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Equity and Relationship Maintenance in First Marriages and Remarriages

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ABSTRACT

Research indicates that individuals in remarriages experience less marital satisfaction than individuals in a first marriage. This study sought to determine whether variations in equity and maintenance might explain this phenomenon. A sample of 547 married individuals from the United States completed an online survey. Results suggested virtually no differences in the use of positive or negative maintenance by marriage type. Although maintenance use predicted a larger amount of the variance in satisfaction among those who were remarried, more maintenance behaviors entered the regression equation predicting satisfaction for individuals in first marriages. Finally, equity predicted the use of maintenance for both marriage types.

KEYWORDS

Equity; maintenance; remarriage

According to the Pew Research Center, 40% of new marriages in the United States include at least one partner who has been married before, and 20% are between two partners who had both been previously married (Livingston, 2014). These numbers reflect a persistent rise in remarriage in the United States over the past 50-plus years that is attributable, in part, to the increased prevalence of divorce since 1960, coupled with longer average life spans. The 2014 Pew Report concludes that nearly a quarter of all marriages currently include a partner who has been previously married (Livingston, 2014).

As Buunk and Mutsaers (1999) argued, most individuals remarry with expectations of being happier than in their first marriage. Yet, research does not support this contention; a host of research indicates that remarried individuals experience less marital satisfaction (e.g., Ivanova, 2016; Mirecki, Chou, Elliott, & Schneider, 2013; Vemer, Coleman, Ganong, & Cooper, 1989) and that remarriages are more likely to end in divorce than are first marriages (Clarke & Wilson, 1994; McCarthy & Ginsberg, 2007). Cherlin (1978) famously argued that remarriage is “an incomplete institution” in which remarried partners face challenges not faced in first marriages, including heightened uncertainty and the challenges associated with blended families (Wilder, 2012a).

Despite the prevalence of remarriages in the United States, relatively few studies have focused on the mechanisms by which such marriages might succeed or fail (Coleman, Ganong, & Weaver, 2001). The vast majority of research into remarriage has focused on the role ambiguity associated with the establishment of stepfamilies (e.g., Wilder, 2012a) or the demographic or personality predictors of remarriage (e.g., Garneau, Higginbotham, & Adler-Baeder, 2015). At question is whether marital interaction itself might explain variations in the marital experience between first marriages and remarriages. This study focuses on the positive and negative relationship maintenance activities among those in a first marriage versus those who are remarried, with a central focus on the impact of equity perceptions.

THE REMARRIAGE CONTEXT

Terminology can be important when considering the remarriage context. When referencing first marriages, it is clear that both members of the couple have never been married before. However, remarriage is a couple-level construct. That is, one or both members of the marriage might have been married before (Shriner, 2009). Although Kurdek (1989) argued that couples in which both members are remarried are different than couples in which only one member has been remarried, his research found that marital history (i.e., whether one or both spouses had been married before) was not associated with marital quality. Accordingly, this study does not differentiate between the two forms of remarriage.

As described earlier, the central concern of this article is that remarriages have higher rates of divorce and lower levels of satisfaction as compared to first marriages (Clarke & Wilson, 1994; Ivanova, 2016; McCarthy & Ginsberg, 2007; Mirecki et al., 2013). Coleman et al. (2001) suggested three reasons why remarriages are more challenging to maintain than first marriages. First, Coleman et al. (2001) discussed the extent to which remarried partners might be more willing and likely to divorce again given that they have successfully navigated the divorce process once before. Because divorce in and of itself might not serve as a strong barrier for dissolution for these couples, Coleman et al. (2001) argued that engaging in maintenance behavior might be even more important for remarried couples than for couples in their first marriage. However, as of yet no scholars have focused on the use of maintenance among remarried couples.

Second, Coleman et al. (2001) acknowledged the extensive research that suggests that remarried individuals might have personality characteristics that prevent or diminish effective maintenance activity. For example, Solomon and Jackson (2014) found that low levels of conscientiousness and agreeableness and high levels of neuroticism predicted divorce, and that these results tended to remain true regardless of life events. That is, individuals with these personality

characteristics tend to enact behaviors that negatively affect daily interaction (Donnellan, Assad, Robins, & Conger, 2007), even when they are not experiencing negative life events (Solomon & Jackson, 2014). As such, there are reasons to suspect that individuals in remarriages might fail to enact prosocial maintenance, or might be enacting more negative maintenance, as compared to those in first marriages.

Finally, Coleman et al. (2001) proposed that the maintenance strategies that work for couples in their first marriage might not be as effective for couples in a remarriage. Remarriages are different from first marriages for a number of reasons, including the potential existence of stepchildren, family complexity, effects of the first marriage on subsequent marriages, economic demands (e.g., spousal and/or child support), and potential lack of social support from family and friends (Meyer, Larson, Busby, & Harper, 2012). For these reasons, Coleman et al. (2001) suggested that behaviors such as allowing the partner to have control or providing the partner with support might engender problems in stepfamily or extended family functioning, and as such may be eschewed by those in a remarriage because of the belief that children are the priority (Garneau et al., 2015). This leads to a discussion of the nature and importance of relationship maintenance.

RELATIONSHIP MAINTENANCE

Although there are several definitions of relationship maintenance (Dindia & Canary, 1993), the most commonly used definition references activities used to keep a relationship in a satisfied state. Several operationalizations of relationship maintenance exist, but the most frequently used is the typology developed by Stafford, Canary, and colleagues (Ogolsky & Bowers, 2013). To create this typology, Stafford and Canary (1991; Canary & Stafford, 1992) first used inductive and deductive means to identify five maintenance behaviors, which included *assurances* (reassuring your partner about your commitment to the relationship), *openness* (talks about the relationship and the individuals' wants and needs), *positivity* (being pleasant and cheerful to the partner), *social networks* (relying on common friends and family members for relational purposes), and *sharing tasks* (agreeing on how instrumental activities will be accomplished). Subsequent to these initial studies, Stafford, Dainton, and Haas (2000) probed for additional, more routine maintenance behaviors. In addition to confirming the original five behaviors, they identified two additional prosocial maintenance behaviors: *conflict management* (which refers to the use of integrative conflict strategies) and *advice* (serving as an honest sounding board for the partner and his or her problems).

Finally, in recognition that positive and negative behaviors coexist in relationships, Dainton and Gross (2008) focused on identifying more connotatively negative behaviors that individuals use to maintain their relationship. Again, using inductive and deductive means, they categorized six negative maintenance

behaviors: *avoidance* (which refers to both topic and partner avoidance), *spying* (monitoring who your partner interacts with), *destructive conflict* (using conflict behaviors that are more likely to exacerbate rather than resolve conflict), *jealousy induction* (seeking to make the partner jealous), *infidelity* (having other romantic or sexual relationships to prevent boredom), and *allowing control* (foregoing interaction with others or activities that the partner does not enjoy).

The corpus of research focusing on relationship maintenance processes has established that maintenance behavior predicts between a moderate and large amount of the variance in relational satisfaction (Ogolsky & Bowers, 2013). This holds true across differing cultures (e.g., Dainton, 2017b; Yum & Li, 2007), among differing marginalized groups such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) romantic relationships (e.g., Ogolsky & Gray, 2016) and in differing relational types such as friendships (e.g., Messman, Canary, & Hause, 2000) and family relationships (e.g., Myers & Odenweller, 2015). Accordingly, it makes sense to investigate the extent to which these maintenance behaviors predict marital satisfaction among remarried couples. A central thesis of this study is that variations in maintenance enactment might explain why individuals who are remarried experience lower relational satisfaction than individuals in a first marriage. That is, because previous research has established that the use of maintenance behaviors predicts relationship satisfaction and commitment (Ogolsky & Bowers, 2013), it could be that variations in marital satisfaction among those in first marriages and those in remarriages can be explained by differential use of maintenance behaviors.

Even though there has been no study comparing the maintenance activities of individuals in first marriages versus those in remarriages, previous research does give us indications of differences based on conceptually similar behaviors. For example, Meyer et al. (2012) found that individuals in first marriages reported more positive communication and less negative communication than individuals in remarriages. In partial support, Wilder (2012a) found that individuals in first marriages engaged in less topic avoidance than individuals in remarriages, and Coleman, Ganong, and Fine (2000) found that individuals in remarriages use more destructive conflict strategies than did those in first marriages. Together, these studies suggest a decreased use of positive communication and an increased use of negative maintenance among those in remarriages, which leads to the first hypothesis:

H1. Individuals who are remarried will engage in less positive maintenance activity and more negative maintenance activity than individuals in their first marriage.

Not only is there a likelihood of variations in the extent to which individuals in these two relational forms engage in maintenance, there is also a possibility

that the behaviors that predict satisfaction for the two groups might vary. Recall that Coleman et al. (2001) postulated that the same behaviors might function differently in remarriages because of the complexity of the family system. That is, in remarriages the couple need not only focus on meeting the needs of the current spouse, but also manage relationships with former spouses, children, and ex-family members. As such, partner-focused relationship maintenance behaviors might play a diminished role in the context of a remarried person's relational satisfaction. It could be, for example, that a remarried individual's satisfaction is associated with things like the partner's performance of the stepparent role, or managing the social networks to privilege some family connections over others. This possibility leads to the first research question:

RQ1. Are there variations in the ways that the use of maintenance predicts relational satisfaction between individuals in a first marriage and those who are remarried?

EQUITY THEORY AND MAINTENANCE

Finally, this study is grounded in equity theory. *Equity theory* proposes that individuals seek to maintain relationships in which the proportion of rewards to costs are equal for both partners in the relationship, which is also known as distributive justice (Hatfield, Traupmann, Sprecher, Utne, & Hay, 1985). When the proportions of rewards and costs are equal, the relationship is deemed *equitable*. There are two forms of inequity: *underbenefittedness* (in which one partner is receiving fewer rewards relative to costs) and *overbenefittedness* (in which one partner is receiving more rewards relative to costs). There is a long and substantial record of research supporting the idea that individuals in equitable relationships are more satisfied with their relationship than individuals in inequitable relationships (Buunk & van Yperen, 1991; Hatfield et al., 1985; Sprecher, 2001; Utne, Hatfield, Traupmann, & Greenberger, 1984).

There are two reasons to frame this study within equity theory. First, and most important, the bulk of research into relational maintenance has used social exchange principles in general, and equity theory in particular (Dainton, 2017a). Scholars have determined that one's own prosocial maintenance enactment is perceived as a cost, and receiving the partner's prosocial maintenance behavior is perceived as a reward. Accordingly, individuals who perceive their relationship to be equitable engage in more prosocial maintenance than individuals who perceive themselves to be underbenefitted (Canary & Stafford, 1992; Stafford & Canary, 2006). Note that although the theory would predict the use of fewer prosocial maintenance behaviors among those who perceive themselves to be overbenefitted, research has not supported this prediction (see Dainton, 2017a). Of interest, the sole maintenance behavior used most often by overbenefitted individuals is avoidance, a negative behavior (Dainton & Gross, 2008).

Second, Ganong and Coleman (1994) proposed that individuals in remarriages might be more sensitive to proportions of rewards and costs than individuals in first marriages. Buunk and Mutsaers (1999) asked individuals who were remarried to compare their perceived equity in their new marriage as compared to their perceived equity in their first marriage. Not surprisingly, individuals reported being more underbenefitted in their previous marriage, and relatively advantaged in their current (re)marriage. There are several possible explanations for this, including cognitive distortions. As Furstenberg and Spanier (1987) noted, “people marrying a second time have a strong issue interest in perceiving the event as different” (as cited by Buunk & Mutsaers, 1999, p. 124). Nevertheless, Furstenberg and Spanier (1987) did find that remarried couples endorsed a need to give and take, which is conceptually similar to the central premise of equity theory.

At question is not whether equity theory predicts the use of maintenance, but how equity might be differentially associated with the use of maintenance behaviors. Recall that individuals who remarry have heightened expectations for marital satisfaction than those in a first marriage (Buunk & Mutsaers, 1999) and that they might be more attuned to equitable exchanges (Ganong & Coleman, 1994). If these are indeed the case, we might see differences in the relationship between equity and the use of maintenance. This leads to the second research question:

RQ2. Are there differences between those in first marriages and those who are remarried in the extent to which equity influences the use of maintenance?

METHOD

Procedure and Sample

This study was approved by the university Institutional Review Board (IRB #16-01-004). To collect data, an online survey was created to measure equity, self-reported maintenance behavior, perception of the partner’s behavior, satisfaction, and additional variables that were not a part of this study. Participants were recruited through SurveyMonkey’s audience request process, which allows researchers to pay for a targeted sample from the company’s membership. In this case, the author requested 400 heterosexual married respondents from the United States, with a specific request for 200 Black respondents and 200 White respondents. The sample was limited to heterosexual partners because same-sex marriage only became legalized throughout the United States in 2015, which limits the likelihood of soliciting remarried same-sex couples. Moreover, scholars are just beginning to study the effects of legal marriage on LGBTQ individuals, with results suggesting that the meaning and experience of marriage is different for these individuals than for opposite-sex married individuals (Haas & Lannutti, 2018). Because more people responded to the solicitation request than anticipated, the total sample included 547 individuals.

Respondents were not restricted to those who were currently satisfied in their marriage. However, only one relational partner was permitted to fill out the questionnaire to prevent nonindependence of data. Individuals were instructed to neither discuss nor show their survey to their spouse.

A total of 547 heterosexual married individuals completed an online survey. Of those, 288 were men (52.8%) and 257 were women (47.2%). Two individuals failed to report sex. The mean age was 49.2 ($SD = 12.2$) and the mean length of marriage was 18 years ($SD = 13.09$ years). A total of 383 (70.7%) reported being in their first (only) marriage, 159 (29.3%) reported being in a second marriage, and 5 failed to report their number of marriages. The couples reported having a mean number of 2.67 children ($SD = 1.94$). The racial makeup of the sample was as follows: 260 (48.7%) reported being African American or Black, 16 (2.9%) reported being Caribbean American/Black, 216 (39.5%) reported being European American or White; 9 (1.6%) reported being Hispanic/Black; 25 (4.6%) reported being Hispanic/White; 19 (3.5%) reported being mixed race; and 2 (0.4%) failed to check a racial or ethnic category. Accordingly, this sample has proportionately more individuals who identify as African American or Black than the makeup of the U.S. population, and proportionately fewer White and Hispanic or Latino individuals than the larger U.S. population.

Instrumentation

The satisfaction and maintenance indexes were based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Norton's (1983) Quality Marriage Index, a six-item measure of satisfaction, was used ($\alpha = .97$, $M = 4.23$, $SD = 1.03$). Maintenance was measured using Stafford et al.'s (2000) measure of self-reported maintenance enactment. Scale reliabilities and means are reported in Table 1.

Table 1. Scale Reliabilities, Means, and Standard Deviations for Maintenance Behaviors

	Self-reported use of maintenance
Advice	$\alpha = .84$, $M = 3.88$, $SD = 0.89$
Assurances	$\alpha = .81$, $M = 4.20$, $SD = 0.91$
Conflict	$\alpha = .81$, $M = 4.08$, $SD = 0.74$
Network	$\alpha = .89$, $M = 3.58$, $SD = 1.13$
Openness	$\alpha = .84$, $M = 3.85$, $SD = 0.94$
Positivity	$\alpha = .83$, $M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.80$
Tasks	$\alpha = .83$, $M = 4.25$, $SD = 1.11$
Allow control	$\alpha = .75$, $M = 2.22$, $SD = 1.31$
Avoidance	$\alpha = .74$, $M = 3.12$, $SD = 1.20$
Infidelity	$\alpha = .86$, $M = 1.43$, $SD = 0.93$
Jealousy induction	$\alpha = .91$, $M = 1.38$, $SD = 0.77$
Negative conflict	$\alpha = .79$, $M = 1.77$, $SD = 1.05$
Spying	$\alpha = .84$, $M = 1.56$, $SD = 0.89$

Two single-item equity indexes were employed to measure equity: Hatfield et al.'s (1979) global equity measure and Sprecher's (1986) equity scale. Hatfield et al.'s question asks "Considering how much you and your partner put into this relationship and how much you and your partner get out of it, which of the following is most accurate?" There are seven numbered response options, ranging from -3 (*I am getting a much better deal than my partner; overbenefitted*) to 3 (*My partner is getting a much better deal; underbenefitted*), with the midpoint representing equity. The Sprecher question asks respondents to "consider all the times when your relationship has become unbalanced and one partner has contributed more for a time. When this happens, who is more likely to contribute more?" Again, there are seven numbered response options, ranging from -3 (*My partner is much more likely to be the one to contribute more; overbenefitted*) to 3 (*I am much more likely to be the one to contribute more; underbenefitted*), with the midpoint representing equity. The two measures were summed, with higher scores representing greater underbenefittedness ($\alpha = .66$, $M = .40$, $SD = 2.60$). Previous reliability has been $\alpha = .70$ (Dainton, 2003).

To classify individuals into equity groups, midpoint responses on the combined index (i.e., those scoring between -1 and 1) were defined as equitable. Those scoring between below -1 were classified as overbenefitted, and those scoring above 1 were classified as underbenefitted. In this sample, 47.7% of the respondents reported being in an equitable relationship ($n = 261$), 22.9% reported being overbenefitted ($n = 125$), and 29.4% reported being underbenefitted ($n = 161$). Given these responses, it appears that individuals in this sample perceive themselves to be relatively more underbenefitted as compared to reports in previous research. Buunk and van Yperen (1991), for example, found that 47% of their sample perceived themselves to be in equitable relationships, with the remainder nearly evenly divided between underbenefitted and overbenefitted.

Of further interest, there were no significant variations in perceived equity by marriage type (first marriage vs. remarriage). For individuals in first marriages, 91 (23.8%) reported being overbenefitted, 176 (46%) reported being in an equitable relationship, and 116 (30.3%) reported being underbenefitted. For remarried individuals 33 (20.8%) reported being overbenefitted, 83 (52.2%) reported being in an equitable relationship, and 43 (27%) reported being underbenefitted. A chi-square test of equity variations by marriage type was not significant, $\chi^2 = 1.76$, $p = 4.14$.

RESULTS

The first hypothesis predicted that individuals in first marriages would report using more positive maintenance and less negative maintenance than individuals who were remarried. A multivariate analysis of variance was used to test the hypothesis,

$F(13, 423) = 2.16$, Wilks's $\Lambda = .94$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$, power = .96. Results suggested a significant difference between the groups. To further probe the results, a Bonferroni correction was set at .003, and significant univariate equations suggested only one behavior—negative conflict management—was used differently based on marriage type. This difference was counter to the prediction; individuals in first marriages reported using more negative conflict management than individuals in remarriages. Accordingly, the hypothesis failed to receive support. Results of the univariate tests are reported in Table 2.

The first research question asked whether there were variations in the way that the use of maintenance predicted satisfaction for those in first marriages versus remarriages. As a first step, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to ascertain whether there was a significant difference in reported marital satisfaction by marriage type. Results suggested no significant difference, $F(1, 536) = 1.63$, $p = .20$. To answer the research question, the data file was split by type of marriage, and separate linear regressions were run with satisfaction as the dependent variable and the seven positive maintenance behaviors and the six maintenance behaviors as the independent variables. Both equations were significant. For individuals in their first marriage, $F(13, 310) = 22.87$, $p < .001$, adjusted $R^2 = .42$. For individuals who were remarried, $F(13, 114) = 14.83$, $p < .001$, adjusted $R^2 = .59$. Results suggest that maintenance enactment predicts more of the variance in marital satisfaction for those in a remarriage, that more maintenance behaviors predict satisfaction for those in a first marriage, and that there are variations in the maintenance behaviors that predict satisfaction for the two groups. Results of the regression equations are given in Table 3.

The second research question asked whether the relationships between equity and the use of maintenance were different for those in first marriages and remarriages. Again, the file was split by type of marriage, and separate one-way ANOVAs were run. Results found some variations between the groups: There were equity differences for both groups in the use of assurances, networks, positivity, allowing control, and avoidance. Equity variations also were associated

Table 2. Univariate Tests of Differences in the Use of Maintenance by Marriage Type

Maintenance Behavior	1 st Marriage Mean (SD)	Remarriage Mean (SD)	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Advice	7.70 (1.78)	7.79 (1.86)	0.23	.634
Assurances	12.49 (2.70)	13.05 (2.69)	3.88	.050
Conflict	12.25 (2.18)	12.23 (2.42)	0.01	.913
Network	7.15 (2.27)	7.34 (2.27)	0.64	.423
Openness	11.57 (2.68)	11.67 (3.08)	0.12	.729
Positivity	12.56 (2.04)	12.99 (2.12)	3.939	.048
Tasks	12.64 (2.15)	13.01 (2.32)	2.50	.115
Allow Control	6.79 (3.18)	6.20 (3.32)	3.07	.080
Avoidance	9.46 (2.90)	9.08 (3.12)	1.53	.218
Infidelity	2.90 (1.72)	2.78 (1.76)	0.64	.426
Jealousy Induction	2.84 (1.57)	2.48 (1.15)	5.68	.018
Negative Conflict	5.57 (2.75)	4.66 (2.20)	11.03	.001
Spying	4.84 (2.44)	4.25 (1.86)	5.92	.015

Table 3. Positive and Negative Maintenance Regressed on Satisfaction for First Marriages and Remarriages

	Beta	Adjusted R^2	F
First marriages		.42	17.90 (13, 295), $p < .001$
Assurances	.45***		
Advice	.15*		
Conflict	-.08		
Network	.04		
Openness	.01		
Positivity	.16*		
Tasks	-.09		
Allow control	-.16**		
Avoidance	-.08		
Infidelity	-.15*		
Jealousy induction	.22***		
Negative conflict	-.04		
Spying	.03		
Remarriages		.59	14.83 (13, 114), $p < .001$
Assurances	.71***		
Advice	.05		
Conflict	-.17		
Network	.16*		
Openness	-.16		
Positivity	-.01		
Tasks	-.11		
Allow control	-.16*		
Avoidance	-.25***		
Infidelity	.02		
Jealousy induction	.04		
Negative conflict	-.09		
Spying	-.03		

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .000$.

with the use of conflict management, tasks, negative conflict, and spying for those in first marriages, suggesting that equity might play a larger role regarding maintenance behavior in first marriages as compared to remarriages. Table 4 presents the results of the ANOVAs.

DISCUSSION

This study sought to examine the maintenance processes for individuals in a first marriage as compared to those in a remarriage. Despite previous research establishing that individuals in remarriages experience less satisfaction than those in a first marriage (Ivanova, 2016; Mirecki et al., 2013; Vemer et al., 1989), that individuals in remarriage enact more negative behavior (Coleman et al., 2001; Meyer et al., 2012; Wilder, 2012a), and that remarriages are more prone to divorce than first marriages (Clarke & Wilson, 1994; McCarthy & Ginsberg, 2007), this study failed to establish that the use of positive and negative maintenance can explain these experiences. The results found few differences overall between the two groups.

Table 4. Equity Variations in the Use of Maintenance for First Marriages and Remarriages

	1 st Marriage				Remarriage			
	Mean	F (p)	η_p^2	Power	Mean	F (p)	η_p^2	Power
Advice		2.89 (.056)	.02	.56		2.84 (.062)	.04	.55
Over	7.64				8.15			
Equity	7.94				7.97			
Under	7.39				7.17			
Assurances		10.65 (.000)	.07	.99		8.06 (.001)	.11	.95
Over	12.96 ^a				13.67 ^a			
Equity	12.96 ^a				13.58 ^a			
Under	11.50 ^b				11.57 ^b			
Conflict		6.18 (.002)	.04	.89		0.73 (.485)	.01	.17
Over	12.00 ^a				12.59			
Equity	12.71 ^b				12.27			
Under	11.78 ^a				11.86			
Network		10.79 (.000)	.06	.97		7.47 (.001)	.11	.94
Over	7.41 ^a				7.93 ^a			
Equity	7.56 ^a				7.74 ^a			
Under	6.38 ^b				6.14 ^b			
Openness		1.69 (.186)	.03	.61		2.68 (.073)	.04	.52
Over	11.69				12.04			
Equity	11.79				12.06			
Under	11.16				10.66			
Positivity		4.41 (.010)	.03	.76		4.09(.019)	.06	.72
Over	12.42 ^a				13.70 ^a			
Equity	12.92 ^a				13.11 ^a			
Under	12.15 ^b				12.23 ^b			
Tasks		5.13 (.006)	.03	.82		0.13 (.878)	.00	.07
Over	11.97 ^a				12.81			
Equity	12.96 ^b				13.05			
Under	11.69 ^a				13.09			
Allow Control		6.70 (.000)	.06	.98		7.37 (.001)	.11	.94
Over	6.00 ^a				5.67 ^a			
Equity	6.42 ^a				5.48 ^a			
Under	7.89 ^b				7.94 ^b			
Avoidance		13.37 (.001)	.06	.91		6.52 (.002)	.09	.90
Over	9.34 ^a				8.33 ^a			
Equity	8.72 ^a				8.56 ^a			
Under	10.61 ^b				10.63 ^b			
Infidelity		6.70 (.051)	.02	.58		2.25 (.109)	.04	.45
Over	2.94				2.63			
Equity	2.66				2.53			
Under	3.21				3.29			
Jealousy Induct		6.70 (.278)	.01	.28		0.94 (.392)	.02	.21
Over	2.94				2.30			
Equity	2.69				2.44			
Under	2.99				2.69			
Neg. Conflict		6.70 (.004)	.04	.85		1.95 (.147)	.03	.40
Over	5.54 ^a				4.74			
Equity	5.09 ^a				4.33			
Under	6.29 ^b				5.23			
Spying		6.70 (.031)	.02	.65		0.45 (.956)	.00	.06
Over	4.65 ^a				4.26			
Equity	4.56 ^a				4.29			
Under	5.37 ^b				4.17			

Note. Means with different superscripts represent significant differences between groups.

There are several implications of these results. First, unlike previous research, there were no differences in satisfaction between the two groups in this sample. Because maintenance behavior is defined as those behaviors that individuals use to sustain desired levels of satisfaction (Dindia & Canary, 1993) it should be no surprise that there were virtually no differences in the use of positive or negative maintenance between the two groups. Yet, recall that Coleman et al. (2001) provided reasons above and beyond satisfaction that would suggest that individuals in remarriages might enact maintenance differently from those in first marriages. First, they acknowledged that potential divorce is less likely to function as a barrier to dissolution for these couples. Canary and Dainton (2006) articulated that the maintenance process involves both centripetal forces (i.e., those things that function as barriers to divorce) and centrifugal forces (i.e., those things that keep a relationship from breaking apart). If there are fewer centripetal forces in a relationship, then centrifugal forces such as the use of maintenance behavior play a stronger role. As such, we might expect remarried individuals to use more maintenance behaviors than individuals in a first marriage. The results of this study call this assumption into question, at least in terms of variations in maintenance behavior. However, it should be noted that the variance in marital satisfaction explained by maintenance enactment was much larger for remarried individuals (59%) than for those in a first marriage (42%). Accordingly, although the relative frequency of maintenance might not vary between the two groups, the relative importance of the use of maintenance might in fact vary. This possibility deserves additional attention.

Second, Coleman et al. (2001) proposed that individuals in remarriages might have personality characteristics that would promote more negative interactions than those in first marriages. Although previous research has supported this proposition (Donnellan et al., 2007), there were no significant differences in the use of negative behaviors between the groups. In fact, the only difference in the use of maintenance between first-married individuals and remarried individuals was for the use of destructive conflict behaviors, with those in first marriages engaging in more of this behavior. Of course, the key personality constructs used in previous research were not assessed in this study, so it is possible that this sample simply included more well-adjusted individuals, regardless of marriage type. Future research should seek to uncover the relationship between personality constructs and relationship maintenance (but see Canary & Stafford, 1993).

Finally, Coleman et al. (2001) argued that the context of remarriage is such that maintenance behaviors might vary in the way they function in remarriage as compared to first marriage. Although this study did not focus on the functionality of maintenance behaviors, the results support that assertion indirectly. In the regression equations predicting marital satisfaction, more and different maintenance behaviors were significant in the equation for those in first marriages as compared to those in remarriages. Engaging in assurances and not

allowing the partner to have control predicted satisfaction for both groups. However, the use of advice, positivity, jealousy induction, and (avoiding) infidelity also predicted satisfaction for those in a first marriage. It could be that couples in remarriages experience challenges associated with blended families, which draws attention away from marital maintenance to family maintenance. Alternatively, it might be that couples in remarriages have “learned” which behaviors work and which behaviors are less functional, thereby eliminating the use of these other maintenance behaviors.

The relative importance of positivity and eschewing the use of infidelity is consistent with previous research that has not differentiated between first and remarriages (Dainton & Gross, 2008; Ogolsky & Bowers, 2013). The failure of positivity to predict satisfaction for those who were remarried is notable, though, as positivity has been one of the most consistent and strong predictors of satisfaction in previous research (Dainton, 2017b). Note as well that a significant negative predictor of satisfaction for those who were remarried was avoidance. Combined, the failure of positivity to emerge in the equation for satisfaction coupled with the relatively large negative beta weight for avoidance suggests that couples in remarriage might value openness and honesty rather than being nice for the sake of being nice. Of course, as tempting as it is to make this conclusion, it is noteworthy that openness was not a significant predictor of satisfaction for these individuals. In addition, in the direct comparison of the use of maintenance between the two groups, the sole significant difference was that those in first marriages were more likely to engage in destructive conflict behaviors than those in first marriages, which is consistent with research demonstrating that individuals in remarriage engage in more constructive conflict than those in first marriages (Mirecki et al., 2013). Future research should strive to ascertain the nature of beliefs about communication among those in a remarriage that might influence how and why particular maintenance behavior is privileged.

Consistent with previous maintenance research (Dainton, 2017a), this study used the tenets of equity theory. Described earlier, equity theory predicts that individuals in equitable relationships should use more prosocial and less negative maintenance than individuals in inequitable relationships (Canary & Stafford, 1992). For individuals in a first marriage, equity predictions were generally supported: In 9 of the 13 cases there were variations in the use of maintenance by equity group. However, in only two of the cases were the full equity predictions borne out, with those experiencing equity reporting a greater use of prosocial maintenance behavior than individuals experiencing either form of inequity. Instead, and consistent with previous research (Dainton, 2017a), individuals experiencing equity or overbenefittedness reported using more prosocial maintenance and less negative maintenance than those experiencing underbenefittedness.

The case for equity was not as strong when it came to individuals in a remarriage. Equity principles were generally supported in five of the cases,

and in all of those cases there was a distinction between the two inequitable states, with underbenefittedness playing a stronger role in stimulating or suppressing the use of maintenance. However, when analyzing the means the trends were similar to those for individuals in first marriages, suggesting that there are few variations in the way that equity is associated with maintenance by marriage type.

As other scholars have noted, most of the research on remarriage has focused on the formation of stepfamilies, with a notable lack of attention on the marital interaction of the remarried couple (Mirecki et al., 2013; Wilder, 2012b). Although previous researchers have suggested that equity principles might be more relevant in remarriages than in first marriages (Ganong & Coleman, 1994), the results of this study suggest that equity functions in the same way in remarriages vis-à-vis remarriages. The differences between the two marital forms do not seem to be in the ways that they use maintenance behaviors, nor in the extent to which they are concerned with distributive justice. Instead, individuals' different experiences in first marriage versus remarriage might be in the way they think about and value communication. Future research should seek to investigate expectations for, and meanings of, particular communicative behaviors within the remarriage context.

As with all research, there are several limitations of this study. First, one of the actual strengths of this study—a diverse sample—is potentially a weakness in the sense that previous research has not taken into account variations in the remarriage experience by race other than in terms of demographics. As such, the results of this study might not be directly comparable to other research investigating communication in remarriage, as the sample in this study had proportionately more African American and Black respondents and proportionately fewer White and Hispanic or Latino respondents than the U.S. population. Second, the remarriage experience is influenced by the presence or absence of (step)children in the home (MacDonald & DeMaris, 1995). This study did not account for this important variable. Third, research indicates that substance abuse, mental health issues, and intimate partner violence are associated with relational termination (Gibb, Fergusson, & Horwood, 2011). Again, this study did not include these variables. Finally, this study investigated only one member of the married couple. Although an individual's own maintenance behavior and perceived equity are associated with his or her marital satisfaction, the partner's maintenance and equity perceptions play an important role as well (Klumb, Hoppmann, & Staats, 2006; Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 2008). Future research should take a dyadic approach, focusing on how one partner's behaviors influence both his or her own perceptions of the relationship, as well as the partner's perception of the relationship.

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