	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	.18	1.83
Step Two												
Satisfaction	—	—	—	—	—	—	-.23	-2.56*	—	—	-.37	-3.46**
Commitment	-.23	-3.00**	—	—	—	—	-.16	-1.83	—	—	—	—
Control Mutuality	—	—	—	—	-.26	-3.42**	—	—	-.29	-3.77***	—	—
Liking	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Respect	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	.16	1.63
Eros	.05	.68	-.21	-2.82**	.18	2.39*	.03	.36	.01	.14	.03	.38
Ludus	.37	5.52***	.10	1.32	.11	1.59	.38	6.00***	.11	1.48	.13	1.80
Storge	-.01	-.15	-.02	-.32	-.08	-1.10	-.05	-.84	.06	.87	-.05	-.71
Pragma	-.09	-1.38	-.12	-1.61	.13	1.86	-.04	-.68	-.04	-.51	-.01	-.18
Mania	.13	2.05*	.16	2.18*	.24	3.45**	.07	1.06	.17	2.41*	.09	1.23
Agape	-.18	-2.69*	-.08	-1.11	-.14	-1.98*	.02	.34	.01	.17	.14	1.92

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

Discussion

This study investigated negative maintenance behaviors in romantic relationships (see Dainton & Gross, 2008) as a function of relational quality indicators and love styles. Two notable findings emerged. First, various relational quality indicators were significant predictors of reported negative maintenance use. Collectively, these results suggest that quality romantic relationships are not maintained by negative maintenance behaviors. Conversely, low-quality counterparts are most likely to exhibit these questionable maintenance behaviors. Hess (2000) revealed that partners maintain relationships with disliked partners differently than with liked partners by creating relational distance (through expressing detachment, avoiding involvement, and showing antagonism). Negative maintenance behaviors may be one way in which partners create such distance when relational quality is low or may be a reaction when the relationship appears threatened.

Furthermore, these results are not surprising when considering research on some of the behaviors that constitute “negative maintenance.” For instance, Fleischmann, Spitzberg, Andersen, and Roesch (2005) revealed that jealousy induction tactics are used by partners for relational distancing purposes or to improve the relationship; Olson and Braithwaite (2004) found that destructive conflict tactics are used in dissatisfying relationships; Chory-Assad and Booth-Butterfield (2001) revealed that secret tests are more common in deteriorating (versus stable) relationships; and Roscoe et al. (1988) discovered that dissatisfaction in a relationship is the number one reason for committing infidelity. Collectively, results from the current study and the aforementioned research suggest that unhappy partners are likely to use all six negative relational maintenance behaviors to keep their relationship “in existence.” This is exemplified by research which suggests that couples will remain in dissatisfying relationships even after relational transgressions (Roloff, Soule, & Carey, 2001). Dissatisfied couples may feel entitled to engage in negative maintenance behaviors because of the low levels of satisfaction and commitment. The dissatisfying relationship may continue to exist due to the enactment of these behaviors, which attend to individual needs and desires in a dysfunctional manner. Indeed, Dainton and Gross (2008) speculated that partners in clinical or abusive relationships may be more likely to use these behaviors.

Second, four of the six love styles were predictors of negative relational maintenance behaviors after controlling for variance explained by the aforementioned relational quality indicators. Specifically, eros love negatively predicted avoidance but positively predicted spying; ludus love positively predicted jealousy induction and infidelity; mania love positively predicted jealousy induction, avoidance, spying, and destructive conflict; and agape love negatively predicted jealousy induction and spying. Storge and pragma love were not significant predictors beyond relational quality indicators (however, these love styles produced significant results in the correlation matrix without controlling for relational quality—see Table 1).

Collectively, these results suggest that ludus and mania lovers are more likely to enact negative relational maintenance behaviors despite the quality of their romantic

relationship. Mania and ludus lovers tend to produce problematic relationships because the ludus lover is likely to play games in relationships and the mania lover tends to be obsessive, dependent, and jealous (Fricker & Moore, 2002; Hendrick & Hendrick, 1986). Ludus lovers may view the use of negative relational maintenance behaviors as part of a game involving control strategies, while mania lovers may use such behaviors which are fueled by jealousy and information-seeking motivations. Interestingly, eros lovers were more likely to use spying. However, the impetus for only using this single negative relational maintenance behavior may not be particularly detrimental. It is likely that the eros lover, whose love is characterized by passion and intensity, may be merely trying to validate the strong passion in the relationship through spying. Research on secret tests supports this contention. Baxter and Wilmot (1984) revealed that romantic partners use secret tests which are strategies people use to obtain knowledge about the state of their relationship, and Levine et al. (2006) verified that eros lovers use secret tests in their relationships. Spying then, may serve simultaneously as a covert secret test and a maintenance behavior for these types of lovers. When partners are behaving appropriately and are being spied on, this unique maintenance behavior may actually serve as a validation effort to reassure that appropriate partner behavior is transpiring. Spying on a partner who behaves appropriately outside the romantic relationship may actually be comforting.

Although this investigation was exploratory in nature, there were several limitations. First, although participants were in a romantic relationship for over 4 years on average, it is possible that a sample consisting entirely of married partners would have revealed different results. Second, responses were solicited from one romantic partner's perspective. Paired couple data would have yielded a more complete investigation of negative relational maintenance. Third, this study oversampled female participants and used a network sample which might have recruited participants from similar social networks. Fourth, the internal reliability estimates were low for some of the negative maintenance behaviors, perhaps in part, because of the low number of items per subscale (e.g., two items for infidelity). It is also possible that participants had trouble responding to some items if they had used the negative behavior for reasons other than maintaining their relationship. For example, participants who had engaged in infidelity for reasons other than relational maintenance may have marked "strongly disagree" (because the stem directed participants to think about how much they used each behavior to maintain their relationship) or "strongly agree" (because they had in fact used the behavior). A fifth limitation involves the degree to which these negative behaviors truly qualify as maintenance behaviors. These negative behaviors may best fit the definition of keeping a relationship "in existence" if partners use them to secure attention or maintain control of the relationship, but would not fit other definitions that focus on keeping a relationship "in a satisfactory condition" or "in repair" (Dindia & Canary, 1993).¹ Accordingly, future research should use a more representative sample, incorporate multiple operationalizations of relational quality, clearly define relational maintenance, and consider the true maintenance role that these negative behaviors play in committed romantic relationships.

Note

- [1] We would like to give appreciation to an anonymous reviewer for assisting in articulating limitations four and five.

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