A DIALECTICAL APPROACH TO STUDYING LONG-DISTANCE

MAINTENANCE STRATEGIES

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the

University of North Texas in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTERS OF ARTS

By

Katheryn C. Maguire, B. S.

Denton, Texas

August, 1997

Maguire, Katheryn C., <u>A Dialectical Approach to Studying Long-Distance Maintenance Strategies.</u> Master of Arts (Communication Studies), August, 1997, 162 pp., 11 tables, references, 54 titles.

Using both qualitative and quantitative methodology, this thesis investigates the tactics used by long-distance relational partners, the differences in use of the tactics between long-distance and proximal partners, the relationship among the maintenance tactics, and the relationship of the tactics to relational satisfaction. Seven relational maintenance strategies were identified from the investigation: affirmation, expression, high tech mediated communication, low tech mediated communication, future thought, negative disclosure, and together-time. Significant differences in the use of maintenance tactics between long-distance and proximal partners were discovered and several tactics were found to correlate with relational satisfaction for both relationship types. It is concluded that relational maintenance should be viewed from a multi-dimensional perspective that recognizes the impact relational dialectics have on relationships.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Romantic relationships have a powerful effect on our daily lives. Research shows that positive relationships not only help people cope with stress, but actually improve their health (Thoits, 1995). For individuals attempting to maintain a long distance relationship (LDR), that is, relationships in which the partners are unable to see each other on a regular basis, the circumstances of the LDR may produce mixed results. For example, in a study concerning physical distance during courtship, Helgeson (1994) found that, "physical separation is a stressor that will be influenced by one's dependence on the relationship" (p. 256). Women were found to adapt better to physical separation than men, who were more dissatisfied and had a more difficult time recovering from time apart (Helgeson, 1994).

It also is suggested that the challenges of LDRs can have negative economic, social, and personal impacts on relational partners (Westefeld & Liddell, 1982). For instance, an individual participating in an LDR may feel emotionally isolated or may experience the economic hardships of constant travel expenses incurred from visits to his/her partner. Thus, while participating in a romantic relationship has personal benefits, when that relationship is an LDR,

the physical distance between partners may necessitate that the relationship be viewed and maintained in different ways.

In today's fast paced society, commuter marriages and other types of LDRs may become common-place. As our economy becomes more global and employee transfers more common, businesses are recognizing the potential impact of commuting on marriage. Maines (1993) claims that though no organizations currently collect data on commuter marriages, "employment trends are forcing many couples to consider the option [of commuting]" (p. 47), a situation that will necessitate that businesses address the LDR issue. Although many companies currently help relocate an employee's "trailing" spouse, more should be done to help the couple adjust to relocation issues (Taylor & Lounsbury, 1988). In a study of the impact of geographic transfers on employees, Taylor and Lounsbury found that managers rated commuter marriages in a low category (i.e., negatively). Thus, the researchers called for companies to be more cognizant of problems that may arise from employee transfers, thereby reducing manager bias towards employees living in commuter marriage situations.

Acknowledging the difficulties involved with LDRs, some college campuses, such as Iowa State University, conduct workshops to help people involved in LDRs cope with separation (Rohlfing, 1995). The Iowa State workshop, "Coping with Long-Distance Relationships", emphasizes two areas: (a) the most difficult aspects of being in a long-distance relationship and (b)

possible ways to deal with long-distance relationships (Westefeld & Liddell, 1982). One benefit from participation in the workshop is realizing you are not the only individual experiencing the hardships associated with maintaining LDRs. Participants also address common problems, including economic hardships (e.g., telephone bills and travel expenses), deciding how to best use their time when together, and evaluating the relationship while at a distance. Some ways in which workshop participants claim to cope with the LDR phenomenon are developing support systems, developing creative ways to communicate (e.g., cassette tapes), being open and honest with each other, and being positive (Westefeld & Liddell, 1982).

In a discussion of the current research regarding LDRs, Rohlfing (1995) claims that 70% to 90% of college students have been involved in at least one long distance friendship or romantic relationship. Surprisingly, however, little research has been conducted on LDRs. Rohlfing also discusses the disparity in the literature regarding what constitutes long distance; the levels of satisfaction, intimacy, and commitment in LDRs; and, the coping strategies used to overcome long distance. The article concludes with a call for future research, specifying that a differentiation should be made among different types of LDRs--commuter marriages, premarital long distance romantic relationships, and long distance friendships. How LDRs are initiated, sex differences in viewing them, and relationship maintenance strategies also are recognized as particular areas of interest for understanding the long-distance phenomenon.

Although Helgeson's (1994) study provides insight into sex differences when adjusting to separation and breakup, and although some colleges and companies are addressing the issue of long distance romances (Taylor & Lounsbury, 1988; Westefeld & Liddell, 1982), current sources provide limited information on strategies that may be used to keep long-distance relationships alive.

Research has attempted to discover the ways in which couples maintain or sustain their relationships to desired relational outcomes (e.g., Baxter & Simon, 1993; Canary, Stafford, Hause, & Wallace, 1994; Stafford & Canary, 1991), but few studies have investigated the unique circumstances of long-distance relationships. Considering the effect long-distance may have on the individual and the relationship, communication scholars should address relational maintenance for this type of relationship. This investigation is one step towards achieving this goal.

The investigation examines the ways in which relational partners attempt to maintain romantic long-distance relationships by using dialectical theory as a foundation for explaining the unique circumstances of LDRs. Baxter (1988) claims the dialectical perspective offers a relational-level perspective as opposed to the individual-level theories associated with theories such as social penetration (Altman & Taylor, 1973) and uncertainty reduction (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). According to Wood (1995), dialectical theory "explains personal relationships in terms of ongoing processes and contradictions that

produce changes over time" (p. 286). Because relational partners in LDRs are constantly adjusting to the presence of contradictions, or opposing relational forces (Montgomery, 1993), dialectical theory provides a logical foundation for understanding the ways couples cope with the stresses and contradictions of LDRs.

As our society continues to become more global and transient, the need to study LDRs as a unique relationship context is clear. The present study focuses on a significant element of LDRs by identifying specific strategies used by relational partners to maintain the relationship, thus coping with the distance phenomenon. In the section that follows, key literature regarding dialectical theory, relational maintenance, and LDRs is discussed. The section concludes with the presentation of four research questions that guide this project.

Review of Literature

Though LDRs, relationship maintenance, and dialectical theory have been studied in the past, to date, no study has sought to integrate the concepts of dialectical theory with the strategies used to maintain LDRs. This review describes the existing research in these three areas. First, dialectical theory will be explained, laying the theoretical foundation for the study. Second, relationship maintenance and maintenance strategies will be examined, including a discussion of how dialectical theory has changed the way maintenance is viewed. Finally, an overview of the long-distance relationship literature is provided, focusing on both commuter marriages and premarital relationships.

Dialectical Theory

Theories play an important role in research by providing a base from which to start an investigation and by providing a way to explain a phenomenon. Previously, dialectical theory has been used in research concerning family systems, physical environments, friendships, and relationship change and development (Altman, 1993; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Bopp & Weeks, 1984; Masheter & Harris, 1986; Rawlins, 1983, 1992). Though the dialectic perspective has existed for hundreds of years, Altman, Vinsel and Brown (1981) were among the first researchers to identify its usefulness as a foundation to study relationships. Other scholars, such as Baxter (1988, 1990), Montgomery (1993), and Rawlins (1983, 1992) also have used this perspective to explain, predict, and describe the dynamic nature of relationships, phenomena that can be overlooked when grounded in unidimensional theoretical perspectives. Thus, the present investigation utilizes the dialectical perspective as a theoretical underpinning for the applied nature of this study. The following review discusses dialectical theory, focusing on the constructs of contradiction and change as the major tenets of the theoretical perspective.

The dialectical perspective provides an orientation for understanding social interactions (Altman et al., 1981; Montgomery, 1992, 1993). Specifically, Relational Dialectic Theory describes relationships as processes full of contradictions and constant changes (Wood, 1995). There are two major

constructs associated with dialectical theory: (a) opposition or contradiction, and (b) process or change (Altman et al., 1981; Baxter, 1988).

<u>Contradictions</u>

Central to dialectical perspective is the idea of contradiction, "the dynamic interplay between unified oppositions" that are "actively incompatible and mutually negate one another" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 8). Thus, both ends of the opposition are necessary to understand each end individually. For example, to fully comprehend and define the concept "good", one needs to acknowledge and comprehend the opposite concept of "bad"; though complementary, the poles are interrelated and cannot exist without one another (Altman et al., 1981). As such, viewing the relationship between polar opposites and the interplay of the contradictions is key when defining social phenomena (Montgomery, 1992).

Healthy relationships involve both sides of the dialectical spectrum. Though tension can result from the interplay of contradictions, this tension is necessary for a relationship to change and grow (Baxter, 1990). Scholars have identified several contradictions important to relationships, such as public-private lives, stability-change, affection-utility, and intimacy-detachment (Altman et al., 1981; Braithewaite & Baxter, 1995; Masheter & Harris, 1986; Rawlins, 1989). Additionally, Baxter (1993) delineates between internal (i.e., within the relationship) and external (i.e., between the relationship and external systems such as friends or society) dialectics. In particular, the internal dialectics of

autonomy-connection, openness-closedness, and novelty-predictability are considered critical to understanding the development of relationships (Baxter, 1988).

Autonomy-connection. Most researchers agree that the central dialectic for understanding relationships is autonomy-connection (Baxter 1988, 1990; Goldsmith, 1990; Montgomery, 1992). Autonomy is the desire to be self-sufficient and independent; connection is the desire to link with another person and be reliant on him/her (Goldsmith, 1990). Baxter (1988) states that "this contradiction is so central to the essence of relationships on definitional grounds alone that it can be regarded as the principal contradiction" (p. 259). The essence of human relationships relies on connection with other people, allowing individuals to form and change their identities as they interact with others. Too much connection, however, can cause individual identities to be lost (Baxter, 1990). Thus, both autonomy and connection are needed to make a relationship work.

A primary example of the autonomy-connection dialectic is Goldsmith's (1990) study of conflict in romantic relationships. Ten couples were asked to describe conflicts in their relational histories, focusing on times in which they experienced conflicting desires for autonomy and connection. Goldsmith found 41 instances of autonomy-connection tensions that were grouped into five tension types: (a) getting involved and getting to know the potential partner, (b) dating others while maintaining a romantic relationship with the partner, (c)

relational tradeoffs with the partner and life priorities, (d) fairness and tolerance, and (e) commitment. All of the tensions experienced by the participants stemmed from the want or need to be an individual, while still maintaining their "coupleness" with the romantic partner. Consequently, the couples had to negotiate each of these tensions in order to keep the relationship going.

Openness-closedness. A second dialectic that is key to understanding the development of relationships is openness-closedness (Baxter, 1988). Communication openness refers to self disclosure or sharing information with another in a direct and honest way (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Relationships need open disclosure for intimacy (Baxter, 1990). The sharing of information is needed during the initial stages of relationship development. For example, Altman and Taylor's (1973) social penetration theory hypothesizes that people disclose non-intimate information at the initial stages of a relationship. As couples grow closer, they will gradually disclose more private, personal information. The depth of disclosure indicates a level of trust in the relational partner that satisfies emotional security (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996).

Simultaneously, openness can create a vulnerability that necessitates information closedness; that is, the withholding of personal information from others (Rawlins, 1989). As a complement to social penetration theory, Altman et. al (1981) discuss privacy regulation theory, a perspective emphasizing the need for closedness and separation from others. They claim people will use different verbal and nonverbal interaction patterns depending on the level of contact

desired (Altman et. al, 1981). Although these two theories--Social Penetration and Privacy Regulation--contradict each other, their concepts lend support to the conceptual framework of dialectics; Altman et. al have sought to unify these theoretical notions from a dialectical perspective.

Novelty-predictability. The third dialectic posed by Baxter (1988) is novelty-predictability. At times, relationships need to be unpredictable in order to increase excitement and interest in the relationship (Berger, 1988). For example, Braithewaite and Baxter (1995) studied the renewal of marriage vows between spouses. Rituals, such as vow renewal, are significant because of their infrequent occurrence; the act would lose significance if enacted more frequently. The renewal of the marriage vows is a celebration of love and commitment in a novel and exciting way, thus interjecting excitement into a relationship.

Conversely, some researchers claim that it is the daily, routine activities that keep relationships going (Duck, 1994). The original focus of uncertainty reduction theory (Berger & Calabrese, 1975) was the initial phases of interactions, whereby "when strangers meet, their primary concern is one of uncertainty reduction or increasing predictability about the behavior of both themselves and others" (p. 100). Once information is acquired about the relational partner, predictability is increased. According to Gerstel and Gross (1983), however, one of the most often missed aspects of marriages by commuting couples is the everyday talk and activities facilitated by a single

residence. Thus, predictability is particularly difficult to establish for individuals participating in long distance relationships.

Contradictions, then, play an integral part in the dialectical perspective, with the dialectics of novelty-predictability, openness-closedness, and autonomy-connection playing a key role in relationship development. The next section discusses the concept of change as it relates to the dialectical perspective.

Change

Change is a constant in relationships (Montgomery, 1993; Rawlins, 1983). The changes in relationships are the result of the "struggle and tension of contradiction from a dialectical perspective" (Baxter, 1990, p. 70). Therefore, relational partners are constantly adjusting to the presence of these contradictions (Montgomery, 1993). The presence of change and continual tension is not necessarily a negative component of relationships. Tensions may be a sign of the continuing development or redefinition of the relationship, thereby signifying relational growth (Masheter & Harris, 1986).

To explain the significance of change, Baxter and Simon (1993) claim there are periods of temporary equilibrium between the two opposing poles of a relationship, called dialectical moments. Although one pole tends to dominate the other, domination sets into motion efforts to achieve equilibrium. For instance, if a couple is experiencing too much predictability and is bored with the relationship, the couple may choose to participate in spontaneous activities such

as unplanned trips or romantic adventures. The struggle for domination between the two poles therefore acts as a catalyst for dialectical change (Baxter, 1988).

Whereas change is important for relational growth, the way that relational partners deal with constant change is essential to the continuation of the relationship. The following section describes specific ways in which relational partners adjust to the constant change and tensions created by contradictions.

Strategic responses. Baxter (1988) describes several strategies used to cope with dominating poles. For Baxter, strategy does not imply individual goal achievement as is traditionally associated with the word strategy; rather, strategies are considered in terms of their efficacy in response to the situational demands of competing contradictions. As opposed to relationship maintenance strategies (i.e., behaviors used to keep a relationship in existence), these strategic responses represent broad categories or patterns of adjustment that allow partners to accommodate dialectics (Wood, 1995). Baxter (1988) identified six strategic responses to dialectic tension: (a) selection, (b) cyclic alternation, (c) segmentation, (d) neutralization, (e) disqualification, and (f) redefinition.

Selection refers to the repeated use of one strategy consistent with one polarity or contradiction. Comments such as "we are always open with each other" and "we are never apart" signify this strategy type. Cyclic alternation addresses each polarity at separate points in time. For instance, certain times in a relationship may be reserved for high levels of disclosure or high levels of privacy. Similarly, segmentation, a type of spatial separation, refers to the

isolation of particular domains as appropriate for one pole over the other. The couple may decide that certain topics are taboo, such as previous relationships or politics.

The final three strategies (i.e., neutralization, disqualification, and redefinition) identified by Baxter (1988) were combined into one category labeled integration. These strategies simultaneously respond to the opposing poles of a contradiction. Neutralization favors neither opposing poles. The small talk prevalent at the beginnings of relationships is an example of this strategy; information is shared, but is not too revealing. Disqualification avoids both polarities, usually through ambiguity. Self contradictions, subject switches, and obscure word choices are examples of this strategy type (Montgomery, 1993). Finally, reframing acts to transcend the contradiction all together--a couple redefines the contradiction so that it no longer possesses two opposing poles. For example, to redefine the openness-closedness contradiction, a couple may decide to be completely honest with each other on topics directly relating to their relationship, but not on all subjects.

In summary, dialectical theory is a useful foundation for the study of personal relationships, especially LDRs. All couples need to cope with the constant flux associated with relationships and LDRs are no different. Although variation is essential to the health and prosperity of relationships, couples must contend with the tensions resulting from the oppositional pulls of contradictions such as autonomy-connection, predictability-novelty, and openness-closedness.

In LDRs, these contradictions may be exaggerated by the physical separation of the relational partners. Relational partners have to become more autonomous to care for themselves while living alone, lose much of the routine and predicable nature of living in the same home or city, and have less opportunity to disclose with their partner. The impact of these exaggerated dialectical tensions may help to explain variations between long distance and proximal relationships.

To accommodate dialectical tensions, some people employ strategic responses such as segmentation, cyclic alternation, or integration for coping with situational demands; others may ignore the tensions completely. Based on dialectics, one can study LDRs from the viewpoint of the contradictions and changes inherent in relationships. The tensions caused by contradictions and the subsequent responses to tensions usually lead to relationship development. Although responses to dialectical tensions are used, LDRs may require different ways to maintain their relationship and achieve growth despite the separation. In the section that follows, the relational maintenance literature is examined to begin addressing this issue.

Relational Maintenance

Interpersonal relationships play an important role in our lives. Thus, it is no surprise that communication researchers focus much of their attention on these types of relationships and how they develop, change, and end over time. According to Canary and Stafford (1994), "most people desire long-term, stable and satisfying relationships" (p. 4). Consequently, relationship maintenance is of

primary interest to individuals interested in understanding the intricacies of interpersonal interaction.

Researchers have investigated strategy use in other types of relationships, such as friendships or acquaintances (Ayres, 1983; Canary, Stafford, Hause, & Wallace, 1993; Rawlins, 1983; Shea & Pearson, 1986), coworkers (Ayres, 1983), relatives (Canary et al., 1993), and student-teacher (Ayres, 1983). The present study, however, will focus primarily on the strategies used by marital and premarital romantic partners. First, the definition of relational maintenance will be discussed. Then, an analysis of seven maintenance strategy typologies will be presented. Because one of the goals of the present study is the creation of a strategy typology for LDRs, an investigation on how other typologies have been created is significant to the current investigation.

<u>Definition</u>

There is much inconsistency in the definition of maintenance. Stafford (1994) asserts that understanding what a researcher means when using the term "maintenance" is necessary for "conceptual clarity" (p. 297). Dindia and Canary (1993) grouped existing definitions of maintenance into four overarching definitions: (a) to keep a relationship in existence, (b) to keep a relationship in a specified state or condition, (c) to keep a relationship in satisfactory condition, and (d) to keep a relationship in repair. The following discussion is organized under these designations, concluding with the definition to be used in this study.

One of the few aspects of maintenance that researchers generally agree upon is that maintenance occurs "just after a relationship has finished beginning and just before it has started to end" (Montgomery, 1993, p. 205). As such, the first definitional category, "to keep a relationship in existence", implies that maintenance strategies are used to prevent a relationship from ending (Dindia & Canary, 1993).

Although most definitions make this assumption, a few scholars limit the idea of maintenance to just preservation. Studies by Stafford and Canary (1991), and Guerrero, Eloy, and Wabnik (1993) follow this developmental view of relationships. They assume that maintenance is necessary for escalating the relationship to a new stage. Using the framework of social exchange theory, the researchers claim that a couple will stay in an equitable and rewarding relationship. Social exchange theorists claim that individuals will maintain relationships in which rewards exceed costs (Thibaut & Kelly, 1959). Therefore, they will employ different strategies to ensure their relationship is satisfying and worth keeping alive.

Though Stafford and Canary (1991) studied the influence of perceived maintenance strategy use on control mutuality, liking, satisfaction, and commitment, they found that maintenance strategies related more to sustaining a relationship as opposed to achieving relational outcomes. Guerrero et. al (1993) also studied the use of maintenance strategies to escalate, de-escalate, stabilize, or terminate relationships. Results indicated that maintenance

strategies "were perceived to be used more frequently within relationships that remain stable or escalate than with those that de-escalate or terminate" (Guerrero et al., p. 280), thereby stressing the role of maintenance strategies to sustain a romantic relationship.

According to Canary and Stafford (1994), relationship maintenance strategies are defined as "actions and activities used to sustain desired relational definitions" or relational outcomes (p. 6). Thus, the second definition "to keep a relationship in a specified state or condition" pertains to keeping certain qualities--thought to be important to relational development--steady (Dindia & Canary, 1993).

Several researchers utilize this definition. For instance, Ayres (1983) suggests that once a relationship reaches a certain level, the partners will try to keep the relationship in a stable state. Therefore, the pattern of exchange that brought the partners to that level will be maintained. Similarly, Dainton, Stafford, and Canary (1994) investigated the key predictors of loving, liking, and satisfaction in marriage. Their results indicate that certain maintenance behaviors do predict these three relational outcomes. Maintenance strategies, then, are used as a means of attaining desired relational outcomes. Finally, Bell, Daly, and Gonzalez (1987) asked respondents to list the ways in which relational partners maintain solidarity and liking in their relationships. Their findings indicate maintenance is measured in terms of perpetuating not just the relationship, but certain relational levels and/or outcomes.

Satisfaction relates to one's "subjectively experienced contentment" with a relationship (Fitzpatrick & Badzinski, 1985, p 693). According to Dindia and Baxter (1987), satisfaction is perhaps the most frequently studied relational outcome. It is no surprise that maintenance can be defined as "maintaining a satisfying relationship" (Dindia & Canary, 1993, p. 165). Unlike the first two definitions, the definition "to keep a relationship in a satisfactory condition" implies that the relationship is sustained in a positive condition--that of satisfaction. Therefore, many studies that measure relationships in terms of satisfaction are implicitly defining relational maintenance from this perspective (e.g., Baxter & Simon, 1993; Bell, Daly, & Gonzalez, 1987; Dainton, Stafford, & Canary, 1994; Dindia & Baxter, 1987; Dindia & Canary, 1993; Stafford & Canary, 1991). For example, Dindia and Baxter claimed that existing research has not shown how relational partners maintain satisfying relationships. Thus, they sought to determine the relationship between participants' reports of maintenance and repair strategies with relational satisfaction. Ironically, results indicated no significant relationship between the strategies employed and marital satisfaction.

The final definition "to keep a relationship in repair" conceptualizes maintenance as both keeping the relationship in good condition and revitalizing a relationship that may have fallen apart (Dindia & Canary, 1993). Roloff and Cloven's (1994) conceptualization of maintenance illustrates this definition well, stating that relational maintenance involves "the individual or joint approaches

intimates take to limit the relational harm that may result from prior or future conflicts and transgressions" (p. 27). One of the major proponents of this view of maintenance are Dindia and Baxter (1987). They equate maintenance strategies with repair strategies, citing the high incidence of divorce and premarital break-ups as a failure of the relational partners to effectively employ maintenance strategies. Although their definition of maintenance stems from the view that relationships are in a constant state of flux, many scholars recognize that repair and maintenance are two separate entities and should not be integrated (e.g., Dindia & Canary, 1993).

In summary, four definitions of relational maintenance are important for conceptualizing relational maintenance. Maintenance strategies should not only keep a relationship in existence, but also should facilitate satisfaction or achieve other desired relational outcomes. The underlying principle, however, behind these definitions is that relationships progress through stages and are linear in nature. Conversely, dialectical theory views relationships differently. Montgomery's (1993) definition of relational maintenance captures the dialectical view of relationships. Montgomery claims that the word "maintain" denotes a steady state that a relationship can achieve. Yet, according to dialectical theory, relationships are in process, constantly in a state of flux and change. As a result, partners need to make adjustments that will sustain a relationship through the flux that characterizes relationships. Adjustments, then, are the strategies used for sustenance.

For the purposes of this study, relational maintenance strategies will be viewed as strategies used by relational partners to sustain their relationship through times of stability and flux; methods to achieve desired relational outcomes. Tactics, then, are specific behaviors used to operationalize or facilitate a particular strategy (Bell et al., 1987). This view of maintenance acknowledges that relationships, especially long distance relationships, are characterized by ebbs and flows in their development. To keep the LDR going, couples need to employ strategies that not only overcome obstacles, but also perpetuate a level of satisfaction and happiness that allow couples to endure separation; otherwise, the costs of relationship may outweigh the benefits. The next section describes maintenance strategy typologies found in the interpersonal literature.

Maintenance Strategy Typologies

In the past fourteen years, the literature base for studying relational maintenance has grown considerably. From Ayres' (1983) landmark study to the ongoing work of researchers such as Canary and Stafford (1991) and Dindia and Baxter (1987), the research has generated several typologies to identify the specific maintenance strategies and their ultimate success in perpetuating relationships. Seven particular typologies will be discussed (Ayres, 1983; Baxter & Simon, 1993; Bell, Daly & Gonzalez, 1987; Canary, Stafford, Hause, & Wallace, 1993; Dainton & Stafford, 1993; Dindia & Baxter, 1987; Stafford &

Canary, 1991). Though the seven typologies possess differences, there is much overlap among them.

Ayres (1983) created one of the first relationship maintenance typologies. Though the typology did not include strategies used by romantically involved partners, it has been used by researchers as an anchor and source for romantic typologies. Initially, the typology generated 27 different tactics used to maintain a relationship. Using a focus group to assess his tactics, Ayres' typology was extended, creating a final list of 38 tactics. This list was presented to 359 undergraduates in questionnaire form in order to test which tactics the students would use to maintain a relationship. The final analysis generated three distinct factors/strategies: (a) avoidance (i.e., ignoring or avoiding things that may alter relationship development), (b) balance (i.e., keeping the relationship constant and equitable), and (c) directness (i.e., telling a partner that things should stay the same). Though these three strategies do recur in future research (e.g., Shea & Pearson, 1986), many additional strategies also have emerged.

Instead of generating tactics themselves, Bell, Daly, and Gonzalez (1987) asked 142 married people and 18 cohabitating individuals to describe the things they do to maintain liking and solidarity in their relationships. Responses were coded, producing a typology of 28 maintenance strategies. Some of the strategies included: (a) concede control (e.g., "spouse allows partner to exert dominance"), (b) equality (e.g., "spouse presents self as equal partner"), (c) inclusion of other (e.g., "spouse invites partner to participate with him/her in

social activities"), (d) physical and verbal affection (e.g., "spouse is verbally/physically affectionate with partner"), and (e) openness (e.g., "spouse self-discloses to partner to make him/her feel special") (Bell et al., 1987, p. 448) (see Appendix A).

Although the Bell et al. (1987) list is more extensive, two of Ayres' (1983) strategies are paralleled in the typology: (a) balance, which stresses keeping the relationship in a steady, equitable state (e.g., concede control, equality, inclusion of other), and (b) directness or outward displays or expressions about the relationship (e.g., verbal affection, physical affection, openness). The strategy of avoidance did not appear to surface in any of the strategies identified by Bell et al. Perhaps the reason lies within the phrasing of the question: they asked for ways to enhance liking and solidarity. Because the strategies also are used to invoke liking from the partner, they may not be used as part of day-to-day relationship maintenance. Therefore, the respondents did not mention any negative strategies. The issue of negative strategies resurfaces in later typologies.

Building on the work of Davis (1973), Dindia and Baxter (1987) created a relational typology based on the observations of 100 respondents (50 married couples). Couples were asked to list the ways in which they both maintain and repair their relationships. From the 100 responses, 652 tactics were inductively derived. Coding of the tactics produced 49 categories that clustered into twelve superordinate categories (i.e., strategies): (a) communication strategies, (b)

antisocial, (c) ceremonies, (d) togetherness, (e) changing external environments, (f) metacommunication, (g) avoid metacommunication, (h) prosocial, (i) rituals, (j) antirituals, (k) seeking outside help, and (l) seeking-allowing autonomy.

Significantly, the Dindia and Baxter (1987) study solicited both positive and negative strategies. Asking participants to include negative strategies may have skewed the results because these strategies reflect the individual level of maintenance--concentrating on the satisfaction of the individual--and not the relational level. Perhaps the inclusion of repair strategies limits the usefulness of this typology for strictly investigating relational maintenance. They did note, however, that with the exception of metacommunication and anti-ritual/spontaneity strategies, the same types of strategies were reported for both maintenance and repair. As previously mentioned, some researchers recognize that repair and maintenance are two separate functions and should not be mixed (Dindia & Canary, 1993).

The benchmark study by Stafford and Canary (1991) greatly influenced research on relational maintenance (see Baxter & Simon, 1993; Canary et al., 1993; Dainton, Stafford, & Canary, 1994; Guerrero, Eloy, & Wabnik, 1993). First, they examined the work of Ayres (1983), Bell, Daly, and Gonzalez (1987), and Shea and Pearson (1986) to gather preliminary items concerning previously identified maintenance strategies. They then surveyed 77 married and nonmarried participants, asking how they maintained their relationships. Using data from these two sources, a factor analysis was conducted revealing five

factors: (a) openness, items involving directness and disclosure; (b) assurances, items involving commitment, showing love, and demonstrating faithfulness; (c) positivity, positive and cheerful actions; (d) sharing tasks, helping equally with tasks; and (e) networks or friends and common affiliations. Although the Ayres' (1983) and Dindia et al. (1987) typologies containing negative strategies were used in the initial collecting of data, negative strategies were not included in the Stafford and Canary list. Though the typology has received validation from other researchers (e.g., Canary, Stafford, Hause, & Wallace, 1993; Dainton & Stafford, 1993), the lack of certain strategies critical to LDRs (e.g., mediated communication) requires that further research be conducted to expand or redefine the strategies.

Dainton and Stafford (1993) used a method similar to Stafford and Canary (1991) to identify components of relationship maintenance. Instead of using the word "strategies", however, they used the word "behaviors" to denote different tactics. According to Dainton and Stafford, strategy denotes intentionality; while behavior allows for non-intentional, routine tactics. They identified the same five strategies--positivity, openness, assurances, sharing tasks, and networks--of Stafford and Canary (1991) as well as seven additional ones: (a) joint activities, (b) talk, (c) mediated communication, (d) avoidance, (e) antisocial, (f) affection, and (g) focus on self. As with the Dindia and Baxter (1987) study, the question used to solicit responses from participants prompted both positive and negative strategies. Therefore, the results indicated two negative strategies: (a)

avoidance, and (b) antisocial. An important advancement in this typology over previous typologies is the inclusion of mediated communication. As recognized in the LDR literature, the use of mediated communication is a primary way to cope with long distance. Perhaps for the previous studies, mediated communication was seen more as a mode of communicating and not a separate strategy; the content was deemed more important than the method. Yet, for LDRs, this method of communication becomes a crucial issue for consideration.

Baxter and Simon (1993) approached the study of maintenance from a dialectical perspective. The dialectical perspective maintains that relationships are in a constant state of flux and from this flux comes the tension of opposing forces. In particular, they examined the dialectics of autonomy-connection, predictability-novelty, and openness-closedness. Their central research question investigated "how various maintenance strategies function to sustain the satisfaction levels of the parties in relationships characterized at different dialectical moments" (p. 229). Using items identified in previous research (e.g., Baxter & Dindia, 1990; Dindia & Baxter, 1987; Stafford & Canary, 1991), they asked participants to describe their maintenance activity and that of their partner. Factor analysis revealed four factors employing both negative and positive strategies: (a) antisocial, (b) contact, (c) romance, and (d) avoidance. Interestingly, over half of the items that fit into the four factors were negative tactics (e.g., "initiate a fight or argument with the other", Baxter & Simon, 1993, pg. 237).

Baxter and Simon (1993) found that depending on where a couple was situated at a certain dialectical moment, certain strategies would be perceived more favorably than others. For example, if a relationship was in an autonomy-dominated moment, tactics that emphasize connection would lead to greater satisfaction than tactics aimed towards autonomy. The incorporation of the dialectical perspective in this study shows the influence change can have on a relationship. Strategies deemed important in LDR and other maintenance research (e.g., mediated communication and assurance of a future) were missing from this research.

Finally, Canary, Stafford, Hause, and Wallace (1993) extended the existing research by conducting an inductive analysis on 579 student papers. Canary et al. claimed that "a more exhaustive typology would be constructed by inductively deriving items from participant's accounts, sampling accounts in a variety of relationships" (p. 6). Students were asked to write about the ways in which they maintain different types of current relationships--family, friends, lovers, and others--and to provide a label for each strategy used. The final typology provided ten categories: (a) positivity, (b) assurances, (c) openness, (d) sharing tasks, (e) networks, (f) joint activities, (g) mediated communication, (h) avoidance, (i) anti-social, and (j) humor. As mentioned earlier, these researchers attempted to create an "exhaustive" typology. Thus, this typology should be the most comprehensive typology in the literature; however, the use of previous

research categories as a guide to code the data prevented flexibility for the possible emergence of new strategies.

Although the long distance relationship (LDR) literature often includes both proximal and long-distance relationships as a comparative measure, the maintenance literature has not yet specifically studied the strategy usage of couples involved in LDRs. When using college students as a population sample, however, as is usual for maintenance strategy investigations, the chances of including a large number of long distance relationships in the sample pool is high. According to Stafford, Daly, and Reske (1987), "as many as one third of premarital relationships in university settings may be long-distance ones" (p. 274). Canary, Stafford, Hause, and Wallace (1993) is one of the first maintenance studies to recognize LDRs. Of their sample, 41.8% of the relationships described by the participants were defined as long distance relationships (i.e., not living in the same town). Logic dictates that if the percentage was high in this study, the percentage also would be high in other studies using a college sample. A fluctuation in the number of LDRs included within the studies may explain the wide variety of maintenance typologies in the literature.

In conclusion, relational maintenance strategies are essential to the survival of a relationship. As seen within dialectical theory, couples need to utilize particular strategies to sustain their relationships not only to desired relational outcomes, but also through the changes caused by dialectical tensions. The

preceding review of literature described research that has resulted in the

development of maintenance strategy typologies. Although this research extends

our understanding of relationship maintenance, the impact of distance on

relationship maintenance may prove to be a unique context for studying

communicative strategies of relational partners (Rohlfing, 1995). Thus, the

current investigation focuses on LDR maintenance in order to extend our

knowledge base about communication in romantic relationships. In the next

section, current research concerning LDRs will be described.

<u>Long-Distance Relationships and Coping Strategies.</u>

Long-distance relationships (LDRs) are a common occurrence (Stafford &

Reske, 1990). As many as one million couples annually may experience LDRs

(Maines, 1993). A paucity of knowledge, however, exists concerning couples

participating in the long-distance experience (Govaerts & Dixon, 1988; Holt &

Stone, 1988) and concerning how the dynamics of their relationships differ from

their proximal counterparts. Research that does exist is seemingly inconsistent,

especially regarding how long-distance relationships should be defined, the

satisfaction levels of those participating in them, and the coping strategies used

to maintain them (Rohlfing, 1995).

This section reviews the LDR literature concerning these issues. First,

various issues that define what constitutes long-distance are provided. Second,

the inconsistencies in results regarding relational satisfaction in LDRs is

discussed. Finally, a synthesis of the coping strategies found in existing research

will be presented. Because the literature base for studying LDRs is minimal, the literature on commuter marriage is included; the emphasis of the study, however, will only be on premarital long distance couples.

Definition

Before one can begin discussing LDRs as a specialized relationship type, one needs to define what actually constitutes "long-distance". In the literature, there appears to be two variables to consider when defining LDRs: (a) the physical distance separating the couple, and (b) the amount of time spent apart. Some studies set a minimum number of miles for a relationship to be considered long-distance, ranging from 100 miles (Carpenter & Knox, 1986) to an average of 421 miles (Stafford & Reske, 1990). The mean distance in a study of commuter marriages was 771 miles, with a range of 40 to 2000 miles (Groves & Horm-Winegard, 1991). Other studies require that the relational partner be outside a particular area (Helgeson, 1994) or in another part of the state (Stephen, 1986). Although these studies do not specifically mention time apart as a defining factor, long-distance implies that the partners will not be able to see each other on a regular basis. Thus, scholars have recognized that how much time a couple spends apart should also be included as a defining variable for LDRs (Holt & Stone, 1988; Guldner & Swensen, 1995).

In a study conducted by Guldner and Swensen (1995), participants who agreed to the statement 'My partner lives far enough away from me that it would be very difficult or impossible for me to see him or her every day' (p. 315) were

classified as being in LDRs. Similarly, commuter marriage literature consistently defines commuter marriage as both maintaining two separate residences in different geographic locations and being separated from each other from several times a week to several months at a time (Gerstel & Gross, 1983, 1984; Govaerts & Dixon, 1988; Groves & Horm-Winegard, 1991; Kirschner & Walum, 1978; Vanderslice & Rice, 1992). As Winfield (1985) claims, commuter marriage is "a situation in which a couple decides to live together, apart" (p. 4).

Holt and Stone (1988) characterized LDRs by using different time and distance variables to categorize couples. First, time apart ranges were identified. Couples were classified as not being apart (zero), being apart less than six months, or being apart more than six months from visit to visit. Next, three frequencies of visitation were presented: (a) visiting more than once a week, (b) visiting once a week to once a month, and (c) visiting less than once a month. Finally, distance ranges were specified. Couples were categorized as living within short distance (0-1 miles) or long distance (2-249 miles or over 250 miles). Although different subtypes of "distance" relationships were identified based on combinations of the three variables, when combined, time apart and physical distance created an important distinction between long-distance and proximal couples.

Based on findings of research about LDRs and commuter marriage, it is evident that time and distance apart play a role in defining long-distance. Although Rohlfing (1995) claims that the inconsistency in defining LDR has not

harmed the research, "it may be useful to arrive at a consensus about the parameters of these relationships" (p. 176). For the purposes of this study, a long distance relationship is defined as a relationship in which the dating partners are unable to see each other on a regular basis (e.g., daily or weekly) due to both time and/or distance.

Satisfaction and Relational Outcomes

Definitional issues are not the only inconsistency found in the LDR literature; the relational satisfaction level as well as other relational outcomes (e.g., love) also vary among studies. For instance, Stafford and Reske (1990) examined the effects of idealization (i.e., unrealistic expectations) and communication in long distance and geographically close premarital relationships. Their results indicate that long-distance couples are not only more satisfied with their communication and relationships than geographically close couples, but also more in love.

Conversely, Guldner and Swensen (1995) found no significant differences between long-distance and proximal couples when comparing the amount of time a couple spends together to their relationship quality. In their study, the 190 PRs and 194 LDRs completed several measures of relationship quality, including relationship satisfaction (Hendrick's Relationship Assessment Scale, 1988), trust (Larzelere & Huston's Dyadic Trust Scale, 1981), and progress towards marriage (King & Christensen's Relationship Events Scale, 1983). The results indicate that "individuals in LDRs report levels of relationship satisfaction, intimacy, trust, and

commitment that are identical to those reported in PRs" (Guldner & Swensen, p. 318).

Studies examining commuter marriages also produce conflicting results. In a study measuring the quality of life in commuting versus single residence couples, Vanderslice and Rice (1992) reported that whereas commuter couples were more satisfied with their career and with the time they had for themselves, they were more dissatisfied with their relationships. Groves and Horm-Winegard (1991) found similar results, stating that "the major benefit . . . for initiating commuting is related to career development and satisfaction", with the drawbacks including a "lack of companionship and emotional support" (p. 215).

When studying vocational and marital satisfaction in commuter couples, however, Govaerts and Dixon (1988) found different results. Their results indicate that though commuter couples were more dissatisfied with their relationships than non-commuters, the difference was not statistically significant; however, the commuters were significantly more dissatisfied with the actual time spent together. Gerstel and Gross (1983) provided a possible explanation for this finding claiming that because a commuter couple's time together is so separate from "other time", the periods together were "vulnerable to inflated expectations which, when not met, may mar the reunion" (p. 186). Finally, Holt and Stone (1988) found that the farther apart (over 250 miles) and the longer the time between visits (more than six months), the lower the satisfaction. This was not as detrimental to couples who, at the same distance, saw each other within a six

month time period, again showing that both time apart and distance play an important role when discussing LDRs.

In summary, the preceding studies suggest that in general, LDRs are less satisfying than proximal relationships. Yet, evidence exists supporting that LDRs can work (Guldner & Swensen, 1995). Because spending less time together causes difficulties in relationships (Guldner & Swensen), something must be done to maintain the relationship and cope with the separation (Carpenter & Knox, 1986). The next section describes communication coping strategies used to sustain long-distance romantic relationships. Coping strategies are defined as the behavioral and/or cognitive attempts to manage specific situational demands which are appraised as taxing or exceeding one's ability to adapt (Thoits, 1995).

Coping Strategies

Generally, communication is more restricted in LDRs than proximal relationships (Stafford & Reske, 1990; Stephen, 1986). As a result, couples involved in LDRs must employ a variety of strategies to compensate for restricted communication. The most frequently mentioned coping strategy is frequency of visits (Carpenter & Knox, 1986; Holt & Stone, 1988). Spending time with one another is essential to maintaining relationships (Guldner & Swensen, 1995). Because communication (especially the relational component) is more restricted in LDRs, couples should take advantage of frequent visitation to allow for more face-to-face interaction, thus incorporating the nonverbal communication component back into the relationship (Stafford & Reske, 1990).

Gerstel and Gross (1983, 1984) indicate that commuting is least stressful when couples visit regularly--on weekends or every other weekend. Additionally, Groves and Horm-Winegard (1991) assert that "the opportunity to visit one's spouse proved important to ensuring individual and marital happiness while commuting" (p. 215). Thus, both commuter marriages and premarital romantic relationships require visitation for the perpetuation of the relationship.

Frequency of visits, however, was not believed to be an effective coping strategy by all researchers. Guldner and Swensen (1995) found that quantity of time spent together was not essential to relationship satisfaction, trust, intimacy, and commitment. Similarly, Stafford and Reske (1990) claim that frequent interactions can be associated with the demise of a relationship. Because they were also studying idealization in LDRs, this finding was consistent with their hypothesis that long-distance couples were expected to hold more idealized images of their partner; with an increase in interaction, the idealization of the partner will dissipate, thus causing disillusionment (Stafford & Reske).

In one of the earliest articles regarding commuter marriages, Kirschner and Walum (1978) suggest that the "day-to-day routines and the habits of being together may erode the intensity of feeling between the couple" (p. 517). They further conclude that being together--in physical proximity--is not a necessity for emotional intimacy; rather, it is the intensity of the interaction, not the frequency, that leads to greater intimacy. They also claim, however, that the closer the geographic distance or the less travel time required, the less strain on a couple

(Kirschner & Wallum). Thus, it may be the way in which the couple views the separation that determines their level of satisfaction. Regardless of effect, frequency of visits is seen as one type of coping strategy used by LDRs for maintenance.

Stephen (1986) claims that if either verbal or nonverbal communication is restricted, the progress of the relationships depends directly on the non-restrained channel; in LDRs, that channel is the verbal channel. Because of increased reliance on verbal communication, LDRs must rely heavily on mediated communication. The literature identifies letters, phone calls, diaries, and tapes as frequently used communication mediums that alleviate the challenges of LDRs, with phone calls being the most important (Gerstel & Gross, 1983, 1984; Carpenter & Knox, 1986; Holt & Stone, 1988; Kirschner & Walum, 1978). Conversely, the economic drain of phone calls may cause problems and even contribute to the frustrations of life; telephone conversations can not fully substitute for face-to-face interaction (Gerstel & Gross, 1984).

One medium not yet researched in depth is electronic mail (e-mail). With increased access to the internet, e-mail is becoming an inexpensive way to communicate on a regular basis. Research of Gerstel and Gross (1983) and Vanderslice and Rice (1992) indicates that one of the things commuter couples miss most is informal conversation--the trivial everyday talk. The increased use of mediated communication may allow more opportunity for this everyday talk. Interestingly, whereas mediated communication was mentioned as a coping

strategy, few direct links with variables such as satisfaction were drawn within the studies (Carpenter & Knox, 1986; Gerstel & Gross, 1983).

Another coping strategy mentioned, but not discussed in depth, is quantity of communication. Gerstel and Gross (1984) report that 42% of commuter couples call each other at least once a day, while another 30% call each other every other day. Like frequency of visits, more frequent communication reaffirms "coupleness" (Kirschner & Walum, 1978). Some researchers have looked at the number of hours spent on the telephone as a measure of frequent interaction (Carpenter & Knox, 1986; Holt & Stone, 1988), yet did not correlate quantity alone with other variables. For college-aged premarital couples, whose financial resources may be limited, making numerous telephone contacts may be expensive. Frequent phone and travel expenses may cause more stress than they alleviate.

Researchers studying commuter marriages cite high income as a resource that facilitates communication and alleviates stress (Gerstel & Gross, 1985; Maines, 1993; Winfield, 1984). In fact, Gerstel and Gross (1984) claim that low income "precludes even the possibility of commuting" (p. 148). More research needs to be done to support quantity of communication as a separate communication coping strategy; the content of communication may be the crucial coping strategy, not the quantity.

Holt and Stone (1988) combined communication quantity with a quality measure to create an overall measure of verbal communication; they found it to

be a satisfying coping strategy. Their discussion of the study's results, however, only emphasizes quality communication. Therefore, quantity alone may not be enough. Kirschner and Walum (1978) agree, stating the "quality of interaction may be more relevant to intimacy than the quantity" (p. 518). Conversely, though empathic communication and deep talk can foster intimacy, it is the informal conversation and shared daily stories that can maintain a couple (Duck, 1994). Quality communication as a strategy may be something defined by the couple and not research.

Some coping strategies that have been identified are not generalizable to all couples or both sexes. For instance, Holt and Stone (1988) mentioned imaginal communication as another coping strategy. They hypothesized that imaginal communication would be used most frequently by individuals who prefer to process information visually. Investigative results support the researchers' hypothesis when assessing frequencies of daydreaming and affective responses to the daydreams. They did not, however, inquire about content of the daydream, potentially an important variable when discussing imaginal communication. Because too much daydreaming is negatively correlated with school performance, moderation was recommended when using this coping strategy (Holt & Stone, 1988).

Two other strategies that have been identified are dependent on the sex of the participant. Carpenter and Knox (1986) examined the different coping strategies used by men and women in LDRs. They found that commitment to the

future was used frequently by women to maintain the relationship, however, the researchers did not clarify what type of commitment. Was it a commitment to future engagements or to marriage? For men, dating others was identified as a coping strategy; the researchers did not define what "dating others" meant. Was it for physical pleasure or for companionship? Similarly, they did not mention if the LDR partner was aware that their significant other was "dating others".

To summarize, additional research is needed to better extend our understanding of LDRs. Based on Holt and Stone's (1988) research, combining time and distance apart is more instrumental for identifying what constitutes long-distance relationships. Recognizing that both variables play a significant role in LDRs may allow for more consistency in future research and may increase our knowledge of how couples cope in LDRs.

Although the seven communication coping strategies derived from the above mentioned studies--frequency of visits, quantity of communication, quality of communication, mediated communication, imaginal communication, commitment to the future, and dating others--may aid couples in sustaining a relationship throughout separation, and although each of these strategies originate in the LDR literature, many of them may be used by proximal couples to maintain their relationships as well. Thus, by investigating the uniqueness of LDRs, the potential exists to increase the knowledge base concerning couples in both long-distance and proximal relationships.

The previous literature review examined dialectical theory, relational maintenance and LDRs. Dialectical theory provides a foundation for studying the ways that long-distance couples maintain their relationships. The tensions caused by contradictions act as the stimulus for relational change. These tensions may be more heightened in LDRs, especially within the internal dialectics of openness-closedness, novelty-predictability, and autonomy-connection. Couples will enact different strategies to sustain the relationship through times of flux in order to keep the relationship at desired levels. Both the LDR and maintenance literatures have sought to discover tactics individuals use to maintain relationships, but have yet to combine forces to create a typology of maintenance strategies useful for LDRs. This study hopes to achieve this end by identifying the strategies used by couples involved in long-distance relationships.

Rationale and Research Questions

Although existing research has identified multiple strategies that allow relational partners to maintain their relationships, most of the relational maintenance literature has failed to differentiate between proximal and long-distance relationships. This lack of attention to a potentially confounding variable limits the usefulness of existing maintenance typologies, particularly when attempting to understand the LDR phenomenon. Our understanding of LDRs also is limited by maintenance perspectives that do not acknowledge constant changes which often occur in the life of a relationship, or do not recognize that relationships frequently develop in nonlinear or nontraditional ways.

As Rohlfing (1995) asserts, in order to better understand relationships, especially LDRs, researchers need to "consider ways that these relationships support and challenge existing social scientific theories" of interpersonal communication (p. 194). By identifying the commonalities between LDRs and PRs, by focusing on the unique aspects of LDRs, and by using dialectical theory as a foundation for understanding relationship maintenance, the current investigation both "supports" and "challenges" the communication research on relational maintenance. Thus, this project serves as an avenue for extending our knowledge base about relational maintenance dynamics.

Considering the increasingly transient nature of our society, extending our understanding of relational maintenance strategies, particularly in LDRs, has not only theoretical, but practical implications. Current employment trends in the United States suggest that job relocation will continue to effect the labor force as we approach the next century (Eisenberg & Goodall, 1993). Consequently, the number of people attempting to survive the long-distance relationship phenomenon will continue to increase.

Beyond extending our theoretical understanding of relational maintenance, this study, then, may serve as a resource for both organizations as they assist those who are coping with separation, and for individuals attempting to understand the dynamics of their own long-distance relationships. To this end, the following research question is advanced:

RQ1: What are the maintenance tactics used by people involved in long-distance relationships?

Additionally, relational maintenance literature and the coping strategies identified within the LDR literature complement each other, suggesting some overlap between the two approaches (e.g., mediated communication). We must question, however, to what degree LDRs and PRs differ from each other. In order to address the issue of differences between LDRs and PRs, the following research questions are posited:

RQ2: Are the maintenance tactics used by relational partners different for LDRs and PRs?

RQ3: Is there a relationship among the different maintenance tactics employed by LDRs?

Finally, because there is much inconsistency in the literature pertaining to the overall satisfaction level of LDRs and PRs, and to the satisfaction associated with specific maintenance strategies, we should extend our understanding of relational satisfaction. To address this issue, the following research question is proposed:

RQ4: In LDRs and PRs, is there a relationship between maintenance tactics used and perceptions of satisfaction with a relationship?

CHAPTER 2

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

A key issue to consider when conducting research is the relationship between theory and data during the process of inquiry (Poole & McPhee, 1985). One mode of inquiry that recognizes the theory-data connection is grounded theory, a process in which the researcher goes "directly to the phenomenon itself and develops concepts, hypotheses, and theoretical propositions from direct experience with the data" (Poole & McPhee, p. 108); thus, the theory emerges (i.e., is inductively derived) from observation.

Following the example of Canary et al. (1993), this study used an inductive approach (i.e., participant accounts) to discover ways in which romantic relationships are maintained. Canary and Stafford (1994) state that "an important future direction [in research] is to discover under what conditions and in which relational types partners successfully employ maintenance strategies and routines" (p. 19). Thus, the study sought information concerning the following research question:

RQ: What are the ways in which college students maintain their romantic relationships?

In the sections that follow the procedures used to answer the research question are described and the results of the analysis are discussed.

Method and Procedures

In order to identify ways in which college students maintain romantic relationships, descriptive data--detailing self-reported maintenance strategies--was obtained in the form of written essays. When all essays were gathered, a qualitative analysis was conducted to discover recurring themes (i.e., the maintenance strategies) in the student responses.

Participants

One hundred students enrolled in an undergraduate survey communication course were recruited to participate in the project. Students were offered classroom credit for their participation; no student was penalized for non-participation. Responses were received from 78 students; eight responses were discarded because the participants did not follow directions, leaving a total of 70 subjects for the study (response rate 70%). Of those participating, 47.1% (n = 33) identified their relationship as long-distance, with exactly half (n = 35) of the respondents writing about a current as opposed to a past relationship. Although generalizability is not an objective of qualitative inquiry, because the course from which subjects were recruited fulfills a core curriculum requirement at the university and thus includes many types of students, it was believed the sample was representative of the university population.

Procedure

Prior to the collection of data, the researcher presented a brief introduction to the study. Students then received a two page handout consisting of a consent

form and an answer sheet for their essay (see Appendix B). The only requirement for participation in the study was that the individual had to have been involved in a romantic relationship at some point in their life. Thus, because the sample was not limited to individuals currently involved in a romantic relationship, multiple perspectives of relational maintenance are represented in the data.

The answer sheet was composed of two sections. In the first section, the participants were asked to answer three demographic questions to discover: (a) the participants' sex (male or female), (b) the type of relationship they were describing (LDR or PR), and (c) the relationship status (current or past). In the second section, participants were instructed to describe all the ways in which they maintain(ed) their romantic relationship--a method similar to the survey techniques utilized by Canary et al (1993), Bell, Daly and Stafford (1987), and Dindia and Baxter (1987). Respondents were instructed to use only the space provided, and to focus only on their current or most recent relationship, thereby providing consistency among responses.

Data Analysis

Lindlof (1995) states that in qualitative inquiry, ". . . the concepts should grow naturally out of an interaction between the kinds of action noted in the field and the theoretical ideas with which the analyst began the study" (p. 217). Unlike previous research (Dainton & Stafford, 1993), no established strategies were used as a guide to code the responses; the codes came directly from the

responses. Thus, the researcher attempted to avoid imposing "an external system on the data" (Lindlof, p. 217).

The 70 pages of narration were coded using the constant comparison method of analysis (Lindlof, 1995). Following the recommendation of Lindlof (1995), a preliminary reading of the responses acquainted the researcher with the participant responses. Next, specific strategies were identified and coded based on perceived similarities and differences within and among the responses (i.e., constant comparison was conducted) (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lindlof, 1995). The constant comparison method is a three step process. The first stage, "comparing incidents applicable to each category", requires the researcher to "continually compare [new data] with ones that have already been grouped in the same category in order to determine goodness of fit" (Lindlof, 1995, p. 233). In the "integrating categories and their properties" phase, the researcher specifies rules that account for particular categories' properties. At this stage, exemplars are identified to illustrate the categories. Finally, the "determining the theory" stage signifies that new data is not necessary to support a category. At this phase, the researcher can begin to reduce the categories or properties of each category as coded (Lindlof).

Following the initial coding by the researcher of both LDR and PR narratives, an independent reader read selected samples of coded responses to verify and clarify the distinctions among categories. Two independent coders were then supplied a code book (see Appendix C) and the 33 pages of LDR

responses. Because the second part of this investigation requires a scale of

LDR maintenance tactics, only the 33 pages from the LDRs were used to

evaluate strategies.

A total of 213 individual tactics were identified by the coders. These tactics

were categorized as nine unique maintenance strategies: (a) mediated

communication (e.g., telephone calls), (b) conversation acts (e.g., talking with

your partner about anything), (c) future thought (e.g., implicitly or explicitly

planning for the future), (d) expression of feelings or emotions, including

nonverbal (e.g., "holding hands" or "snuggling") and verbal tactics (e.g., "telling

her that I love her"), (e) stimulation (e.g., strategies that cause excitement, such

as "good sex" and "having fun"), (f) other-orientation (e.g., "I always went out of

the way to do nice things for him" and "shared belongings"), (g) together time

(e.g., dates, visits), (h) other-time (e.g.,"having time apart"), and (I) shared values

(e.g., trust, religion, respect, etc.). Agreement among the coders was 83.23%,

indicating that the categories were reliable.

Results

Nine categories emerged from data analysis: (a) mediated

communication, (b) future thought, (c) other-orientation, (d) together time, (e)

other time, (f) values, (g) communication acts, (h) stimulation, and (i) expression.

One should note, however, that the respondents did not limit themselves to using

the categories independent of each other; oftentimes, they used strategies in

conjunction with each other. For example, one couple would "call each other

collect and say 'I love you' when [the operator] asked for the person's name and then hang up", utilizing "mediated communication" to "express their emotions". Thus, although the strategies were mutually exclusive, they were used in conjunction with one another as effective maintenance techniques.

Mediated Communication

One of the most frequently mentioned strategies is mediated communication, or communication through means other than face-to-face. Previous research has indicated mediated communication is a strategy used to maintain relationships (Canary, Stafford, Hause, & Wallace, 1993; Carpenter & Knox, 1986; Dainton & Stafford, 1993; Gerstel & Gross, 1983; Holt & Stone, 1988). This strategy supports Stephen's (1986) claim that if one channel of communication is restricted, the couple will turn to nonrestrained channels. In addition, by using mediated communication, couples can perform other strategies such as communication acts and expressing feelings, fears, or concerns to the partner.

The various modes of mediated communication reflected in the analysis included sending cards, letters, notes or pictures through the mail, making telephone calls, and using e-mail and on-line chat. Often, the respondents would indicate the frequency with which they used particular tactics. For example, one person explained, "we wrote letters one or two times per week and talked on the phone three times per week". Expense did appear to be an issue when selecting the mode of communication. Many respondents wrote comments such as "we

continued to. . . have very expensive phone conversations" and "we would try to split the phone bill by taking turns calling each other". To defray costs, some participants utilized computer mediated communication, as indicated by one person's response, "since he lives in Mississippi, which is ten hours away, we mainly use computers to communicate with a weekly phone call."

Future Thought

The second category, future thought, relates to a focus or hope for the future. A few people indicated using this strategy directly. For example, referring to having "dreams" and "concentrating on future plans instead of being apart" were employed to cope with distance. Most of the participants indirectly referred to the future by planning on "special times" together. Planning for upcoming visits also seemed to be a key tactic related to future thought. Additionally, knowing "[she] was coming back so the relationship wasn't as strained as it could have been" was extremely beneficial to one participant. Carpenter and Knox (1986) and Stafford and Reske (1990) claim that commitment to the future is a strategy used by individuals to sustain their long-distance relationship. In the Stafford and Canary (1991) and Dainton and Stafford (1993) typologies, the assurance category includes discussion of the future as a substrategy.

Other Orientation

Other orientation is the third strategy identified from the analysis. As mentioned, other orientation is a strategy intended to bolster the partner or the relationship. Being other-oriented means both sensing and recognizing the needs

of the other person in the relationship, or the needs of the couple as a whole. Therefore, the person goes beyond their own gratification for the sake of the other or the couple. Other researchers have labeled strategies similar to this phenomena as balance (Ayres, 1983) or positivity (Canary, Stafford, Hause, & Wallace, 1993; Dainton & Stafford, 1993; Stafford & Canary, 1991).

Within this strategy are several tactics, each one demonstrating the participant being other-oriented. For example, one person stated "I do favors for them when they need help and they do the same for me". Besides doing favors, others claimed to "give more than you take" and that they were "constantly learning how to adapt to be the kind of person and do the things we know would please the other, while keeping our individuality intact". "Supporting the other person's interests and ideals" also exemplifies other-orientation.

Another aspect of other-orientation derived from the responses was "practicing in depth listening" or "understanding the other persons point of view." These strategies were especially important during disagreements. One woman stated that "we didn't raise our voices when we argued, we talked things out rationally". Others agree, stating repeatedly that they "always think reasonable [sic] and not to let anger overcome [their] minds" and they "don't go to bed upset with each other". On the other hand, not being other oriented potentially caused the breakup of one couple. As one respondent claimed,

We talked over our situation, the difficulties and frustrations. While he felt left out, I had thrown my energies into other things and had left him out.

Four weeks later, I couldn't and he couldn't get away [to visit], so we

missed our meeting.

When the couple moved apart, one member changed while the other did not. The

person who left was not attending to the needs of her partner. This caused the

other partner to feel estranged and, as a result, the relationship ended a short

time later.

Together Time

Together time, or just "just being together", was the most frequently

mentioned strategy. This is supported in existing literature (Carpenter & Knox,

1986; Holt & Stone, 1988). When discussing commuter marriages, Gerstel and

Gross (1983) submit that commuting is least stressful when the couple can visit

regularly on the weekends. Joint activities (Canary et al., 1993; Dainton &

Stafford, 1993) and togetherness (Dindia & Baxter, 1987) are also mentioned in

the maintenance strategy literature.

Those participants involved in LDRs mentioned visiting "as often as

possible" as an important way to maintain their relationships. One participant

indicated that she "saved money to fly (about every three months)", while another

said that she "went to Lubbock two times each semester and he came home

three to four times, plus one month at Christmas". A male respondent summed it

up well stating, "when we actually met on occasion it was great because we both

missed each other and were glad to see each other."

Other Time

Giving each other "space" also can become an issue for couples; too much time together can cause problems. Dindia and Baxter (1987) mention a similar strategy: seeking/allowing autonomy. Though relatively few people mentioned this strategy, it appeared to be an important issue to those needing time apart. For example, one person said that though they can not see each other every day, they are more passionate now than when they did see each other daily; thus, space worked to benefit the couple.

All of the respondents who specified other time as a strategy were involved in proximal relationships; no long-distance partners mentioned this strategy. Yet, several participants who wrote about previous LDRs stated that when the distance ended and they were living together in the same city, their relationship ended because they could not find the balance in "together time" and "other time". Nevertheless, although other time is recognized as a maintenance strategy, it is not a strategy identifiable in long-distance relationships.

Values

The sixth strategy, values, refers to relational partners sharing the same or similar value systems. Individually, the issues comprising the values category are difficult to define; many of the respondents simply listed values such as "respect" and "patience". Others would describe a situation in which the value was a central issue to the members of a relationship. For example, a woman wrote "we have God as our foundation to always fall back on. Even when love fails, God is

beneath us to hold us together. . ." It is obvious that the woman felt religion, a shared value for the couple, was important.

Trust seemed to be a major part of the values strategy because "without trust, you do not have a relationship". Others mentioned being "faithful and loyal to the other person" or having "a complete trust in the other person". One person, referring to her LDR, claimed that "although we had a really good relationship it was very hard to stay close when we weren't together. . . we were very young so we were not very trusting of one another." Although the couple shared the value of trust, maturity affected their ability to use the common value as a maintenance tactic.

<u>Conversation Acts</u>

Conversation acts are the actual use of conversation to maintain the relationship. These acts are very similar to the "communication strategy" category mentioned by Dindia and Baxter (1987) and to "quality communication" indicated by Holt and Stone (1988). Participants mentioned the importance of having "deep talk", "meaningful conversations", and "open conversations" that go beyond the realm of daily "chit chat". Others suggested that just the act of talking itself was important. The entire response of one person related to communication, showing, in her opinion, the importance of this strategy:

As ordinary as this may seem, we maintain our relationship through communication. When either he or I have something to say, we say it. We

learned through our past mistakes of not saying what we feel that communication is essential. He is my best friend and I tell him everything. For her, it is through communication that the couple expressed their feelings and built a foundation. In this respect, communication was _the_ most important strategy.

One of the primary conversation acts described was the discussion of problems, especially "directly after the problem occurs". Many felt compelled to discuss a troublesome issue "almost immediately so it doesn't fester and build up" or before it "turns into a huge fight." Clarity was also important when solving problems. According to one respondent, "we try to be as understandable [sic] as possible. . . we always think passionately during our struggles, and it always resolves the problems instantly." Another respondent tried to make sure "[their] communications [sic] were not cluttered with unneeded information, petty arguments, and key words such as 'anyways' and 'whatever'." These respondents realized the importance of solving disputes through clear communication during discussion.

<u>Stimulation</u>

The strategy of stimulation is defined as actions or activities that cause excitement in the relationship (e.g., the "spark" to light the fire). Some participants received this spark from the element of surprise, such as finding jewelry hidden in a backpack or roses in the car. Others found it in more intimate

ways, such as sex. Two types of stimulation strategies were consistently mentioned in the responses: (a) sexual and (b) playful stimulation.

Several participants commented on the physical aspect of relational intimacy, identifying tactics such as "being physical with the touch", "good sex", and "making out". One of the most striking examples of physical stimulation was the following:

> One of the things that spiked our interest was the physical aspect. Every single closeness or non-intercourse sexual experience was literally enthralling. Each kiss kept me returning. . . Simple conversation, kisses, physical touch all were the basis for our mutual attraction and thus extended the relationship.

Besides physical stimulation, several participants indicated that play was a maintenance strategy. One person wrote, "Have fun with one another! When both are busy, it's easy to not make time to have fun. Make time! When the fun is gone, what do you have?" In other words, having fun gave the relationship the excitement needed to help keep the couple together. Similarly, other people stressed laughter as important. For example,

> Another way we maintain our relationship is through laughing. We have both made each other mad on many occasions but we don't dredge up old problems, we laugh about them. We are always sarcastic with each other, but in a playful way. It keeps things light-hearted and fun.

Laughter was not only a way to maintain the relationship, but also a way to release tension during stressful times, thus functioning in two beneficial ways.

<u>Expression</u>

The final category derived from the surveys was expression. This category is closely related to other strategies such as communication acts, other orientation and stimulation—a prime example of how tactics are often employed simultaneously. The primary distinction in this theme, however, is the outward expression of one's opinion or feelings about your partner. For example, though previous research used labels such as "physical affection" to describe sexual and expressive acts (Bell, Daly & Gonzales, 1987), there was a clear distinction in the data between the "stimulating" and emotional aspects of physical intimacy. Instead of specifying sexual intimacy, some people enjoyed just "snuggling" or "holding hands". For one person in particular, she enjoyed being able to "sit and cuddle. . . while talking or watching t.v."

Concerning verbal expression, though saying "I love you" may occur during a conversation, the main emphasis is not on the process of saying the words, but on their meaning. One person mentioned, "I do not liberally use the words 'I love you'. I use them only when I mean it so he will not think I am just saying words". Once again, for this person the statement was more powerful when said in moderation. In addition, although complements bolster the other person's esteem (e.g. "I make statements that my wife is beautiful and sexy"), thereby being other-oriented, the complement itself is an expression of the

person's opinions about the partner. Likewise, one individual reaffirmed her relationship, by "reminding [the partner] how important the other person is to you". In this respect, expression is similar to assurances, defined as "covertly and overtly assuring each other of the importance of the relationship" (Canary et al, 1993, p. 9).

Summary

This preliminary study investigated the ways in which college students maintain their romantic relationships. Though the categories identified suggest similarities with maintenance strategies identified in previous literature, the study extends our understanding of maintenance strategies through its emphasis on LDRs. For example, although most romantic partners may possess hope for the future of their relationships, the intricacies of what future thought may mean is clarified when considering the long-distance phenomenon.

Additionally, by utilizing the respondents own words to describe relational maintenance, we are able to establish the unique nature of maintenance tactics, particularly in long-distance relationships. When a romantic partner is able to describe how he/she is stimulated by his/her partner or is able to express the specific conversational acts used to facilitate relational growth, our understanding of relationship maintenance is extended.

To this end, this analysis is used to create a survey instrument that will deductively assess the maintenance strategies of LDRs. The next chapter

describes the procedures used in the deductive study. It is followed by the

chapters presenting the results of the analysis and the discussion of the findings.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Based on the qualitative analysis and on previous literature, this study was conducted to identify the strategies used by long-distance romantic partners to maintain their relationships. In the section that follows, the procedures for conducting the quantitative investigation are provided. First, the participants used for the study are described. Next, the construction of the survey instrument is discussed. The third section provides a discussion of the data collection procedures and the final section presents the methods of data analysis.

<u>Participants</u>

Participants for the study included undergraduate students enrolled in an introductory communication course--who were currently involved in a romantic relationship--and their romantic partners. The course is a core curriculum option for all university students. Thus, although the sample was not randomly selected, because the students reflect all undergraduate classifications (e.g., sophomore) and multiple academic majors, the sample was believed to be representative of the college population.

Following a brief description of the project, 333 students claimed to be eligible to participate, providing an overall subject pool of 666 possible

Table 1

Demographic Information

Demographic Information	LD	PR	Total
Participants			
Number of Participants	143	236	379
Males	72	118	190
Females	71	118	189
Average Age (in years)			
Males	21.31	22.43	21.67
Females	20.28	21.17	20.73
Average Time with Partner (in months)			
Males	23.07	23.50	22.29
Females	19.72	23.24	21.48

participants; 258 subjects were involved in an LDR, while 408 subjects were involved in a PR. Responses were received from 379 individuals (55% response rate), including143 long distance relational participants and 236 proximal relational participants.

Subjects included 190 males and 189 females with a mean age of 21.45 (range 16 to 45 years). The average length of time they had been involved in their romantic relationship was slightly under two years (23.41 months) with a range of 1 to 283 months (see Table 1). Students received discovery learning

points (i.e., participation points) for taking part in the study. The students were instructed to write their name on the consent form only; a code number was assigned to the survey instrument itself. To insure anonymity, the consent forms were separated from the survey instrument upon receipt by the researcher.

Instrumentation and Procedure

Scale Construction

The development of the initial survey instrument was a three step process. As described in Chapter Two, the first step involved qualitative data collection and produced nine maintenance categories: (a) mediated communication, (b) conversation acts, (c) future thought, (d) expression, (e) stimulation, (f) other-orientation, (g) together time, (h) other time, and (I) values.

Second, to create dependable items, the wording of existing scales (Ayres, 1983; Stafford & Canary, 1993) was reviewed, thereby modeling the potential scale items after previously identified, reliable instruments. With the exception of four tactics (i.e., audio and video recordings, negative tactics, and diaries) that were identified from the maintenance literature (e.g., Gerstel & Gross, 1983), all items were derived from the qualitative analysis. The qualitative category of "Other Time" was omitted during scale construction because all of the respondents who mentioned this category were involved in proximal relationships. A total of 38 items representing eight strategies from the qualitative analysis comprised the maintenance strategy portion of the survey.

Eight items representing "mediated communication" were included in the scale: (a) "I call my partner on a regular basis", (b) "I send electronic mail (e-mail) to my partner on regular basis", (c) "I mail letters to my partner to stay in contact", (d) "I keep a diary and periodically give it to my partner to read", (e) "I send cards to my partner when I can", (f) "I record audio tapes and give them to my partner", (g) "I use on-line chat to communicate with my partner", and (h) "I record video tapes and give them to my partner" (see Appendix D). "Future thought" was represented by five tactics : (a) "I discuss the future of our relationship with my partner", (b) "I concentrate on future plans instead of focusing on when we are apart", (c) "I plan when my partner and I can see one another", (d) "I plan when my partner and I can next talk with one another", and (e) "I set aside specific times each week to interact with my partner" (see Appendix D).

"I try to take trips with my partner whenever possible", "I spend as much time with my partner as possible", and "I spend romantic times (e.g., dates, alone time) with my partner" were the three items representing "together time". The "shared values" category was indicated by only one tactic: "I discuss issues such as honesty and respect with my partner" (see Appendix D). "Other orientation" contained eight items that emphasized a focus on one's partner. For instance, complementing one's partner, staying involved in his/her interests, doing favors for the partner, and buying gifts for one's partner were tactics describing other orientation. "I try to make every moment count when I am with my partner", "I share the expenses of maintaining our relationship (e.g., phone calls, travel, etc.)

with my partner", "I support my partner during his/her decision-making" and "I listen carefully to my partner when he/she talks", also reflected other orientation (see Appendix D).

Six items were used to describe "conversation acts". They included: (a) "I try to resolve problems with my partner as soon as they occur", (b) "I have deep, meaningful conversations about what we can do to improve our relationship with my partner", (c) "I talk with my partner about the day-to-day activities of his/her life", (d) "I let my partner know when I am in a bad mood to avoid conflict", (e) "I openly tell my partner when I am happy with the relationship", and (f) "I openly tell my partner when I am dissatisfied with our relationship" (see Appendix D).

Items relating to the category "expression" included three tactics that described the use of emotional affirmations in the relationship: (a) "I show physical affection (e.g., hugs, cuddles, kisses) other than sexual intimacy to my partner", (b) "I often say 'I love you' to my partner", and (c) "I tell my partner intimate sentiments (e.g., I miss you)". "Stimulation" also was represented by three items: (a) "I am sexually intimate with my partner whenever possible", (b) "I joke with my partner", and (c) "I find fun and creative ways to interact with my partner". Additionally, the item "I argue with my partner about trivial things" was added in order to address the existence of negative maintenance strategies identified in previous research (Dindia & Baxter, 1987).

The third step of scale construction involved the testing of the survey items. Prior to the distribution of the survey instrument, a pilot study was

conducted to assess the validity of the tactics to be included in the survey instrument. To address potential overlap between the strategies of the qualitative study, the eight categories were collapsed into four strategies: (a) strategies involving verbal or nonverbal expressions of thoughts, feeling, or emotions (i.e., conversation acts, other-orientation, verbal expression, humor, and values) were combined into one category called "communicating intimacy"; (b) physical expression, physical stimulation, and together time--strategies that require being together in the same location--were combined into one category called "together time", while (c) "future thought" and (d) "mediated communication" remained specific categories.

The wording of the instrument for the pilot study was condensed to reflect only the core part of the tactic (see Appendix E). For instance, instead of saying "I send electronic mail (e-mail) to my partner on a regular basis", the statement read "e-mail". The survey was distributed to students in five classes at two mid-sized Southcentral Universities. Only surveys from participants either currently involved in an LDR or involved in one within the past year were used, producing 29 usable responses. Respondents were asked to indicate the frequency with which they used each tactic. Results from the pilot study indicated that participants used all tactics previously identified except "IRC On-Line Chat"; thus, this tactic was omitted from the final scale (see Table 2).

Table 2

Frequency Table for Pilot Study

Category	Number of Participants	%	Times Used per Month	$\bar{x}$
Mediated Communication				
Telephone calls	26	89.7	395-399	15.34
E-mail	8	27.6	133	16.62
Cards	22	75.9	56-57	28.5
Letters	18	62.1	97-98	5.44
On Line Chat (IRC)	0	0	0	0
Send Pictures	12	41.4	24	2
Audio Tapes	3	10.3	3 (per year)	1
Video Tapes	1	3.4	1 (per year)	1
Diaries	4	13.8	13 (per year)	3.25
Communicating Intimacy				
Problem Resolution	27	93.1	188-191	7.07
Argue	21	72.4	104-105	5
Saying Intimate Sentiments	28	96.6	578-579	20.67
Complements	28	96.6	360	12.86
Romanticism	28	96.6	228	8.14
Give Gifts	21	72.4	35-37	1.76

Frequency Table for Pilot Study (cont.).

Category	Number of Participants	%	Times Used per Month	$\bar{x}$
Communicating Intimacy cont.				
Listen to partner	27	93.1	387	14.33
Share Expenses	21	72.4	154	7.33
Do Favors	23	79.3	177	7.69
Be Positive	28	96.6	409	14.60
Act Supportive	27	93.1	373	13.82
Joke with partner	28	96.6	453	16.18
Express Values				
Spirituality	20	69.0	102	5.1
Respect	25	86.2	323	12.92
Trust	25	86.2	339	13.56
Honesty	25	86.2	346	13.84
Talk about day-to-day activities	27	93.1	455	16.85
Meaningful Conversations	28	96.6	258	9.21
Future Focus				
Marriage	15	51.7	98-99	6.60
Plan next conversation	27	93.1	306-307	11.37
Living together in the same city	19	65.5	153	9.21

Frequency Table for Pilot Study (cont.)

Category	Number of Participants	%	Times Used per Month	$\bar{x}$
Future Focus cont.				
Plan next visit	27	93.1	198	7.33
Together Time				
Visits	26	89.7	176-177	6.81
Dates	22	75.9	75-77	3.50
Trips	14	48.3	27-30	2.14
Participation in other's interests	22	75.9	99	4.50
Physical Expression				
Hugs	27	93.1	354-364	13.48
Sex	19	65.5	68-71	3.74
Kiss	26	89.7	361-362	13.92
Cuddle	25	86.2	277-288	11.52

Note. Percentages were calculated based on 29 total possible responses. Means were calculated based on the number of participants claiming to use the response and the number of times (sum total) the tactic was used per month or year.

Once a draft of the scale had been created, the instrument was tested for face and content validity. After all recommendations and corrections were made, the survey instrument was finalized and ready for distribution.

The final survey instrument. The survey instrument contained three sections: (a) demographic information, (b) maintenance strategy items, and (c) a section for open-ended responses about relational maintenance (see Appendix E). The demographic section asked for the participant's sex (male or female), age, and length of time dating their current partner (in months). The scale portion consisted of 38 items, each utilizing a five point Likert-type scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. Many of the maintenance scales utilize this method (e.g., Stafford & Canary, 1991). The general directions for the scale were created based on the Stafford and Canary (1991) scale and on Babies' (1989) recommendations for survey construction. At the conclusion of the maintenance items, an additional question was asked in order to determine the satisfaction level of the participants. The question asked the participant to rate his/her level of satisfaction with his/her relationship on a scale of one to ten, with ten being the most highly satisfied and one the least satisfied.

The open-ended statement allowed participants to comment on any particular item or to offer additional ways to maintain a relationship that were not listed on the scale. The statement read: "Please feel free to comment on any particular item, or to provide additional ways you maintain your relationship that are not listed on this scale".

Data Collection

Once the pilot study had been conducted and the survey instrument had been created, the data collection process began. First, permission was obtained

for the use of human subjects by the University of North Texas Institutional Review Board (see Appendix F). Second, the instructors of the introductory communication course sections were asked to provide a preliminary count of students interested in participating in the study. Third, the researcher met individually with the recitation leaders (i.e., instructors) to train them on administration procedures. Instructors were told to ask the participant in which type of relationship they are involved (i.e., LDR or PR) and then to give them the packet corresponding to that relationship type. The survey packets contained the directions to the participant, the informed consent forms, the survey instruments for both the student and his/her partner; and, two envelopes stamped with the researcher's address and a space for the student participant to write his/her name and the name of his/her instructor. When the surveys were completed and returned, the empty envelopes were given to each teacher in order to award class participation points (see Appendices D, G, H).

The top of the first page of the packet differed depending on the relationship type. For proximal partners, the top line had the letters "PR"; for the long-distance partners, the top line had the letters "LDR". This allowed the researcher to easily differentiate between the participants. Next to the code associated with relationship type (i.e., PR or LDR), students were instructed to write in the last four digits of their social security number on both their copy and their partner's copy of the survey. In addition, they were instructed to write an A on the survey they were to complete and a B on their partner's survey. This

information was used to identify the individual surveys and differentiate between the student participant and his/her partner. To ensure anonymity, consent forms were separated from survey responses immediately upon receipt (for problem concerning data collection procedure, see Appendix J).

Respondents were provided three ways to return the surveys. First, the students could give the envelopes directly to their teacher. Second, a drop box was provided on campus. Third, because the envelopes had the researcher's address, the participants could mail their responses to the researcher. The LDR participants were provided one stamp to help defray the costs of mailing. The students' partners additionally were provided a blue sticker to affix on the seal of the envelope, to ensure their partner did not access their responses.

Method of Analysis

Several methods of analysis, such as t-tests, correlations, frequency distributions, and means were used to address the research questions. Frequency distributions, percentages, means, and standard deviations were calculated in order to establish a descriptive base for the category. Comparative analysis was conducted to assess differences between LDR and PR respondents, while correlations were calculated to evaluate relationships among survey items, and while factor analysis was used for scale construction.

To answer research question one, "What are the maintenance tactics used by people involved in long-distance relationships?", frequency distributions, percentages, and mean responses for each survey item were calculated (for

long-distance respondents only). These statistical analyses verified the strategies and tactics identified in the preliminary study, thereby identifying the tactics LDRs use to maintain their relationships.

The second research question, "Are the maintenance tactics used by relational partners different for LDRs and PRs?", was addressed by calculating t-tests for each survey item between LDR and PR responses. A .05 level of statistical significance was used to establish significance (Williams, 1992). The Aspin Welch t-test was used in order to address unequal numbers in comparison groups.

For the third research question, "Is there a relationship among the different maintenance tactics employed by LDRs?", two methods of analysis were employed. First, Pearson product moment correlations were conducted to establish what, if any, relationship exists among the individual survey items (Williams, 1992). A .05 level of significance was established to determine the significance of a correlation. Additionally, factor analysis was conducted on the LDR responses in order to determine if the tactics cluster into particular groups. The analysis was limited to only the LDR participants because the scale is geared toward that target group.

For the fourth research question, "In LDRs and PRs, is there a relationship between the maintenance tactics used and perceptions of satisfaction with a relationship?", Pearson product moment correlations were

conducted to evaluate the relationship between tactics of maintenance and respondents' perceptions of relational satisfaction (Williams, 1992).

In order to establish scale reliability, Chronbach's alpha was calculated on all survey items and on the factors emerging from the factor analysis (Williams, 1992). The overall reliability for the scale was .9013, with reliabilities for the individual items ranging from .8953 to .9085. Additionally, the factors identified from the factor analysis had reliabilities ranging from .6209 to .7930.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The current study identifies the ways that long-distance relational partners

maintain their romantic relationships. Specifically, the four research questions

proposed for this study are answered based on data collected with the survey

instrument. This chapter describes the results of data analysis conducted for

each research question.

Research Question One

What are the maintenance tactics used by people

involved in long-distance relationships?

The first question identified the particular strategies that individuals

involved in LDRs use to maintain their relationships. The frequency distributions

and mean responses indicated that all maintenance tactics were used by LDR

participants to some degree (see Tables 3 & 4)[1]. Those tactics used most often

included joking with one's partner (97.9%) with a mean response of 4.75, and

talking with the partner about day-to-day activities (96.5%) with a mean response

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[1] The percentage was calculated by adding the percent of respondents indicating agree or
strongly agree. The percentages reported are based on 143 possible LDR responses.

of 4.64. Other frequently used tactics included spending romantic times with the partner (mean = 4.60, 93.7%), showing physical affection other than sexual intimacy (mean = 4.72, 93.4%), telling the partner intimate sentiments (mean = 4.67, 93.0%), supporting the partner in his/her decision-making (mean = 4.44, 92.3%), staying involved in the partner's interests (mean = 4.49, 92.3%), spending time with one's partner (mean = 4.46, 90.9%), and complementing the partner (mean = 4.36, 90.9%). For the tactics of keeping diaries (mean = 1.57) and sending video tapes (mean = 1.57), less than 10% of the total number of LDR participants indicated using the tactic (see Tables 3 & 4). Thus, though descriptive data indicates that all maintenance tactics are used in LDRs, some tactics are not nearly as common place as others.

Research Question Two

Are the maintenance tactics used by relational partners

different for LDRs and PRs?

The second research question compared LDRs and PRs in regards to their use of individual maintenance tactics. Using an Aspin-Welch t statistic, the means for these two groups were compared to answer this question. Statistically significant differences between the groups were found on ten maintenance tactics (see Table 5). Long-distance participants claimed to use electronic mail,

Table 3

Frequencies and Percentages of Responses for Items: LDR

Question	1	2	Response 3	4	5	No Response
I send electronic mail (e-mail) to my partner on a regular basis.	68	14	8	25	28	
	47.6	9.8	5.6	17.5	19.6	
I talk with my partner about the day-to day activities of his/her life.	2	2	1	36	102	
	1.4	1.4	0.7	25.2	71.3	
I stay involved in my partner's interests.	2	2	7	45	87	
	1.4	1.4	4.9	31.5	60.8	
I mail letters to my partner to stay in contact.	26	29	16	39	32	1
	18.2	20.3	11.2	27.3	22.4	0.7
I call my partner on a regular basis.	3	8	6	27	99	
	2.1	5.6	4.2	18.9	69.2	
I discuss the future of our relationship with my partner.	2	9	9	32	91	
	1.4	6.3	6.3	22.4	63.6	
I have deep, meaningful discussions about what we can do to improve our relationship with my partner.	5	12	16	49	61	
	3.5	8.4	11.2	34.3	42.7	

Frequencies and Percentages of Responses for Items: LDR (cont.)

Question	Response					No
	1	2	3	4	5	Response
I concentrate on future plans instead of focusing on when we are apart.	2	10	24	62	45	
	1.4	7.0	16.8	43.4	31.5	
I try to make every moment count when I am with my partner.	2	4	3	37	96	1
	1.4	2.8	2.1	25.9	67.1	0.7
I keep a diary and periodically give it to my partner to read.	96	27	6	13	1	
	67.1	18.9	4.2	9.1	0.7	
I share the expenses of maintaining our relationship with my partner.	11	15	14	41	62	
	7.7	10.5	9.8	28.7	43.4	
I try to resolve problems with my partner as soon as they arise.	1	3	11	55	73	
	0.7	2.1	7.7	38.5	51.0	
I buy gifts for my partner.	4	6	8	47	78	
	2.8	4.2	5.6	32.9	54.5	
I show physical affection other than sexual intimacy to my partner.	2	3	3	17	118	
	1.4	2.1	2.1	11.9	82.5	
I argue with my partner about trivial things.	20	35	19	44	25	
	14.0	24.5	13.3	30.8	17.5	

Frequencies and Percentages of Responses for Items: LDR (cont.)

Question			Response			No
	1	2	3	4	5	Response
I plan when my partner and I can see one another.	1	10	16	47	69	
	0.7	7.0	11.2	32.9	48.3	
I listen carefully to my partner when he/she talks.	0	6	9	50	78	
	40.0	4.2	6.3	35.0	54.5	
I try to take trips with my partner whenever possible.	1	15	19	56	52	
	0.7	10.5	13.3	39.2	36.4	
I send cards to my partner when I can.	12	19	21	53	37	1
	8.4	13.3	14.7	37.1	25.9	0.7
I openly tell my partner when I am dissatisfied with our relationship.	5	16	27	55	40	
	3.5	11.2	18.9	38.5	28	
I spend as much time with my partner as possible.	1	8	4	41	89	
	0.7	5.6	2.8	28.7	62.2	
I try to attend many of my partner's activities as a way to stay involved in his/her life.	2	12	19	49	61	
	1.4	8.4	13.3	34.3	42.7	

Frequencies and Percentages of Responses for Items: LDR (cont.)

Question			Response			No
	1	2	3	4	5	Response
I spend romantic times with my partner.	3	3	3	30	104	
	2.1	2.1	2.1	21.0	72.7	
I often say, "I love you" to my partner.	8	11	6	11	107	
	5.6	7.7	4.2	7.7	74.8	
I record audio tapes and give them to my partner.	87	20	10	18	8	
	60.8	14.0	7.0	12.6	5.6	
I record video tapes and give them to my partner.	97	26	9	6	5	
	67.8	18.2	6.3	4.2	3.5	
I discuss issues such as honesty and respect with my partner.	5	4	9	58	67	
	3.5	2.8	6.3	40.6	46.9	
I plan when my partner and I can next talk with one another.	3	13	16	45	66	
	2.1	9.1	11.2	31.5	46.2	
I complement my partner to help him/her feel better about him/herself.	4	4	5	54	76	
	2.8	2.8	3.5	37.8	53.1	

Frequencies and Percentages of Responses for Items: LDR (cont.)

Question			Response			No
	1	2	3	4	5	Response
I set aside specific times each week to interact with my partner.	5	15	22	40	61	
	3.5	10.5	15.4	38.0	42.7	
I let my partner know when I am in a bad mood to avoid conflict.	8	20	22	54	39	
	5.6	14.0	15.4	37.8	27.3	
I am sexually intimate with my partner whenever possible.	18	12	9	31	73	
	12.6	8.4	6.3	21.7	51.0	
I support my partner during his/her decision-making.	2	3	6	51	81	
	1.4	2.1	4.2	35.7	56.6	
I joke with my partner.	2	0	0	27	113	1
	1.4	0.0	0.0	18.9	79.0	0.7
I do favors for my partner.	0	15	18	52	56	2
	0.0	10.5	12.6	36.4	39.2	1.4
I tell my partner intimate sentiments.	2	0	7	25	108	1
	1.4	0.0	4.9	17.5	75.5	0.7
I find fun and creative ways to interact with my partner.	2	3	11	48	77	2
	1.4	2.1	7.7	33.6	53.8	1.4

Frequencies and Percentages of Responses for Items: LDR (cont.)

Question			Response			No
	1	2	3	4	5	Response
I openly tell my partner when I am happy with our relationship.	2	3	15	36	85	2
	1.4	2.1	10.5	25.2	59.4	1.4

Table 4

Mean Responses to Survey Items

Item	LDR	PR	Total
I send electronic mail (e-mail) to my partner on a regular basis.	2.52	1.64	1.97
I talk with my partner about the day-to day activities of his/her life.	4.64	4.67	4.66
I stay involved in my partner's interests.	4.49	4.51	4.50
I mail letters to my partner to stay in contact.	3.16	2.03	2.46
I call my partner on a regular basis.	4.48	4.58	4.54
I discuss the future of our relationship with my partner.	4.41	4.46	4.44
I have deep, meaningful discussions about what we can do to improve our relationship with my partner.	4.04	4.11	4.08
I concentrate on future plans instead of focusing on when we are apart.	3.97	3.89	3.92
I try to make every moment count when I am with my partner.	4.55	4.20	4.33
I keep a diary and periodically give it to my partner to read.	1.57	1.44	1.49
I share the expenses of maintaining our relationship with my partner.	3.90	4.12	4.07
I try to resolve problems with my partner as soon as they arise.	4.37	4.25	4.30
I buy gifts for my partner.	4.32	4.31	4.32

Mean Responses to Survey Items (cont.).

Item	LDR	PR	Total
I show physical affection other than sexual intimacy to my partner.	4.72	4.74	4.73
I argue with my partner about trivial things.	3.13	3.22	3.19
I plan when my partner and I can see one another.	4.21	3.90	4.02
I listen carefully to my partner when he/she talks.	4.40	4.29	4.33
I try to take trips with my partner whenever possible.	4.00	4.00	4.00
I send cards to my partner when I can.	3.59	3.18	3.33
I openly tell my partner when I am dissatisfied with our relationship.	3.76	3.89	3.84
I spend as much time with my partner as possible.	4.46	4.23	4.44
I try to attend many of my partner's activities as a way to stay involved in his/her life.	4.08	4.11	4.11
I spend romantic times with my partner.	4.60	4.58	4.59
I often say, "I love you" to my partner.	4.38	4.37	4.38
I record audio tapes and give them to my partner.	1.88	1.66	1.71
I record video tapes and give them to my partner.	1.57	1.48	1.52
I discuss issues such as honesty and respect with my partner.	4.24	4.30	4.28

Mean Responses to Survey Items (cont.)

Item	LDR	PR	Total
I plan when my partner and I can next talk with one another.	4.10	3.54	3.75
I complement my partner to help him/her feel better about him/herself.	4.36	4.41	4.39
I set aside specific times each week to interact with my partner.	3.96	3.89	3.92
I let my partner know when I am in a bad mood to avoid conflict.	3.67	3.90	3.81
I am sexually intimate with my partner whenever possible.	3.90	3.78	3.83
I support my partner during his/her decision-making.	4.44	4.49	4.47
I joke with my partner.	4.75	4.77	4.76
I do favors for my partner.	4.06	4.41	4.28
I tell my partner intimate sentiments.	4.67	4.59	4.62
I find fun and creative ways to interact with my partner.	4.38	4.19	4.26
I openly tell my partner when I am happy with our relationship.	4.41	4.42	4.42

t (208.5) = 5.68, p < .0001, more often than PR participants. They also send

cards, t (293.5) = 3.16, p< .001, and write letters, t (263.3) = 7.82, p < .0001,

more often than their PR counterparts. Additionally, making every moment

Table 5

<u>Differences Between the Strategy Use of Long Distance (LD) and Proximal (PR)</u>
<u>Relational Types.</u>

Item	Means and Standard Deviations				t-Score
	LDR	<u>SD</u>	PR	<u>SD</u>	Score
I send electronic mail (e-mail) to my partner on a regular basis.	2.52	1.65	1.64	1.02	5.68*
I talk with my partner about the day-to day activities of his/her life.	4.64	.70	4.67	.53	.48
I stay involved in my partner's interests.	4.49	.77	4.51	.61	.25
I mail letters to my partner to stay in contact.	3.16	1.44	2.03	1.23	7.82*
I call my partner on a regular basis.	4.48	.96	4.58	.75	1.03
I discuss the future of our relationship with my partner.	4.41	.95	4.46	.75	.60
I have deep, meaningful discussions about what we can do to improve our relationship with my partner.	4.04	1.09	4.11	.92	.63
I concentrate on future plans instead of focusing on when we are apart.	3.97	.94	3.89	.82	.79
I try to make every moment count when I am with my partner.	4.55	.79	4.20	.80	4.21*
I keep a diary and periodically give it to my partner to read.	1.57	.98	1.44	.85	1.29
I share the expenses of maintaining our relationship with my partner.	3.90	1.28	4.18	.98	2.30*
I try to resolve problems with my partner as soon as they arise.	4.37	.77	4.25	.84	1.42

Differences Between the Strategy Use of Long Distance (LD) and Proximal (PR) Relational Types (cont.).

Item	Means and Standard Deviations				t-Score
	LDR	SD	PR	SD	Score
I buy gifts for my partner.	4.32	.96	4.31	.78	.07
I show physical affection other than sexual intimacy to my partner.	4.72	.73	4.74	.53	.30
I argue with my partner about trivial things.	3.13	1.34	3.22	1.22	.66
I plan when my partner and I can see one another.	4.21	.94	3.90	.99	2.99*
I listen carefully to my partner when he/she talks.	4.40	.78	4.29	.68	1.37
I try to take trips with my partner whenever possible.	4.00	.99	4.00	1.02	.00
I send cards to my partner when I can.	3.59	1.24	3.18	1.20	3.16*
I openly tell my partner when I am dissatisfied with our relationship.	3.76	1.08	3.89	.97	1.15
I spend as much time with my partner as possible.	4.61	.85	4.42	.74	.44
I try to attend many of my partner's activities as a way to stay involved in his/her life.	4.12	1.01	4.08	.89	.34
I spend romantic times with my partner.	4.60	.81	4.58	.62	.21
I often say, "I love you" to my partner.	4.38	1.20	4.37	1.12	.08
I record audio tapes and give them to my partner.	1.88	1.29	1.66	1.04	1.76
I record video tapes and give them to my partner.	1.57	1.02	1.48	.81	.90

Differences Between the Strategy Use of Long Distance (LD) and Proximal (PR) Relational Types (cont.).

| Item | Means and Standard Deviations | | | | t-Score |
	LDR	SD	PR	SD	
I discuss issues such as honesty and respect with my partner.	4.24	.95	4.30	.75	.60
I plan when my partner and I can next talk with one another.	4.10	1.05	3.54	1.22	4.77*
I complement my partner to help him/her feel better about him/herself.	4.36	.89	4.41	.62	.59
I set aside specific times each week to interact with my partner.	3.96	1.14	3.89	1.09	.54
I let my partner know when I am in a bad mood to avoid conflict.	3.67	1.17	3.90	.90	1.98*
I am sexually intimate with my partner whenever possible.	3.90	1.43	3.78	1.32	.81
I support my partner during his/her decision-making.	4.44	.79	4.49	.60	.58
I joke with my partner.	4.75	.59	4.77	.43	.31
I do favors for my partner.	4.06	.97	4.41	.74	3.72*
I tell my partner intimate sentiments.	4.67	.69	4.59	.64	1.05
I find fun and creative ways to interact with my partner.	4.38	.82	4.19	.82	2.18*
I openly tell my partner when I am happy with our relationship.	4.41	.86	4.42	.73	.14

* $p < .05$

count, $t(303.0) = 4.21$, $p < .0001$; planning to see your partner, $t(312.1) = 2.99$, $p < .003$; 3); and planning when to next talk with your partner, $t(332.5) = 4.77$, $p <$

.0001, were more important for LDR respondents. Finding fun and creative ways to interact with your partner, t (297.8) = 2.18, p < .03, was also of greater importance in LDRs (see Table 5).

Conversely, PR participants indicated that they were more concerned about sharing the expenses of the relationship, t (242.6) = 2.30, p < .02, and were more willing to let the partner know when they were in a bad mood, t (242.3) = 1.98, p < .05. Doing favors for the partner, t (241.9) = 3.72, p < .0002, also occurs more often in PRs (see Table 5).

To assess for possibilities of type two error, power was calculated for t-scores between p < .05 and p < .200. Three items fell within this range. The power for each was as follows: (a) "resolution of problems", power = .22; (b) "listen to partner", power = .28; and (c) "audio recordings", power = .44.

Research Question Three

Is there a relationship among the different maintenance tactics employed by LDRs?

The third research question sought to determine substantial relationships among the 38 tactics used in long-distance relational maintenance. Two methods of data analysis were used: correlations and factor analysis. Results of the correlation analysis indicated several significant relationships among the data (see Table 6 and Appendix I). Specifically, the evaluation of physical expression

Table 6

Loadings for Principle Components Factor Analysis with a Varimax Rotation for the Survey Items, LDR only.

	Factor						
Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I send electronic mail (e-mail) to my partner on a regular basis.	.10	.12	-.19	.63*	-.02	-.05	.01
I talk with my partner about the day-to day activities of his/her life.	.59*	.52	.18	-.04	.28	-.11	-.03
I stay involved in my partner's interests.	.46	.47*	.14	.01	.22	.08	.10
I mail letters to my partner to stay in contact.	.05	.03	-.08	.20	.08	-.07	.84*
I discuss the future of our relationship with my partner.	.08	.70*	.36	.03	.09	.21	-.02
I keep a diary and periodically give it to my partner to read.	-.09	-.35	.11	.67*	-.03	.19	.10
I show physical affection other than sexual intimacy to my partner.	.42	.66*	.13	-.21	.14	.04	.14
I plan when my partner and I can see one another.	.21	.07	.00	-.13	.77*	.23	.04
I try to take trips with my partner whenever possible.	.01	.34	.51*	-.12	.04	.16	.14

Loadings for Principle Components Factor Analysis with a Varimax Rotation for the Survey Items, LDR only (cont.).

Item	Factor						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I send cards to my partner when I can.	.13	.20	.28	.11	-.04	.07	.79*
I openly tell my partner when I am dissatisfied with our relationship.	.22	.28	.14	.01	.02	.76*	-.08
I spend as much time with my partner as possible.	.45	.32	.51*	-.17	.19	.12	.03
I try to attend many of my partner's activities as a way to stay involved in his/her life.	.31	.10	.73*	.05	.14	.17	12
I spend romantic times with my partner.	.36	.54*	.31	-.23	.30	.15	.07
I often say, "I love you" to my partner.	.03	.72*	.10	.23	-.13	.08	.10
I record audio tapes and give them to my partner.	-.07	.11	-.05	.65*	.04	-.11	.08
I record video tapes and give them to my partner.	-.07	-.11	.14	.77*	-.06	-.06	.13
I discuss issues such as honesty and respect with my partner.	.58*	.26	.16	-.05	.01	.39	-.09

Loadings for Principle Components Factor Analysis with a Varimax Rotation for the Survey Items, LDR only (cont.).

Item	Factor						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I plan when my partner and I can next talk with one another.	.15	.19	.34	.10	.72*	.05	.01
I complement my partner to help him/her feel better about him/herself.	.73*	.12	.40	-.03	.05	.11	.13
I set aside specific times each week to interact with my partner.	.20	.21	.59*	.03	.55	.02	-.02
I let my partner know when I am in a bad mood to avoid conflict.	.15	.05	.07	-.12	.31	.70*	.08
I support my partner during his/her decision-making.	.58*	.32	.35	-.15	.06	.29	.13
I joke with my partner.	.43	.54*	-.03	-.23	.32	-.00	.03
I do favors for my partner.	.48	.07	.54*	.13	.13	-.28	-.21
I tell my partner intimate sentiments.	.38	.62*	.11	-.05	.26	.18	.14
I find fun and creative ways to interact with my partner.	.76*	.09	.01	.01	.22	.13	.13
I openly tell my partner when I am happy with our relationship	.54*	.52	.09	.06	.16	.27	-.04

Note. Only items that had the highest loading above .434 were retained, shown by the asterisk next to the figure.

other than sexual intimacy with "romantic times" ($R^2 = .53$) suggested a

substantial relationship, as did making every moment count ($R^2 = .46$) with

physical expression; these two correlations accounted for the greatest amount of

variance. "Romantic times" also was significantly correlated with listening to

one's partner ($R^2 = .34$). Finally, supporting one's partner and spending time with

one's partner also were closely related ($R^2 = .41$) (see Appendix I). It should be

noted that other significant relationships appeared; they explained minimal

amounts of variance (for a description of these correlations and the total item

correlation matrix, see Appendix I). To assess for possibilities of type two error,

power was calculated for correlations on all items falling between $p < .05$ and $p <$

.200 (for a list of relationships and the power calculated for each one, see Table

7).

As a second method of assessment, a factor analysis was conducted on

the data submitted by the LDR participants. The unrotated factor analysis

produced little variance among the factors provided, thus the 38 tactics were

subjected to a VARIMAX rotation, accounting for a greater level of variance

among the factors. Based on Kaiser (1960), only factors whose eigenvalues are

greater than one were retained. Seven factors were produced from a VARIMAX

rotation of the principal components factor analysis, accounting for 65.8% of the

total variance (see Table 7). As recommended by Stevens (1986) for scale

construction, the 28 items that loaded above .434 were retained by the seven

Table 7

Power Calculations for Correlations Among Maintenance Tactics.

Correlation	Power	Correlation	Power
Involvement in partner's interests/diaries	.29	Involvement in partner's interests/letters	.40
Letters/Problem resolution	.38	Letters/physical affection other than sex	.29
Physical affection other than sex/day-to-day talk	.26	Telephone calls/cards	.29
Telephone calls/letters	.34	E-mail/letters	.40
Telephone calls/e-mail	.32	Deep, meaningful discussions/letters	.38
Day-to-day talk/sexual intimacy	.33	Discussions of the future/ sexual intimacy	.48
Letters/intimate sentiments	.26	Day-to-day talk/ arguments	.26
Deep, meaningful discussions/ video recordings	.28	Concentration on future plans/ telling partner about bad mood	.45
Diaries/complements	.33	Diaries/support	.46
Share the expenses/sexual intimacy	.33	Resolution of problems/ video recordings	.29
Arguments/audio recordings	.28	Arguments/set aside times each week	.39
Arguments/sexual intimacy	.45	Cards/audio recordings	.30

Power Calculations for Correlations Among Maintenance Tactics (cont.).

Correlation	Power	Correlation	Power
Cards/video recordings	.34	Cards/discussion of honesty and respect	.45
Cards/telling partner about bad mood	.38	Cards/jokes	.32
Dissatisfaction with the relationship/plans to talk together	.49	Romantic times/video recordings	.46
Romantic times/sexual intimacy	.43	"I love you"/audio tapes	.33
"I love you"/plans to talk with one another	.38	Audio tapes/sexual intimacy	.44
Audio tapes/support	.43	Discussion of honesty and respect/sexual intimacy	.35
Complements/sexual intimacy	.34	Set aside specific times/ sexual intimacy	.48
Audio tapes/jokes	.26	Favors/deep, meaningful discussions/	.32
Favors/make every moment count	.41	Diary/intimate sentiments	.32
Diary/satisfaction with the relationship	.26	Share the expenses/ favors	.37
Share the expenses/fun and creative interactions	.48	Favors/problem resolution	.35
Arguments/intimate		Sexual intimacy/fun and	

| sentiments | .32 | creative interactions | .29 |

Power Calculations for Correlations Among Maintenance Tactics (cont.).

Correlation	Power	Correlation	Power
Diary/listen to partner	.40	Arguments/listen to partner	.44
Diary/trips	.31	Diary/cards	.30
Diary/spend time with partner	.44	"I love you"/fun and creative interactions	.44
Time with partner/ sexual intimacy	.42		

factors. Thus, the seven factors represent clusters of particular tactics (i.e., strategies) used by LDR participants (amount of variance explained by each factor in parentheses).

Factor one, affirmation of the couple or the partner, retained six items that had the highest loading above the .434 criteria (33.9%). It included talk about day-to-day activities (.59), discussions of honesty and respect (.58), giving complements (.73), supporting of partner during decision-making (.58), establishing fun and creative ways of interaction (.76), and telling your partner that you are happy with the relationship (.54) (see Table 6). Factor two, expression, had seven items that loaded above .434 (8.8%), including involvement in your partner's interests (.47), discussions of the relationship's

future (.70), physical affection other than sexual intimacy (.66), romantic times (.54), saying "I love you" (.72), joking with your partner (.54), and telling your partner intimate sentiments (.62) (see Table 6).

Factor three, together-time, retained five variables (5.7%). These items reflect taking trips with your partner (.51), spending time with your partner (.51), attending your partner's activities (.73), setting aside specific times each week to interact with your partner (.59), and doing favors for the partner (.54). Factor four, high tech mediated communication, contains four items (4.9%), including the use of e-mail (.63), diaries (.67), audio tapes (.65), and video tapes (.77). Factor five, planning for interactions (4.5% of variance), involved both plans for the next visit (.77) and the next conversation (.72) (see Table 6).

Factor six, negative disclosure (4.1%), retained items concerning telling your partner when you are dissatisfied with the relationship (.76) and telling the partner when you are in a bad mood in order to avoid conflict (.70). Last, factor seven, low tech mediated communication (4.0%), was comprised of writing letters (.84) and sending cards (.79) (see Table 6).

Research Question Four

In LDRs and PRs, is there a relationship between Maintenance tactics Used and perceptions of satisfaction with a relationship?

The last research question investigated the relationship between satisfaction and maintenance tactics. Though significant positive correlations

were found between 19 tactics and satisfaction among LDR responses, correlations were low to moderate (Frey, Botan, Friedman, & Kreps, 1991) and explain small amounts of variance (see Table 8). The relationships between long-distance relational participants' reports of satisfaction and the tactics of: (a) discussing plans for the future ($R^2 = .07$), and (b) having deep, meaningful conversations ($R^2 = .07$) accounted for the greatest amount of variance for LDRs (see Table 8).

The items accounting for the most variance for PR subjects included spending romantic times with the partner ($R^2 = .15$), saying "I love you" ($R^2 = .15$), and finding fun and creative ways to interact ($R^2 = .15$). Other items of significance for PRs included talking with the partner about day-to-day activities ($R^2 = .09$), discussing the future of the relationship ($R^2 = .14$), making every moment count ($R^2 = .10$), spending time with the partner ($R^2 = .14$), telling the partner intimate sentiments ($R^2 = .11$), and telling the partner when he/she is happy with the relationship ($R^2 = .14$) (see Table 8). To assess for possibilities of type two error, power was calculated for correlations on all items falling between $p < .05$ and $p < .200$ (for a list of relationships and the power calculated for each one, see Table 9).

Post Hoc Analysis

Tests were conducted to establish the reliability on the 28 item version of the scale instrument, and on the seven factors that emerged during analysis.

The alpha reliability of the scale using the twenty-eight items was .8732, with the

reliabilities for the individual items ranging from .8638 to .8786. Additionally,

Table 8

Correlations of the Individual Survey Items with the Satisfaction Measure: LDR, PR and Total

Item	LDR	PR	Total
I send electronic mail (e-mail) to my partner on a regular basis.	.04	.06	.05
I talk with my partner about the day-to day activities of his/her life.	.10	.30*	.19*
I stay involved in my partner's interests.	.16*	.28*	.22*
I mail letters to my partner to stay in contact.	.10	.10	.10
I call my partner on a regular basis.	.13	.20*	.16*
I discuss the future of our relationship with my partner.	.26*	.37*	.31*
I have deep, meaningful discussions about what we can do to improve our relationship with my partner.	.27*	.23*	.25*
I concentrate on future plans instead of focusing on when we are apart.	.13	.22*	.17*
I try to make every moment count when I am with my partner.	.08	.32*	.20*
I keep a diary and periodically give it to my partner to read.	.19*	.04	.12*

I share the expenses of maintaining our

relationship with my partner.	.16	.08	.12*
I try to resolve problems with my partner as soon as they arise.	.19*	.23*	.21*

Correlations of the Individual Survey Items with the Satisfaction Measure: LDR, PR and Total (cont.).

Item	LDR	PR	Total
I buy gifts for my partner.	.20*	.20*	.20*
I show physical affection other than sexual intimacy to my partner.	.15	.24*	.19*
I argue with my partner about trivial things.	.07	-.29*	-.11*
I plan when my partner and I can see one another.	-.08	.13	.03
I listen carefully to my partner when he/she talks.	.18*	.20*	.19*
I try to take trips with my partner whenever possible.	.03	.258	.14*
I send cards to my partner when I can.	.21*	.17*	.18*
I openly tell my partner when I am dissatisfied with our relationship.	.14	-.07	.04
I spend as much time with my partner as possible.	.22*	.38*	.29*
I try to attend many of my partner's activities as a way to stay involved in his/her life.	.21*	.18*	.19*
I spend romantic times with my partner.	.19*	.39*	.28*
I often say, "I love you" to my partner.	.21*	.39*	.30*
I record audio tapes and give them to my partner.	-.02	.04	.01

I record video tapes and give them to my partner.	.22*	.09	.16*

Correlations of the Individual Survey Items with the Satisfaction Measure: LDR, PR and Total (cont.).

Item	LDR	PR	Total
I discuss issues such as honesty and respect with my partner.	.11	.07	.09
I plan when my partner and I can next talk with one another.	.11	.09	.09
I complement my partner to help him/her feel better about him/herself.	.14	.17*	.15*
I set aside specific times each week to interact with my partner.	.19*	.22*	.20*
I let my partner know when I am in a bad mood to avoid conflict.	-.04	.08	.02
I am sexually intimate with my partner whenever possible.	.06	-.10	-.02
I support my partner during his/her decision-making.	.19*	.26*	.22*
I joke with my partner.	-.03	.15*	.05
I do favors for my partner.	.20*	.09	.14*
I tell my partner intimate sentiments.	.17*	.33*	.25*
I find fun and creative ways to interact with my partner.	.17*	.39*	.28*
I openly tell my partner when I am happy with our relationship.	.17*	.38*	.27*

* p<.05

Table 9

Power Calculations for Relationship Between Satisfaction and Maintenance
Tactics.

	LDRs	PRs	Total
Involvement in partner's interests	.48		
Letters		.36	.50
Telephone calls	.33		
Concentration on future plans	.33		
Share the expenses	.48		
Physical affection other than sex	.42		
Plans to see each other again		.50	
Dissatisfaction with the relatinship	.39		
Video recordings		.28	
Discussions of honesty or respect	.26		.44
Plans to talk to each other		.26	.44
Complements	.38		
Informing partner of bad mood		.26	
Sexual intimacy		.36	
Favors		.29	

reliabilities were conducted on the seven factors; reliabilities range from .6209 to

.7930 (see Table 10).

Table 10

Post-Hoc Cronbach's Alphas on the Seven Factors and the 28 Item Scale
Instrument.

Factor		Alpha	Variance
One:	Affirmation of the Couple or the Partner	.6209	33.8%
Two:	Expression	.6291	8.8%
Three:	Together Time	.6353	5.7%
Four:	High Tech Mediated Communication	.7930	4.8%
Five:	Planning	.6744	4.4%
Six:	Negative Disclosure	.6948	4.1%
Seven:	Low Tech Mediated Communication	.7286	4.0%
Reliability of 28 Item Survey		.8732	

Tests also were conducted to discover the relationship between

satisfaction and the seven factors for both LDRs and PRs (see Table 11).

Results indicated that for both LDRs and PRs, four factors were correlated with

satisfaction: affirmation ($R^2 = .04$), expression ($R^2 = .05$), together time ($R^2 =$

.05), and low tech mediated communication (R^2 = .03). For PRs, the correlations were somewhat stronger: affirmation (R^2 = .16), expression (R^2 = .25), together time (R^2 = .12), and low tech mediated communication (R^2 = .03).

Table 11

Post-Hoc Pearson Product Moment Correlation of Satisfaction and the Seven Factors: LDR, PR, and Totals

Factor		LDR	PR	Total
One:	Affirmation of the Relationship or the Partner	.19*	.40*	.28*
Two:	Expression	.23*	.50*	.35*
Three:	Together Time	.23*	.34*	.28*
Four:	High Tech Mediated Communication	.13	.08	.11*
Five:	Planning	.02	.12	.08
Six:	Negative Disclosure	.06	.01	.03
Seven:	Low Tech Mediated Communication	.17*	.17*	.16*

*p < .05

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

"Having a good relationship with someone takes time and effort on both parts. It is something that has to be worked on frequently or it will stand still and eventually die" (personal communication, student participant). The current project investigates techniques that allow us to work on and attend to relationships.

The purpose of the study is to discover the ways that romantic partners maintain their relationships when the relationship is affected by long-distance separation. Using both inductive and deductive methods of data collection, the project identifies the tactics used to maintain romantic relationships. Additionally, the perceptions of long-distance and proximal partners are compared to assess differences in their use of maintenance tactics and to measure relational satisfaction for these two couple types.

Relational dialectics (Baxter, 1988) is used as the theoretical basis for the study. This perspective suggests that tensions such as the distinction between being autonomous and connected are a constant issue for relational partners. Thus, at any given moment, relational partners will use maintenance strategies to regain the balance between dialectics.

The following chapter summarizes the findings concerning relational maintenance strategies. First, the results of the study are provided. Next, the implications of the project are discussed. Finally, the limitations of the study and directions for future research are presented.

Summary of Research Findings

The first research question sought to identify the tactics used by LDR partners to maintain their romantic relationships. As previously mentioned, tactics are the behaviors representing or facilitating particular strategies (Bell et al., 1987). Thus, tactics need to be identified prior to defining the strategies themselves. In the current investigation, 38 tactics were identified as methods of maintaining romantic relationships. The tactics were derived from qualitative analysis and verified through quantitative inquiry. All of the tactics identified within this study were used by both long-distance and proximal relational partners.

The most frequently used maintenance tactics include joking with one's partner and talking about day-to-day activities with one's partner. Additionally, participants identified telling one's partner "I love you", complementing one's partner, sharing intimate sentiments, and supporting one's partner during decision-making as important maintenance tactics. Spending time together in romantic or intimate moments and being involved in your partner's interests or activities also were identified as frequently used tactics.

Whereas the first research question identifies the tactics used to maintain relationships, the second question assesses differences in the use of those behaviors between LDRs and PRs. Findings indicate that long-distance partners tend to use e-mail, letters, and cards significantly more often than PR partners. They also spend more time than proximal partners: (a) planning for the next interaction or visit, (b) searching for fun and creative ways of interacting with their partner, and (c) considering ways to make each interaction significant. Conversely, proximal partners claim to share the expenses of the relationship more often than their long-distance counterparts. A proximal partner does more favors for his/her partner and is more willing to inform his/her partner if he/she is in a bad mood. The tactics of buying gifts for each other, planning trips together, and saying "I love you" frequently, are important regardless of the relational type.

The third research question examines the relationship among maintenance tactics. Items such as physical expression (other than sex), listening to one's partner, spending romantic times together, making every moment count, and offering support to your partner are related to all maintenance tactics except types of mediated communication (e.g., e-mail, letters, diaries), and arguing about trivial things; arguments over trivial things is only related to calling the partner and attending the partner's activities. Interestingly, spending romantic times with one's partner was not associated with sexual intimacy and sharing your diary with your partner has an inverse

relationship with items such as discussions of day-to-day activities and discussions of the relationship's future.

In order to extend our understanding of the relationship among tactics, factor analysis also was conducted to answer the third research question. According to Stevens (1986), one of the reasons for conducting factor analysis is to discover empirically the number of underlying constructs accounting for the greatest amount of variance on a scale. The underlying constructs in the current investigation allow us to define and identify maintenance strategies and to create a maintenance strategy scale that emphasizes LDRs. Seven factors accounting for 28 maintenance tactics emerged from analysis.

The first factor, "affirmation", includes items that either verbally (e.g., saying "I love you" or other intimate sentiments) or nonverbally (e.g., showing physical affection other than sexual intimacy) acknowledge the partner or the couple in a positive manner. Factor two, "expression", contains tactics that involve the disclosure of attitudes such as trust or honesty, feelings about the relationship or the partner, or day-to-day information to the partner. Although these two tactics are closely related, the emotional depth in the first factor is deeper than that of the second.

As opposed to these positive expressions, the third factor, "negative disclosure", involves one partner telling the other when he/she is dissatisfied with the relationship or informing the partner that he/she is in a bad mood--a tactic

designed to avoid conflict. Though the information being discussed is negative, the actual act of disclosing may benefit the relationship.

The fourth factor, "together time", relates to spending time with one's partner (e.g., taking trips together or attending the partner's activities). Similarly, factor five, "plans for the future", specifies planning activities that precede future interactions with the partner (e.g., the next conversation or visit). Two factors involve mediated communication; the mode, however, is different. Factor six involves a more "high tech" or longitudinal approach to communication: e-mail, audio or video tapes, and diaries. The seventh factor, "low tech mediated communication" involves written communication via the postal service: (a) sending letters, and (b) sending cards.

The final research question investigates the relationship between maintenance tactics or strategies and relational satisfaction for LDRs and PRs. Satisfaction with the relationship related to nine maintenance tactics for LDR partners. Specifically, making plans for the future, having deep meaningful conversations, and time together were important to long-distance partners. Long-distance partners also were satisfied with their relationships when they verbally expressed their love to their partner and when they were able to attend their partner's activities. Sending physical expressions of care such as gifts, cards, and video tapes produced perceptions of satisfaction in LDRs as well.

For the PR participants, satisfaction is mostly related to romance. Saying "I love you", and expressing other intimate sentiments in fun and creative ways were examples of romantic expectations. Additionally, discussing not only day-to-day activities, but the future of the relationship were important to the satisfaction of PRs. For PRs, one significant negative relationship also was discovered: arguing about trivial things was negatively associated with relational satisfaction.

In an analysis of the relationship between satisfaction and the factors (i.e., the strategies), the same four factors were related to satisfaction for both PRs and LDRs: (a) affirmation (i.e., acknowledgment of the partnership), (b) expression (i.e., disclosure of feelings, thoughts, or emotions), (c) together time (i.e., spending time with each other), and (d) low tech mediated communication (i.e., written communication). [2] In summary, then, it is evident that although differences exist between LDR and PR relational partners' perceptions of maintenance tactics, there also are common tactics used for all types of relationships. By using LDRs as our foundational base, contrasts and similarities can be identified.

Implications

Although the strategies discovered in this study are directed at LDRs, findings indicate that both LDRs and PRs utilize each strategy to varying

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[2] Although significant relationships were found, the strength of the correlations were in the low to moderate range.

degrees. This type of finding has several implications for the study of relational maintenance. Specifically, we are reminded of the importance of recognizing both similarities and differences in the ways contrasting groups maintain and carry out

their interactions. Although LDRs are unique, they do not exist in a vacuum. People participating in LDRs share similar life experiences to proximal relational partners, and in most instances, also have participated in PRs at some point in time. Thus, while our understanding of LDRs is extended by taking a micro approach to the study of relational maintenance, we can not ignore the benefits of integrating both LDR and PR research into our knowledge base on relational maintenance.

Though none of the existing maintenance typologies contain all seven strategies found in this investigation, these strategies have been identified in previous research on coping with LDRs and maintaining PRs. For example, positivity, assurances, openness (Dainton & Stafford, 1993; Canary, Stafford, Hause, & Wallace, 1993; Stafford & Canary, 1991, 1992), facilitate enjoyment, verbal affection (Bell et al., 1987), and togetherness (Dindia & Baxter, 1987) are all similar to expression and affirmation. Similarly, within the LDR literature, quality communication (Holt & Stone, 1988) may contain tactics specified in the above strategies. Thus, because the typology of seven strategies identified in this study combines strategies and tactics from both LDR and PR literature, it provide a more inclusive description of maintenance strategies that can be used

for all romantic relationships. Future research should continue to explore relationships by integrating the strategies of existing typologies and by considering the connection between coping with and maintaining a relationship.

In addition, the seven factors--affirmation, expression, future thought, together time, negative disclosure, high tech mediated communication, and low tech mediated communication--identified from the statistical analysis are similar to some of the categories identified in the initial qualitative analysis. Of the original nine qualitative categories (i.e., mediated communication, conversation acts, future thought, expression of feelings or emotions, stimulation, other-orientation, together time, other time, shared values) several categories re-emerged. For instance, expressions of feelings or emotions is similar to factor two or expression, also containing an item representing shared values (i.e., "I discuss issues such as honesty and respect with my partner"). Other-orientation is very similar to the first factor, affirmation, while conversation acts encompass both expression and affirmation. The reemergence of the qualitatively derived categories in the quantitative inquiry supports the need and importance of triangulated research.

The factor analysis not only identified seven strategies used by LDRs to maintain their relationship, but it also finalized the scale. Similar to the scale creation of Stafford and Canary (1991), the items that did not meet the criteria for inclusion into the factors were eliminated. In theory, the ten items that did not load into the factors--telephone calls, deep meaningful conversations,

concentration on future plans instead of being apart, making every moment count, sharing the expenses of maintenance, resolving problems immediately, gifts, arguments about trivial things, listening carefully to the partner, and sexual intimacy--should be eliminated from the final scale. When these ten items are reviewed, however, one would wonder why they should be discarded.

For example, buying gifts and having deep, meaningful conversations with the partner were associated with satisfaction for the LDRs, but did not factor into any of the seven strategies. In addition, although making every moment count was done more often by the LDRs than the PRs, it also was excluded from the final scale. Listening to your partner was associated with satisfaction for PR and LDR partners, yet did not load in the factor analysis. Considering the importance placed on active listening in communication studies, it is questionable that it did not enter into the final typology. Further research is needed to explain why these tactics do not factor into one of the seven strategies identified in this study.

Another implication of the study relates to mediated communication. Studies regarding relational maintenance and LDRs have specified mediated communication as important (e.g., Canary, Stafford, Hause, & Wallace, 1993; Gerstel & Gross, 1983). In the current study, however, calling your partner on a regular basis did not factor as a form of mediated communication, contradicting the existing claim that telephone calls is the most important mode of communication (Gerstel & Gross, 1983; Holt & Stone, 1988). The results of the study do show that telephone calls are related to thirty-one of the thirty-seven

other strategies in the scale, demonstrating its close relationship to other maintenance tactics. Because telephone calls are such a common occurrence for both PRs and LDRs, however, perhaps the messages communicated during the call are more important than the act of calling itself, or perhaps telephone calls are so common place that they are considered habitual as opposed to strategic.

Additionally, mediated communication factored into two different strategies: (a) low tech, and (b) high tech. The high tech modes of communication allow for more channels to be incorporated into the interaction as well as allowing for a higher number of interactions and for more extensive communication exchange. For example, audio and video recordings incorporate nonverbal components into the interaction (i.e., gestures or vocal inflection). Additionally, e-mail can be sent several times a day at little or no cost to the relational partners. Diaries, a written form of communication similar to letters or cards, expand over several days, weeks, or even months, providing partners with a deeper insight into one another's daily lives. Thus, this implication afforded by mediated communication suggests that maintenance strategies may be better understood based on a dichotomy of common to rare, and/or based on frequency of use.

When viewing the similarities and differences in the use of maintenance tactics between PRs and LDRs, and the connection of maintenance tactics to relational satisfaction, the following observation can be made: although LDRs

used seven particular tactics more often than PRs (i.e., e-mail, letters, cards, making every moment count, plans to see the partner and/or talk to the partner, and fun and creative interactions), only one of these strategies--sending cards--is related to relational satisfaction for LDRs. While the exchange of letters or e-mail might be expected, and while making every moment together count and planning for the next interaction may be common occurrences in maintaining an LDR, sending cards may still be surprising and add novelty to the relationship, thereby increasing the relational satisfaction of the partners.

Similarly, finding fun and creative ways of interacting with one's partner and making every moment together count are related to the satisfaction of PRs. Perhaps the circumstances of separation force LDR partners to make more of each moment and to be more creative, thus not recognizing their importance to the relationship. Whereas, the satisfaction level of the PR is effected by the use of these two tactics because they are not everyday occurrences in PRs. It seems probable, then, that infrequently employed strategies may be more significant to relational maintenance than tactics as common place as telephone calls.

Sexual intimacy was another commonly used tactic for both PRs and LDRs; nearly 70% of the respondents in both groups indicated being sexually active. Sexual intimacy, however, was not related to relational satisfaction for either relationship type. For 20% of the respondents, sexual intimacy was not even an option; several participants cited religion as a reason for not engaging in premarital sex. Though one would normally associate sexual intimacy with

romance, no association was detected in the data analysis. Thus, sexual intimacy may not be a tactic associated with the maintenance of a relationship but instead maybe--in most instances--a defining issue of it. Future research should clarify the role of sexual intimacy in romantic relationships.

Furthermore, three tactics taken from the qualitative responses of LDRs were used more frequently by PRs--sharing the expenses of relational maintenance, informing his/her partner when he/she is in a bad mood, and doing favors. The possible explanation for the use of these three tactics by the PRs over LDRs lies within the items themselves. For example, PRs do favors for their partner more often than the LDRs. Perhaps the explanation for this is opportunity: PRs see each other more often and thus have the ability to enact this strategy more often than LDRs. Also, LDRs may define "favors" differently than the PRs.

Although several LDR participants commented on the importance of sharing the costs of maintaining the relationship in the qualitative study, it was the PRs who indicated doing this tactic more often in the quantitative study. Possibly the short-term financial costs associated with maintaining an LDR do not outweigh the option of not maintaining the relationship at all. In other words, the participants may go to whatever lengths are needed to keep the relationship alive, regardless of cost. Proximal partners--who have constant expenses--may be more attuned to financial imbalance because of the regularity with which money is a relational issue.

The PR participants' use of disclosures when one partner is in a bad mood happens more often in PRs than LDRs. This may be explained by the work of Stafford and Reske (1990). Stafford and Reske claimed that "restricted communication was actually associated with positive relational images and frequent interaction was associated with the demise of the relationship" (p. 278). Thus, because LDR communication is more restricted (i.e., limits face-to-face exchange) it maybe interpreted more positively. Additionally, although disclosure was used to avoid conflict, because of the mediums of communication, LDR partners may mask their emotions and hide their true feelings--allowing the facade of happiness to continue--thereby avoiding problems that are not easily resolved from a distance.

Additional implications may be explained by the contradictions revealed in dialectical theory (Baxter, 1988). For example, the autonomy-connection dialectic states that while couples want to remain in very close contact with each other, they may be faced with periods of wanted (or unwanted) autonomy or alone time (Baxter, 1988). For LDR couples, living circumstances necessitate each partner be more independent--forced autonomy. Although this independence allows the partners to advance their own personal goals (Groves & Horm-Winegerd, 1991), they still need to employ tactics that facilitate connection with their partner. Thus, it is logical that LDRs would use tactics that increase, or have the potential to increase, the number of interactions with their partner--thereby at least temporarily increasing the connection side of the dialectic.

The dialectic novelty-predictability suggests that couples desire a pattern of interaction on which they can rely, but also enjoy periods of spontaneity. Long-distance partners may feel a lack of predictability in their relationship due to the separation. Electronic mail and letters are two ways LDRs can increase the predictability of the interactions. Sending cards, done less often than letters or e-mail, may be a means of interacting with the partner, but in a more spontaneous, novel way, thereby increasing the level of relational satisfaction for the partners. For the PRs who may experience moments of too much predictability, finding fun and creative ways of interaction and making every moment count may allow for more novelty in, and more satisfaction with, the relationship.

A third dialectic that is evident in both LDRs and PRs is openness-closedness. Relationships build and develop via the disclosing of information, but there are times in which it seems necessary or desirable to withhold information. Perhaps there is little difference in PR and LDR partners' view of this dialectic. For instance, the increased use of mediated communication allows LDRs to express themselves regularly--even though this occurs by means other than face-to-face, a primary vehicle for PRs. Thus, both relationship types have similar opportunities to express themselves (or not), allowing both groups the chance to say "I love you" to each other. This assumption is supported by this study; results indicate a lack of significant difference between the overall

relational satisfaction level of PRs and LDRs, a finding similar to that of Guldner and Swensen (1995).

In summary, the following implications or assumptions are made from the research. First, the seven strategies identified in the study emphasize the need to view the similarities and differences in the ways maintenance strategies are used by differing relational groups (i.e., LDRs and PRs). Emergence of these seven factors from both qualitative and quantitative inquiry support the need to use triangulated research methodologies as an avenue for identifying commonalities and distinctions in LDRs and PRs. The tactics that comprise these strategies and their relationship to relational satisfaction also warrants closer investigations into the relationship maintenance of particular groups.

Additionally, the various forms of mediated communication--which increase the quantity of interactions in LDRs--calls into question whether relational maintenance should be measured in terms of the frequency and/or regularity with which relational partners use one type of strategy over another. Finally, the dialectics of autonomy-connection, novelty-familiarty, and openness-closedness provide insight into the reasons relational partners use particular strategies and how they utilize them to maintain their romantic relationships. The use of particular tactics allows the partners to regain the dialectical balance between these three contradictions in their relationships.

Limitations

Although the results of this study are far-reaching, the study itself is not without limitations. First, the mistake in the directions may have caused confusion for the participants and affected their responses. The mistake was caught early, though, and it is hoped that this did not severely effect the outcomes of the study. Second, the definition of a long-distance relationship may have been too vague on the survey instrument. The participants were not provided a minimum or maximum distance or time apart to be considered long-distance; they were allowed to self-identify long-distance based on their own opinions of the relationship. Without such parameters, the possibility for overlap between PRs and LDRs increases. No information concerning the distance separating the couple, or the estimated time between visits, was collected on the LDR couples. This check on the definition may help determine whether an open definition is sufficient for delineating LDRs and PRs, or a more specified definition would help.

Third, the method used to measure relational satisfaction may not have been sufficient. Although the method used in this study is similar to the last question of the Norton (1983) scale, other studies have used more standardized methods for measuring relational satisfaction (e.g., Norton's Quality Marital Index; Stafford & Canary, 1991). Fourth, the demographic information did not ask respondents to identify if the couple was married. It was assumed that the vast majority of the participants, being young, college-aged students, would be in

premarital relationships. A few of the respondents, however, mentioned they were currently married, thus indicating a mixed sample. There may be differences between commuter marriages and long-distance premarital relationships, yet the prerequisite for participation in the study was that the participant be involved in a romantic relationship. Thus, if the individual considered their marriage romantic, they were allowed to participate. Nevertheless, the mixed sample may have effected the results of the research.

The strategy "shared values" identified from the qualitative study was comprised of one tactic only. Other tactics should have been created to adequately represent this strategy. Additionally, the seven factors accounted for only twenty-eight of the thirty-eight items. Perhaps the other items were too general to be included in the typology. For example, instead of saying "I share the expenses of maintaining our relationship with my partner" it should have said "I take turns calling my partner long-distance" or "I take turns visiting my partner"; further specifying these items may help alleviate this problem. And, although the overall reliability for the scale without the ten items was still relatively high, reliabilities for the individual factors were low. The low factor reliabilities indicate that further testing of the instrument is needed. Despite these limitations, the study extends our understanding of relational maintenance and possesses a heuristic value that can lead to future research.

Direction for Future Research

As a result of this study, there are several directions for future research. First, further research is needed to test the reliability and validity of the survey instrument created in the project. The initial results are promising, but more testing is needed to establish this scale as a valid instrument. Research should be conducted to discover why items such as listening to the partner and telephone calls did not appear in the factors; further specifying the strategies may help this situation.

Second, following validation of the LDR scale, research is needed that further integrates the existing knowledge about relational maintenance. Through meta-analysis, existing typologies could be unified, providing a more comprehensive description of what maintenance includes for both LDRs and PRs.

More research also is needed to discover who enters into long distance relationships, why they do, and how it effects the relationship itself. As scholars begin to understand the individuals participating in this unique situation, chances increase that the myths and mysteries surrounding this phenomenon will be removed. For instance, further differentiation is needed to categorize "long-distance". Several long-distance relational types have been identified, such as the pre-marital LDR, commuter marriages, and military relationships. Yet, researchers should not ignore exploring the similarities long-distance relationships share with proximal relationships or the circumstances leading to

LDRs. It may be significant to identify how LDRs begin (i.e., has the relationship always been long-distance?) as an avenue for understanding how they maintain themselves.

Finally, LDRs provide scholars a unique context from which to study existing interpersonal and relational concepts and theories. This study utilized relational dialectics to help explain how LDRs cope with their unique situation. Other theories, such as Uncertainty Reduction and Exchange Theories, and concepts such as communication competence and marital typologies could provide interesting ground for future research.

Conclusion

Relationships are a driving force in the lives of many people. Consequently, much research focuses on romantic, family, work, and friend relationships. Although the information derived from research is available to scholars, it should be available to the general public; self-help sections of bookstores contain many books providing advice for building and maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships--the primary claims of these often emphasize issues of communication. Scholars in the field of communication have a responsibility to report their findings to individuals outside the realm of the discipline. Many people are striving to improve their relationships and want to know the best ways to achieve that goal. Thus, communication scholars must recognize the importance of applying their knowledge (i.e., educating the general public).

For example, the student participants in this study have taken a particular interest in the results of the investigation. One participant currently involved in a LDR stated: "Relationships are some of the hardest things to maintain in life. I sometimes wonder if I'm trying my hardest or if I'm doing everything I should be". Another LDR participant said, "Tell the communication classes about the results of this project. I am interested in the outcome of it". Thus, it is evident that research concerning long-distance relationships is not only wanted, but needed.

As society continues to become more globalized and transient, as long-term commitments become less common, ways to enhance and strengthen interpersonal relationships become more important. By investigating the unique characteristics of interpersonal relationships such as the distinction between LDRs and PRs, communication scholars have the potential to improve the quality of life for those struggling with interpersonal challenges. It is only through this type of commitment to use our knowledge more effectively that true communication satisfaction can be achieved.

APPENDIX A

TYPOLOGY OF AFFINITY-MAINTENANCE STRATEGIES

A Typology of Affinity-Maintenance Strategies

Strategy	Description
Altruism	Spouse assists partner in whatever ways are possible
Concede Control	Spouse allows partner to exert dominance in their relationship
Conversational Rule-Keeping	Spouse conforms closely to rules of politeness when conversing with the partner
Dynamism	Spouse presents self as a dynamic, active, and enthusiastic person in encounters with partner
Elicit Other's Self Disclosure	Spouse encourages partner to self-disclose
Equality	Spouse presents self as partner's equal
Facilitate Enjoyment	Spouse attempts to make the couple's interactions very enjoyable
Faithfulness	Spouse is faithful to partner
Honesty	Spouse is honest and sincere in interactions with partner
Inclusion of Other	Spouse invites partner to participate with him/her in social activities
Influence Perceived Perceptions of Closeness	Spouse engages in behaviors calculated to lead partner to the relationship as being close
Listening	Spouse is attentive to what partner says
Openness	Spouse self-discloses to partner to make him/her feel special
Optimism	Spouse presents self as an optimist when with partner
Physical Affection	Spouse is physically affectionate with partner

Physical Attractiveness	Spouse tries to be as attractive as possible in appearance, attire, and hygiene
Present Interesting Self	Spouse tries to be interesting when with partner
Reliability	Spouse is dependable in carrying out his/her responsibilities to partner and family
Reward Association	Spouse gives nice things to partner
Self-concept Confirmation	Spouse tries to build partner's self-esteem
Self-improvement	Spouse tries to improve self to please partner
Self-inclusion	Spouse joins in the activities of the partner
Sensitivity	Spouse acts in warm, caring, and empathic manner toward partner
Shared Spirituality	Spouse and partner share spiritual activities
Similarity	Spouse presents self as similar to partner in interests, beliefs, and values
Supportiveness	Spouse supports partner in his/her endeavors
Third-Party Relations	Spouse demonstrates positive feelings toward the partner's friends and family
Verbal Affection	Spouse is verbally affectionate with partner

from "Affinity-Maintenance in Marriage and its Relationship to Women's Marital Satisfaction," by R. A. Bell, J. A. Daly, and M. C. Gonzalez, 1987, Journal of Marriage and the Family, 49, 448.

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONAIRE FOR QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Instructions: Take a moment to think about your most recent romantic relationship. Keeping that particular relationship in mind, describe all of the ways in which you and your partner maintained your relationship (i.e. the ways in which you kept the relationship going). Because each relationship is unique, there are no right or wrong answers...anything goes! You may use the front and back of this sheet of paper. When completed, turn this form, along with the signed consent form, to your recitation leader. DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME ON THIS SHEET OF PAPER. Your recitation leader will award you your points according to the consent form, not this response sheet. Your comments will remain anonymous. Thank you for your help.

I. Please answer the following questions before you begin:

1. Your sex   male   female

2. Relationship status   past   current

3. Do you consider yourself involved in a long distance relationship (one in which you are restrained from seeing your partner regularly due to time and/or distance apart)?   yes   no

II. Write the ways in which you maintain(ed) your relationship. Use the back of this sheet if necessary.

APPENDIX C

CODE BOOK FOR QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Code Book: Long Distance Relationship Maintenance

CODE	Strategy	Definition
M.C.	Mediated Communication (in parenthesis are the particular modes)	Communication that is enacted through another medium besides face-to-face
C.A.	Conversational Acts	Talking with the partner about any personal or relational topic or issue
F.T.	Future Thought	Implicit or explicit focus or plan for the future
Exp/P Exp/V	Physical Expression Verbal Expression	The outward showing of feelings or emotions towards the partner
St	Stimulation	Tactics that cause physical or mental excitement
O.O.	Other Orientation	Tactics directed toward the happiness of the other person or the couple
T.T.	Together Time	Spending time with the partner (i.e. in the same location)
O.T.	Other Time	Strategies directed at allowing the partners to have space or time apart
S.V.	Shared Values	Involves the use of mutually defined values or beliefs by the couple

APPENDIX D

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

In the space provided, please write the last four digits of the student's social security number (student ID number). Also, in the second space, write "A" if the student is completing this survey, or "B" if the student's partner is completing this survey.

LDR-_____-____

Maintenance Strategies for Long Distance (LDR) and Proximal (PR) Romantic Relationships

General Instructions: Either a pen or a pencil may be used to complete this questionnaire. Most of the questions may be answered by simply circling the appropriate number. Other questions ask for written-in answers. The following statements concern activities people do to maintain their romantic relationships (i.e., to keep the relationship going). Keeping in mind your current relationship, please indicate whether you Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (A), Undecided (U), Agree (D), or Strongly Agree (SD).

	SD	D	U	A	SA
1. I send electronic mail (e-mail) to my partner on a regular basis.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I talk with my partner about the day-to-day activities of his/her life.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I stay involved in my partner's interests.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I mail letters to my partner to stay in contact.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I call my partner on a regular basis.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I discuss the future of our relationship with my partner.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I have deep, meaningful discussions about what we can do to improve our relationship with my partner.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I concentrate on future plans instead of focusing on when we are apart.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I try to make every moment count when I am with my partner.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I keep a diary and periodically give it to my partner to read.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I share the expenses of maintaining our relationship (e.g., phone calls, travel, etc.) with my partner.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I try to resolve problems with my partner as soon as they arise.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I buy gifts for my partner.	1	2	3	4	5

	SD	D	U	A	SA
14. I show physical affection (e.g., hugs cuddles, kisses) other than sexual intimacy to my partner.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I argue with my partner about trivial things.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I plan when my partner and I can see one another.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I listen carefully to my partner when he/she talks.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I try to take trips with my partner whenever possible.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I send cards to my partner when I can.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I openly tell my partner when I am dissatisfied with our relationship.	1	2	3	4	5
21. I spend as much time with my partner as possible.	1	2	3	4	5
22. I try to attend many of my partner's activities as a way to stay involved in his/her life.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I spend romantic times (e.g., dates, alone time) with my partner.	1	2	3	4	5
24. I often say, "I love you" to my partner.	1	2	3	4	5
25. I record audio tapes and give them to my partner.	1	2	3	4	5
26. I record video tapes and give then to my partner.	1	2	3	4	5
27. I discuss issues such as honesty and respect with my partner.	1	2	3	4	5
28. I plan when my partner and I can next talk with one another.	1	2	3	4	5
29. I complement my partner to help him/her feel better about him/herself.	1	2	3	4	5
30. I set aside specific times each week to interact with my partner.	1	2	3	4	5
31. I let my partner know when I am in a bad mood to avoid conflict.	1	2	3	4	5
32. I am sexually intimate with my partner whenever possible.	1	2	3	4	5
33. I support my partner during his/her decision-making.	1	2	3	4	5

	SD	D	U	A	SA
34. I joke with my partner.	1	2	3	4	5
35. I do favors (e.g., chores, type papers, etc. for my partner.	1	2	3	4	5
36. I tell my partner intimate sentiments (e.g., "I miss you").	1	2	3	4	5
37. I find fun and creative ways to interact with my partner.	1	2	3	4	5
38. I openly tell my partner when I am happy with the relationship.	1	2	3	4	5

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION:

SEX: _____ Female _____ Male

AGE: _____

Length of time dating your current partner? _____

On a scale of 1-10, please rate your level of satisfaction with the relationship, with 10 being the most highly satisfied and 1 the least satisfied. _____

Please feel free to comment on any particular item, or to provide additional ways you maintain your relationship that are not listed on this scale.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP!

APPENDIX E

PILOT STUDY FOR LDR MAINTENANCE STRATEGIES

Communication Maintenance: Pilot Study

A study is being conducted on the communication techniques used to maintain romantic long distance relationships (i.e., strategies to keep the relationship going). Please complete the following information based on your experiences in a long distance relationship. Your responses will remain completely anonymous, so **please do not write you name anywhere on this sheet.** You may write any additional comments that you believe to be pertinent to the study on the back of the survey. Thank you for your help.

PART A: Demographics

1. Please state your age: _____

2. Sex: ___ Female ___ Male

3. Classification: ___ Freshman/woman ___ Sophomore ___ Junior ___ Senior ___ Graduate

4. Please select **one** of the following categories:

___ I am currently involved in a long distance romantic relationship

(If marked, answer the following: For How long? ___ months)

___ Within the last 12 months I was involved in a long distance romantic relationship that has now ended.

(If marked, answer the following:
How long did the relationship last? ___ months)

___ Prior to this past year, I have once participated in a long distance romantic relationship.

(If marked, answer the following: When did it end? ___ months ago.
How long did it last? ___ months)

___ I have never participated in a long distance romantic relationship.

(If marked, please **discontinue** the survey)

PART B: Maintenance Techniques

The following is a list of communication maintenance techniques that appear to be the most commonly used techniques to maintain long distance romantic relationships. Next to each category, please indicate how often you (not your partner) use/used that particular strategy **per month.** For example if you call/ed your partner twice a week, then write 8 times per month. If you have never used that strategy, write 0 in the space. If you rarely use/d the strategy, write the total number of times and scratch out "per month".

Category 1: Mediated Communication (communication enacted through other means
beside face-to-face).

Telephone Calls _____ per month   Letters _____ per month

E-mail _____ per month   On Line Chat (IRC) _____
                                       per month

Cards _____ per month   Send Pictures _____ per
                                       month

Audio Tapes _____ per month   Video Tapes _____ per
                                       month

Diaries _____ per month

Which of these techniques do you believe is most important?

_____

Category 2: Communicating Intimacy (communication regarding the relationship, problems, or other issues, as well as expressions of affection toward the partner).

Problem Resolution (talk about problems) _____ per month

Argue _____ per month

Saying "I love you", "I miss you", or other intimate sentiments _____
per month

Complements _____ per month   Do favors _____ per month

Romanticism _____ per month   Be positive _____ per month

(Category 2 continued)

Give gifts ____ per month   Act supportive ____ per month

Listen to your partner ____ per month   Joke with partner ____ per month

Share expenses ____ per month

Express values shared by you and your partner such as:

Spirituality ____ per month   Trust ____ per month

Respect ____ per month   Honesty ____ per month

Talk about the day-to-day activities ____ per month

Have deep/meaningful discussions ____ per month

Which of these techniques do you believe is most important?

_____

Category 3: Future Focus (implicit or explicit focus, plan, or discussion about the future)

Marriage ____ per month   Plan for next visit ____ per month

Plan for next conversation/interaction ____ per month

Living together in the same city ____ per month

Which of these techniques do you believe is most important?

_____

Category 4: Together Time (spending time with the partner in the same location)

Visits ____ per month (if less often, indicate frequency _____)

Dates ____ per month   Trips ____ per month

Participate in other's interests ____ per month

(Category 4 continued)

Physical Expression:

Hugs ____ per month   Kiss ____ per month

Sex ____ per month   Cuddle ____ per month

Which of these techniques do you believe is most important?

_____

Please feel free to comment on any of the techniques mentioned above. In addition, if you use any techniques that are not listed above, please write them down, describe them, and indicate how often per month you use that technique. Continue on back if necessary. **THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP.**

APPENDIX F

LETTER FROM HUMAN SUBJECTS

University of North Texas

November 18, 1996

Ms. Katheryn Maguire
1163 Dallas Drive
Denton, TX 76205

Re: Human Subjects Application No. 96-239

Dear Ms. Maguire:

As permitted by federal law and regulations governing the use of human subjects in research projects (45 CFR 46), I have conducted an expedited review of your proposed project titled "A Dialectical Approach to Studying Long-Distance Relationship Maintenance Strategies." The risks inherent in this research are minimal, and the potential benefits to the subjects outweigh those risks. The submitted protocol and informed consent form are hereby approved for the use of human subjects on this project. **Please provide this office a copy of the final survey instrument.**

The UNT IRB must re-review this project prior to any modifications you make in the approved project. Please contact me if you wish to make such changes or need additional information.

If you have questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Mark Elder
Chairman
Institutional Review Board

ME:em

cc. IRB Members

APPENDIX G

DIRECTIONS TO THE PARTICIPANT

Dear Participant.

Thank you for volunteering to participate in this study. We are looking at the strategies people use to maintain romantic relationships.

In order to get the full 20 points:

Both you and your partner need to complete the survey (10 points for each one). Each packet should contain one copy of this letter (for your eyes only), two surveys, two consent forms, two addressed envelopes, and one blue dot. In order to ensure anonymity, ask your partner to secure the blue dot along the seal of their envelope. Additionally, I have included one stamp for the LDR couples to help defray any costs of mailing.

THESE SURVEYS ARE DUE BY WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26, 5:00 p.m. You can either hand them in directly to your TA, place them in the drop box located in Terril Hall 215, or mail them to the address on the envelope.

On the top of the surveys, write the **last four digits** of your social security number (student ID number). Also, write "A" on the survey you will complete and "B" on your partner's survey.

EXAMPLE: PR (or LDR)-_____ - ____

(LDR signifies long distance relationship and PR a proximal, or non-long distance relationship. Make sure you get the one that corresponds with your relationship type!). This will be used for identification purposes only and will not be traceable back to you. When the researcher receives the consent forms, the consent forms and the envelopes will be separated from the surveys.

When finished, write your name and your section leader's name on the front of both envelops where indicated. These envelops will be given to your recitation leader to record the discovery learning points.

If you have any questions regarding this project, feel free to contact Katheryn Maguire, the project leader, at 817-565-3198 (work) or 817-591-6059 (home).

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP!

APPENDIX H

CONSENT FORM

I,_____, agree to
participate in a study of the ways in which individuals maintain their romantic
relationships. A maintenance strategy is an action or activity used to sustain a
relationship through the constant flux that characterizes relationships to a desired
outcome. Though previous research has examined the ways in which people maintain
their relationships, few have actively sought information directly from individuals
involved in both long distance and proximal (close distance) relationships. We hope to
use your responses to gain better understanding of this complex phenomena.

I understand that in order to participate in this study, I must be currently involved
in a romantic relationship. In addition, I will ask my partner to participate in the study.
S/he will complete the instrument and mail it directly to the researcher. Thus, I will not
see my partner's response. Participation in the study will be a one time occurrence;
after the survey is completed, both my partner and I will have ended our participation in
the study.

I have been informed that the responses to the survey will remain completely
anonymous. My and my partner's name will appear on the consent form only. Once
both completed forms have been given to the recitation leader, the consent form will be
separated from the survey and will remain so for the duration of the project. Under this
condition, I agree that any information obtained from this research may be used in any
way thought best for publication or education.

I understand that there is no personal risk or discomfort directly involved with this
research and that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue participation in this
study at any time. A decision to withdraw or not participate in this study will not
negatively affect my grade in this course.

If I have any questions or problems that arise in connection with my participation
in this study, I should contact Katheryn Maguire, the project leader at 817-565-3198
(work) or 817-591-6059 (home).

_____   _____
(date)   (participant's signature)

_____   _____
(date)   (witness if the participant
                                    is unable to read this form
                                    and requires someone else
                                    to read it to him/her)

THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN REVIEWED BY UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS
COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS (PHONE: 817-565-
3940)

APPENDIX I

CORRELATIONS

Code Sheet for Total Item Correlation Matrix

I send electronic mail (e-mail) to my partner on a regular basis.	1
I talk with my partner about the day-to-day activities of his/her life.	2
I stay involved in my partner's interests.	3
I mail letters to my partner to stay in contact.	4
I call my partner on a regular basis.	5
I discuss the future of our relationship with my partner.	6
I have deep, meaningful discussions about what we can do to improve our relationship with my partner.	7
I concentrate on future plans instead of focusing on when we are apart.	8
I try to make every moment count when I am with my partner.	9
I keep a diary and periodically give it to my partner to read.	10
I share the expenses of maintaining our relationship (e.g., phone calls, travel, etc.) with my partner.	11
I try to resolve problems with my partner as soon as they arise.	12
I buy gifts for my partner.	13
I show physical affection (e.g., hugs cuddles, kisses) other than sexual intimacy to my partner.	14
I argue with my partner about trivial things.	15
I plan when my partner and I can see one another.	16
I listen carefully to my partner when he/she talks.	17
I try to take trips with my partner whenever possible.	18
I send cards to my partner when I can.	19
I openly tell my partner when I am dissatisfied with our relationship.	20
I spend as much time with my partner as possible.	21

I try to attend many of my partner's activities as way to stay involved in his/her life. 22

I spend romantic times (e.g., dates, alone time) with my partner. 23

I often say, "I love you" to my partner. 24

I record audio tapes and give them to my partner. 25

I record video tapes and give then to my partner. 26

I discuss issues such as honesty and respect with my partner. 27

I plan when my partner and I can next talk with one another. 28

I complement my partner to help him/her feel better about him/herself. 29

I set aside specific times each week to interact with my partner. 30

I let my partner know when I am in a bad mood to avoid conflict. 31

I am sexually intimate with my partner whenever possible. 32

I support my partner during his/her decision-making. 33

I joke with my partner. 34

I do favors (e.g., chores, type papers, etc. for my partner. 35

I tell my partner intimate sentiments (e.g., "I miss you"). 36

I find fun and creative ways to interact with my partner. 37

I openly tell my partner when I am happy with the relationship. 38

Item Total Correlations: LDR Only

					Item					
Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	1.0									
2	.04	1.0								
3	.03	.63*	1.0							
4	.14	.05	.13	1.0						
5	-.12	.43*	.38*	.06	1.0					
6	-.04	.51*	.44*	.01	.57*	1.0				
7	-.08	.38*	037*	.14	.36*	.61*	1.0			
8	-.09	.20*	.23*	.06	.20*	.33*	.27*	1.0		
9	-.07	.46*	.46*	.24*	.27*	.32*	.38*	.32*	1.0	
10	.28*	-.29*	-.12	.15	-.17*	-.17*	.02	-.00	-.28*	1.0
11	-.02	.31*	.33*	.04	.33*	.32*	.24*	.10	.24*	-.10
12	.05	.44*	.54*	.14	.26*	.46*	.41*	.23*	.45*	-.09
13	.04	.58*	.50*	.26*	.44*	.55*	.43*	.28*	.38*	-.09
14	-.06	.68*	.55*	.12	.33*	.49*	.37*	.35*	.68*	-.34*
15	-.03	.11	.07	.05	.25*	.05	.02	.00	-.05	-.05
16	-.02	.35*	.31*	.04	.25*	.18*	.22*	.22*	.26*	-.11
17	.09	.48*	.39*	.20*	.19*	.38	.41*	.29*	.48*	-.14
18	-.04	.27*	.25*	-.00	.24*	.33*	.21*	.24*	.33*	-.12
19	.10	.17*	.23*	.51*	.12*	.27	.36*	.25*	.29*	.12
20	-.01	.28*	.37*	-.05	.24*	.41	.40*	.35*	.33*	-.02
21	-.06	.52*	.38*	.01	.44*	.48*	.39*	.26*	.50*	-.15
22	.01	.35*	.39*	.06	.26*	.35*	.41*	.23*	.32*	.06
23	-.08	.66*	.56*	.06	.43*	.55*	.39*	.38*	.56*	-.30*

Item Total Correlations: LDR Only (cont.).

	Item									
Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
24	.26*	.30*	.30*	.11	.20*	.43*	.34*	.20*	.26*	-.04
25	.22*	.01	-.00	.19*	-.01	.04	.03	-.00	-.07	.21*
26	.28*	-.08	-.07	.27*	-.01	-.00	.11	.04	-.18*	.51*
27	-.09	.46*	.35*	-.05	.27*	.39*	.38*	.35*	.36*	-.10
28	.02	.38*	.32*	.02	.27*	.33	.37*	.27*	.27*	.02
29	-.03	.59*	.47*	.10	.34*	.35*	.37	.28	.44	-.13
30	-.11	.51*	.37*	.04	.41*	.41*	.40*	.20*	.34*	-.07
31	-.09	.19*	.25*	.04	.21*	.24*	.27*	.15	.27*	-.07
32	.04	.13	.20*	-.04	.08	.16	.07	.09	.19*	.05
33	-.02	.54*	.50*	.06	.35*	.43*	.43*	.37*	.53*	-.15
34	-.08	357*	.46*	.03	.37*	.40*	.24*	.18*	.41*	-.33
35	.08	.45*	.34*	-.06	.22*	.24*	.13	.08	.14	-.01
36	-.01	.54*	.53*	.11	.41*	.54*	.42*	.34*	.33*	-.13
37	.01	.50*	.39*	.06	.26*	.21*	.34*	.25*	.35*	-.08
38	.07	.52*	.46*	.01	.39*	.49*	.36*	.34*	.38*	-.11

p < .05

Item Total Correlations: LDR Only (cont.).

					Item					
Item	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
11	1.0									
12	.36*	1.0								
13	.18*	.36*	1.0							
14	.23*	.48*	.47*	1.0						
15	.07	-.03	.09	.03	1.0					
16	.25*	.36*	.33*	.30*	.04	1.0				
17	.17*	.46*	.34*	.56*	-.15	.26*	1.0			
18	.11	.26*	.21*	.33*	-.09	.18*	.33*	1.0		
19	-.00	.26*	.39*	.28*	-.02	.03	.39*	.30*	1.0	
20	.27*	.43*	.32*	.36*	.10	.25*	.32*	.23*	.08	1.0
21	.30*	.47*	.42*	.52*	.01	.39*	.39*	.37*	.24*	.32*
22	.24*	.38*	.47*	.32*	.19*	.25*	.31*	.38*	.31*	.31*
23	.34*	.53*	.43*	.73*	-.00	.42*	.58*	.42*	.24*	.44*
24	.17*	.25*	.35*	.41*	.09	.03	.25*	.19*	.29*	.22*
25	-.04	.00	.08	-.09	-.12	-.08	-.06	.01	.12	-.09
26	.06	-.12	.05	-.18*	.04	-.19*	-.08	-.04	.13	-.01
27	.27*	.33*	.34*	.47*	.02	.26*	.37*	.24*	.15	.42*
28	.20*	.36*	.37*	.31*	.01	.48*	.24*	.22*	.22*	.16
29	.26*	.39*	.49*	.48*	.09	.27*	.42*	.21*	.32*	.38*
30	.23*	.37*	.51*	.38*	.14	.41*	.29*	.28*	.18*	.45*
31	.09	.19*	.20*	.20*	.00	.32*	.23*	.22*	.14	.50*
32	.13	.29*	.11	.18*	.15	.18*	.17*	.19*	-.07	.23*

Item

Item	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
33	.39*	.50*	.42*	.53*	.04	.33*	.47*	.38*	.31*	.44*
34	.32*	.44*	.28*	.56*	.10	.33*	.37*	.29*	.13	.27*
35	.14	.13	.26*	.26*	-.01	.09	.24*	.25*	.07	.03
36	.18	.51*	.40*	.56*	.12	.32*	.48*	.34*	.33*	.32*
37	.16	.34	.40	.38	-.06	.35*	.45*	.24*	.26*	.25
38	.28*	.51*	.31*	.57*	.04	.29*	.36*	.30*	.20*	.40*

$p < .05$

Item Total Correlations: LDR Only (cont.)

					Item					
Item	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
21	1.0									
22	.56*	1.0								
23	.60*	.43*	1.0							
24	.28*	.21*	.26*	1.0						
25	-.10	-.04	.018*	.13	1.0					
26	-.19*	.06	-.15	.01	.05	1.0				
27	.45*	.33*	.45*	.23*	-.06	-.10	1.0			
28	.42*	.39*	.39*	.14	.02	.00	.30*	1.0		
29	.60*	.54*	.47*	.21*	-.02	-.03	.52*	.34*	1.0	
30	.46*	.55*	.49*	.23*	-.01	.04	.28*	.61	.47*	1.0
31	.24*	.23*	.32*	.05	-.05	-.19*	.33*	.24*	.22*	.29*
32	.15	.19*	.15	.21*	-.15	.03	.13	.02	.13	.16
33	.64*	.52*	.54*	.32*	-.15	-.17*	.52*	.34*	.63*	.42*
34	.46*	.25*	.58*	.25*	-11	-.22*	.35*	.35*	.36*	.32
35	.42*	.40*	.34*	.08	.04	.05	.27*	.31*	.42*	.47*
36	.48*	.37*	.55*	.45*	-.08	-.17*	.47*	.43*	.39*	.38*
37	.38*	.32*	.40*	.15	-.01	-.04	.45*	.29*	.55*	.32*
38	.54*	.35*	.50*	.36*	.02	-.09	.55*	.39*	.47*	.37

p < .05

Item Total Correlations: LDR Only (cont.)

				Item				
Item	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38
31	1.0							
32	-.03	1.0						
33	.33*	.20*	1.0					
34	.22*	.22*	.47*	1.0				
35	.10	.06	.32*	.24*	1.0			
36	.28*	.24*	.54*	.63*	.28*	1.0		
37	.29*	.12	.50*	.47*q.32*		.47*	1.0	
38	.31*	.25*	.60*	.54*	.29*	.68*	.52	1.0

p < .05

APPENDIX J

DATA COLLECTION CORRECTION

Data Collection Correction

After the scales had been distributed to the first sections of the communication course, an error in the directions was detected. The directions were written, "Keeping in mind your current relationship, please indicate whether you Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (A), Undecided (U), Agree (D), or Strongly Agree (SD)". They should have read, "Keeping in mind your current relationship, please indicate whether you Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Undecided (U), Agree (A), or Strongly Agree (SA)". Following detection, course instructors communicated the error to their students. The students were also instructed to tell their partner about the change. Although the error in the directions could have resulted in skewed results, because the error was detected early and corrected, it was believed to have minimal if any effect on the final results.

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