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Conflict Management Style and Marital Satisfaction

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The aim of this study was to investigate whether there is one conflict management style that correlated more significantly with marital satisfaction than any other. In addition, spousal satisfaction with how marital conflict is managed was also examined, as were gender differences. Fifty-seven couples who had been married for at least 10 years took part in the study. Results showed that the collaborative conflict management style has the highest correlation with both marital satisfaction and spousal satisfaction with conflict management in the marriage. In contrast, where one or both of the spouses used the competitive conflict management style, the lowest marital satisfaction was reported. The results were also interpreted in terms of cultural and gender differences.

Marital satisfaction, which is related to emotional support, shared interests, and conflict resolution, may be one of the most prominent contributors to global satisfaction (Argyle & Furnham, 1983; Fowers & Olson, 1993). There are few aspects in a marriage that influence a couple's sense of well-being more than their ability to manage mutual conflict (Van den Broucke, Vandereycken, & Vertommen, 1995). The prime indicators of whether conflicts in the marriage have been handled constructively or not are whether the partners are satisfied both with their feelings about the relationship and the actual outcome of the conflict (Wilkinson, 1983). Furthermore, a requirement for maintaining a marriage involves the ability to make creative use of conflict (Crohan, 1992; Newman & Newman, 1987). If conflict is managed constructively, growth and enrichment ensue. If it is managed destructively, however, the couple is doomed to endure a relatively unsatisfactory relationship.

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Conflict management is one of the most important determinants of the well-being of the relationship (Baccocchi, 1997; Crohan, 1992) and marital satisfaction (Alberts & Driscoll, 1992; Heavey, Layne, & Christensen, 1993; Metz & Dwyer, 1993). Destructive conflict management is characterized by escalating spirals of manipulation, threat and coercion (overt expression of the conflict), avoidance spirals (covert expression of the conflict), retaliation, inflexibility and rigidity, a competitive pattern of dominance and subordination, and demeaning and degrading verbal and nonverbal communication. Furthermore, unresolved conflict can impact negatively on the mental health of one of the partners (Baccocchi, 1997; Markman, Renick, Floyd, Stanley, & Clements, 1993). Constructive conflict, conversely, is characterized by flexibility, interaction with the intent to learn instead of an intent to protect, enhancement of self-esteem, a relationship focus instead of an individual focus, and cooperation (Hocker & Wilmot, 1995).

Conflict has been defined in different ways. For example, it has been described as the process that begins when one party perceives that the other one has frustrated some concerns of his or hers (Thomas, 1976); an interpersonal conflict exists whenever an action by one person prevents, obstructs, or interferes with the actions of another person (Johnson, 1990); it is a situation in which interdependent people express manifest or latent differences in satisfying their individual needs and interests, and they experience interference from the other in accomplishing these goals (Donahue & Kolt, cited in Hocker & Wilmot, 1995).

Couples differ not only in their ability to use conflict constructively or destructively, but also in the manner in which they argue, react to, and act upon conflict (Burman, Margolin, & John, 1993; Gottman & Krokoff, 1989; Kilmann & Thomas, 1977; Schaap, Buunk, & Kerkstra, 1988; Straus, 1979). People adhere to preferred styles for dealing with conflict (Sternberg & Soriano, 1984; Wilkinson, 1983), which usually are learned in childhood (Johnson, 1990). It can be viewed as (a) a characteristic of the person, much like a personality style; (b) types of conflict behavior or categories of behavior, and (c) communicative orientations that people adopt toward conflict.

Certain situations or stances may affect the choice of a conflict management style (Hocker & Wilmot, 1995). The style may, for example, vary according to the nature of the conflict, previous success with the style in similar situations, or the appropriateness of the style for the specific situation (Putnam & Wilson, 1982). It thus may be argued that to deal with conflict effectively, functional and dysfunctional conflict as well as the various styles of conflict management should be distinguished and defined (Deutch, 1969; Trusty, 1977). Markman et al. (1993) found support for the possibilities of preventing marital discord through interventions focused on building skills in diverse conflict management styles.

Thomas (1976) presents two analytically independent dimensions of behavior in conflict situations, namely, assertiveness (the attempt to satisfy one's own concerns) and cooperativeness (the attempt to satisfy the con-

cerns of others). On the basis of these two dimensions, five different conflict management styles were identified (Figure 1).

The five styles are defined below:

1. *Competing* behavior is both assertive and uncooperative. It is associated with forcing behavior and win-lose arguing.
2. *Collaborating* behavior is assertive and cooperative. It has been identified with confronting disagreements and problem solving to find solutions.
3. *Compromising* is intermediate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness. It is identified with the proposal of a middle ground.
4. *Avoiding* behavior is unassertive and uncooperative and is associated with withdrawal and failure to take a position in a conflict situation.
5. *Accommodating* behavior is unassertive and cooperative; it is seen as an attempt to soothe the other person and seek harmony (Kilmann & Thomas, 1975; Thomas & Kilmann, 1978).

In the conflict grid (see Figure 1), compromising is conceptualized as a style lying between uncooperative and cooperative behavior and unassertive and assertive behavior. It thus has a position in the middle, between avoiding and collaborating (problem solving) and between accommodating and competing (forcing). A study by Van De Vliert and Hordijk (1989) found compromising behavior to be more closely related to cooperative behavior (collaborating and accommodating) than to uncooperative behavior (avoiding and competing).

Research on conflict management styles and marital satisfaction has yielded diverse results. Burman et al. (1993) found that couples tended to use three styles, namely, physical aggression, verbal aggression, and withdrawal. They found that couples who made use of physical aggression lacked

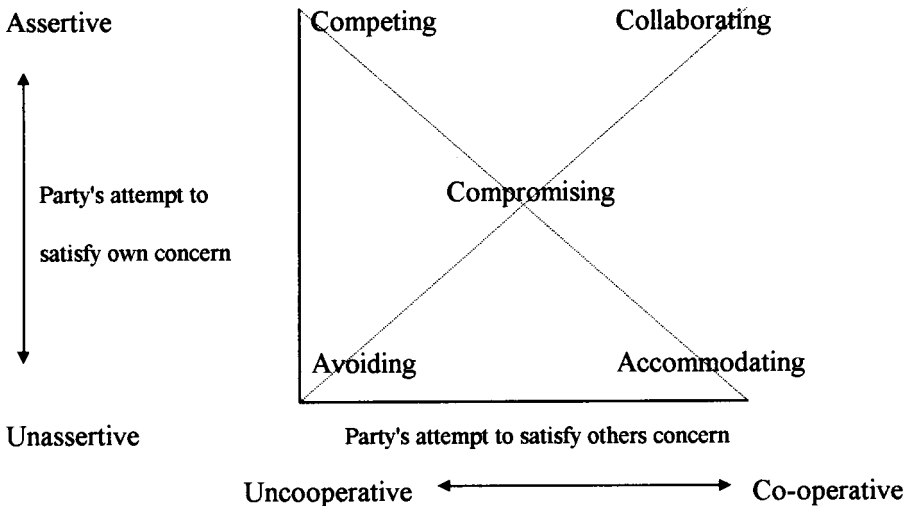


FIGURE 1. Styles of conflict management according to Thomas (1976).

problem-solving skills. Rands, Levinger, and Mellinger (1981) found satisfaction to be the lowest when spouses escalated or avoided their conflicts, particularly when one partner was seen as uncompromising. Heavey et al. (1993) found that among dissatisfied couples the husband's withdrawal was predictive of the wife's becoming hostile. Schaap et al. (1988) found that all conflict management styles correlated negatively with marital satisfaction, with the exception of problem solving (collaboration), which appears to be a style characteristic of satisfactory marriages. Alberts and Driscoll (1992) supported the traditional belief that avoiding conflict was dysfunctional to the relationship and an antisocial act. Avoidance strategies, however, have been associated with satisfied and nondistressed couples (Gottman, 1993; Noller & Fitzpatrick, 1988; Pike & Sillars, 1985). According to Rands et al. (1981), contrary to popular belief, openness and dealing with conflict is not always associated with high marital satisfaction. Nor is aggressiveness necessarily associated with low satisfaction. Crohan (1992) found that the degree of discrepancy between wives and husbands in their beliefs about conflict was not highly predictive of either spouse's marital happiness, concurrently or longitudinally. However, husbands and wives who agree on how conflict should be managed are happier, especially those who agree that conflict should not be avoided. Furthermore, in unhappy marriages, wives are described as conflict engaging and husbands as withdrawn (Gottman & Krokoff, 1989; Heavey et al., 1993). In most studies it was found that men and women differ regarding style of conflict management (Korobik, Baril, & Watson, 1993; Mc Dowall, 1990; Thomas & Kilmann, 1978).

According to Carstensen, Gottman, and Levinson (1995), findings such as the above-mentioned are based almost exclusively on research with relatively young couples. Virtually no research has addressed the question of whether similar interactional patterns are present in older married couples. Besides conflict management style being related to gender, it may also vary from culture to culture. Kirchmeyer and Cohen (1992) believe that conflict management style is influenced by cultural background. Crohan (1992), however, found that many of the basic processes involved in marital conflicts and their relationship to marital happiness are similar for Blacks and Whites in America. According to Ohbuchi and Takahashi (1994), a management style that is desirable within one culture may be unacceptable in another. Research by De Kock (1995), Fry (1993), Hoppe, Kagan, and Zahn (1977) and Kagan, Knight, and Martinez-Romero (1982) found that cultures differ significantly in their approaches to conflict.

South Africa consists of various population groups. Bearing in mind that groups may differ regarding preferences for conflict management style (Botha & Kirsten, 1993), the population for this study is defined as people of color, living in the Western Cape province in South Africa. Although much of the reported research was based on studies of young married couples, we decided to include couples in stage four of family development (Duvall & Miller, 1985). In this stage, the oldest child is between 3 and 13 years of age,

and the couple is confronted with many internal and external issues regarding both the family and the marital relationship (Bacciocchi, 1997). The aim of this study was to determine which conflict management styles correlate most highly with marital satisfaction. A secondary aim was to establish how satisfied spouses were with conflict management in their marriages. With this knowledge, marital therapists may achieve greater success by promoting a particular conflict management style during consultation.

METHOD

Participants

Participants came from a suburban Black community located just outside Stellenbosch in the Western Cape. Two ministers of a Protestant church identified a total of 62 couples who had been married in their particular parishes ten or more years ago and still lived in Stellenbosch. All of these couples were contacted, and 57 of them agreed to take part in the study. Their monthly income varied between R1,500 and R6,999, thus placing them slightly below the reported average income for the Western Cape, which is R4,000 to R12,000 per month (Bridgeman, Palmer, & Thomas, 1992). All participants spoke Afrikaans (73% of Blacks in the Western Cape speak Afrikaans at home; Eskom, 1996) and were active church members (60% of Blacks in the Western Cape attend church regularly; Eskom, 1996). Of the 57 couples, 28 (49.12%) had been married between 10 and 15 years, 11 (19%) between 15 and 20 years, 10 (17.5%) between 20 and 25 years, and the remaining 8 couples for 30 years or more. In only four of the cases had one of the spouses been married before. Only one of the couples was childless and the rest had, on average, between two and three children. Regarding educational qualifications, 8.8% had only primary school qualifications, 57% had secondary school qualifications and 34% had tertiary qualifications.

Measuring Instruments

A biographical questionnaire was developed and administered to the participants. Data on gender, years married, educational qualifications, average monthly income, and whether the couple had children (if so, how many) were generated in this way.

The Thomas-Kilmann MODE (Management of Differences Exercise) Instrument (Kilmann & Thomas, 1977) was used to measure conflict management style. The MODE is based on the revision of the conflict management style model developed by Blake and Mouton (1964). The Thomas-Kilmann instrument has 30 pairs of statements describing modes of handling conflict. Subjects are asked to choose the statement in each pair that best describes their behavior in conflict situations (Kilmann & Thomas, 1977). MODE compared well with other instruments, regarding internal consistency and test-

retest validity. In addition, the forced-choice method appears to contribute to the instrument's structural validity (Kilmann & Thomas, 1977). Test-retest reliabilities are moderately high and consistent across the modes. The average test-retest coefficient for the MODE instrument is .64 (Kilmann & Thomas, 1977). Various researchers have made use of the instrument and thus provided support for its use (De Kock, 1995; Duane, 1989; Ohbuchi & Takahashi, 1994; Tang & Kirkbride, 1986).

The Enrich Marital Inventory (ENRICH) (Olson, McCubbin, Barnes, Larsen, Muxon, & Wilson, 1985) consists of 12 subscales designed to assess potential problem areas in the marital relationship (Fowers & Olson, 1993). For the purpose of this study, both the marital satisfaction and the conflict resolution subscales were used. The marital satisfaction subscale provides a global measure of satisfaction by surveying 10 areas of the marital relationship. The conflict resolution subscale assesses partners' perceptions of the existence of conflict and satisfaction with the resolution of conflict in the relationship (Fowers & Olson, 1989). For both subscales, test-retest reliability and consistency reliability ranged between .81 and .90 (Olson et al., 1985). Both the instruments used were already available in Afrikaans and had been used in previous studies (De Kock, 1995; Greeff, 1995).

Procedure

Postgraduate psychology students from the University of Stellenbosch were recruited and trained to administer the questionnaires. Names and addresses of the potential participants as well as telephone numbers where possible, were obtained from the ministers. The research assistants were instructed that they had 2 months in which to make appointments with the couples and arrange to administer the tests. When the research assistants made the appointments, they informed the potential participants that their names had been obtained from their minister and that participation was voluntary. They were also told that the information obtained would be treated confidentially. The spouses were asked to complete all three questionnaires independently and were encouraged to ask for assistance should the need arise.

RESULTS

To examine the relationship between conflict management style, marital satisfaction, and satisfaction with conflict management, data were categorized according to the preferred styles of conflict management of the husbands and the wives. Table 1 shows the conflict management styles, as distinguished by the Thomas-Kilmann MODE instrument, for males and females.

Of the 114 subjects, 12 identified with more than one conflict management style. In this study, these combination styles are referred to as style 6 (competitive and avoiding), style 7 (collaborative and avoiding), style 8 (avoid-

TABLE 1. Conflict Management Style (CMS) as Distinguished by Males ($n = 57$) and Females ($n = 57$)

Conflict management style	Male	Female	Both
1. Competition	11	4	0
2. Collaboration	6	8	4
3. Compromise	12	13	5
4. Avoidance	14	12	6
5. Accommodation	7	15	1
6. Style 1 and 4	2	0	0
7. Style 2 and 4	1	3	0
8. Style 4 and 5	3	1	0
9. Style 3 and 5	1	1	0

ing and accommodating), and style 9 (accommodating and compromising). As can be seen in Table 1, the most commonly used conflict management style among the males in this study is avoidance ($n = 14$), and the one least used (besides the combination styles) is collaboration ($n = 6$). Females of this study used accommodation ($n = 15$) the most and competition ($n = 4$) the least. In 16 cases both the husband and the wife reported the same conflict management style.

Subsequently, the research questions being asked are whether the averages of the marital satisfaction scores as well as spousal satisfaction with conflict management scores differ significantly when couples are categorized in terms of conflict management style. For the males: Wilk's Λ -statistic was 0.495, with probability of exceedence = p -value = $P(\Lambda \geq 0.495) = 0.013$, while Roy's largest root = 0.375 with p -value < 0.05 . The calculated statistics for the females are: Wilk's Λ -statistic = 0.390, with probability of exceedence = p -value = $P(\Lambda \geq 0.390) = 0.000$, while Roy's greatest root = 0.35 with p -value < 0.05 . These test statistics indicate that the groups do differ among each other when categorized according to conflict management style.

The mean scores of marital satisfaction and satisfaction with conflict management, based on conflict management styles, are given in the tables that follow. Although mean scores of the combination styles are also given, no relevant conclusions can be drawn. Separate calculations were made for males and females, and the results are reported as such. Male and female marital satisfaction scores are presented in Table 2 in terms of the husbands' conflict management style and in terms of the wives' conflict management style.

From Table 2, it follows that in marriages where the husband is competitive, both males and females report the lowest level of marital satisfaction. In marriages where the husband is collaborative, both males and females report the highest marital satisfaction. Males tend to be slightly more satisfied with their marriage when they themselves adopt a compromising style than when they adopt the accommodating style. Females, on the other hand, reported little difference in marital satisfaction whether their husbands

TABLE 2. Mean Marital Satisfaction (MS) Scores According to the Husbands' and the Wives' Conflict Management Style (CMS)

CMS	Husbands' style				Wives' style			
	Male	<i>SD</i>	Female	<i>SD</i>	Male	<i>SD</i>	Female	<i>SD</i>
1. Competition	31.46	6.31	32.64	4.41	34.25	4.78	31.75	8.73
2. Collaboration	42.00	6.03	42.00	5.33	42.38	6.97	41.50	5.83
3. Compromise	39.75	4.18	38.75	5.82	38.15	3.53	36.85	7.56
4. Avoidance	38.57	5.05	36.07	6.76	37.33	6.58	34.75	6.02
5. Accommodation	36.71	5.06	38.42	6.13	33.88	6.29	36.73	4.99
6. Style 1 and 4	38.00	4.24	40.00	5.66	—	—	—	—
7. Style 2 and 4	38.00	—	39.00	—	38.00	2.10	36.00	1.50
8. Style 4 and 5	31.00	5.57	30.33	5.51	44.00	—	38.00	—
9. Style 3 and 5	41.00	—	30.00	—	35.00	—	39.00	—

used accommodation or compromise styles. In marriages where the husband avoids conflict, the males tend to be slightly more satisfied with the marriage than the females. Furthermore, it appears that in marriages where the husband uses the accommodation style, male marital satisfaction is very low. Female satisfaction in these marriages is higher than when the husband is avoiding and approximately the same as when the husband is compromising.

Furthermore, females report the lowest marital satisfaction when they themselves use the competitive conflict management style. Males report the lowest marital satisfaction when their wives use the accommodating conflict management style. When the wife uses the collaborative conflict management style, the highest marital satisfaction scores for both males and females are reported. In marriages where the wife uses compromise, males and females report more satisfaction than when the wife uses avoidance, accommodation or competition. Females are, however, as satisfied when they themselves use compromise as when they are accommodating. In marriages in which the wife avoids conflict, males are slightly more satisfied than when their wives use competition or accommodation, and females show relatively low marital satisfaction. In marriages where the wife is accommodating regarding conflict management, male marital satisfaction is at its lowest, and female satisfaction is higher than in the avoiding and competitive group and approximately the same as in the compromise group.

Table 3 presents scores on male and female satisfaction with conflict resolution, in terms of the husbands' and the wives' conflict management style.

From Table 3, it can be seen that in marriages where the husband uses the competitive conflict management style, both males and females report the lowest satisfaction with their conflict resolution, whereas in marriages where the husband uses the collaborative conflict management style, the highest satisfaction with conflict resolution for both males and females is reported. Male satisfaction with conflict resolution is slightly higher when

TABLE 3. Mean Satisfaction with Conflict Management (SCM) Scores According to the Husbands' and the Wives' Conflict Management Style (CMS)

CMS	Husbands' CMS				Wives' CMS			
	Male	<i>SD</i>	Female	<i>SD</i>	Male	<i>SD</i>	Female	<i>SD</i>
1. Competition	27.00	4.92	26.64	6.38	23.50	3.42	30.00	2.58
2. Collaboration	37.17	6.71	36.67	5.53	36.63	8.40	37.88	6.40
3. Compromise	36.67	3.82	33.75	7.78	34.92	6.29	34.00	7.28
4. Avoidance	29.57	6.27	30.50	8.46	28.17	6.41	25.42	6.54
5. Accommodation	33.29	9.48	33.71	7.43	30.07	5.81	28.53	6.05
6. Style 1 and 4	31.50	0.71	28.00	1.41	—	—	—	—
7. Style 2 and 4	34.00	—	31.00	—	33.00	3.50	37.00	5.50
8. Style 4 and 5	21.67	2.08	27.67	4.16	32.00	—	33.00	—
9. Style 3 and 5	30.00	—	30.00	—	39.00	—	38.00	—

they themselves use the compromising rather than the accommodating conflict management style. Female satisfaction is approximately the same whether the husband uses compromise or accommodation to resolve conflict. The second lowest satisfaction scores for both males and females are found in marriages where the husband avoids conflict.

Furthermore, in marriages where the wife is competitive, only males report the lowest satisfaction with conflict resolution. Females report the lowest satisfaction with conflict resolution when they themselves avoid conflict. In marriages where the wife uses collaboration, the highest satisfaction for both males and females is reported. Males report slightly higher levels of satisfaction when their wives compromise than when their wives accommodate during conflict. Females report the same level of satisfaction as males when they themselves compromise. Males report the second lowest level of satisfaction when their wives avoid conflict. Females are more satisfied when they themselves are competitive than when they are accommodating during conflict.

DISCUSSION

The research questions were: (a) Is there one conflict management style that correlates more highly with marital satisfaction, and (b) how satisfied are spouses with their way of managing conflict? Furthermore, gender differences also were examined. With regard to the first question, the results of this study clearly indicated that for this particular study population, the collaborative conflict management style yielded the highest level of marital satisfaction for both males and females. This supports previous research that found collaboration to be a style characteristic of satisfactory marriages, and that using the collaborative style provides a basis for achieving mutual and satisfying agreements (Johnson, 1990; Schaap et al., 1988; Wilkinson, 1983). According to Wilkinson (1983), the requirements for using the collaborative

conflict management style are equal power and a climate of trust. The use of the style then produces mutual commitment to solutions and adds to the relationship climate of trust and openness. Not only did the results of this study show that the spouses were most satisfied with their marriage when they engaged in collaborative and problem-solving techniques, but the couples also indicated that they were most satisfied with the way in which conflict was managed in the marriage when collaborative and problem-solving techniques were used.

In contrast, the results showed that in couples where one or both of the spouses used the competitive conflict management style, the lowest marital satisfaction was reported. This too supported previous research that found the use of this style to lead to feelings of resentment, powerlessness, and increased conflict (Rands et al., 1981; Wilkinson, 1983). The males in this study all expressed dissatisfaction with the way in which conflict was managed in their relationships when either they or their wives used this style. The same was found for the females, except for when they themselves used the competitive style. In these cases, the women were relatively satisfied with the way conflict was managed. This finding supports the belief that people who use competitive conflict management styles are not concerned with the needs of other people or the relationship. For these people, winning is paramount, and it gives them a sense of pride (Johnson, 1990).

In this study, the collaborative conflict management style was not the only one that was positively associated with marital satisfaction. Both males and females in this study obtained the second-highest levels of marital satisfaction when either they or their spouses used compromising styles to resolve conflicts. The second-highest levels of satisfaction with the way in which conflict was managed in the relationship were also noted when either spouse was compromising. This supports previous research that found compromise to be associated with nondistressed couples (Schaap et al., 1988). Furthermore, the finding of Van De Vliert and Hordijk (1989) that compromising behavior is more closely related to collaborating and accommodating than to avoiding and competing is also supported.

In accordance with previous studies (Gottman, 1993; Noller & Fitzpatrick, 1988, Pike & Sillars, 1985; Rands et al., 1981), the conflict-avoidance management style tended to be associated with low marital satisfaction. Females appeared to find it particularly disturbing when either they or their husbands avoided conflict. As far as satisfaction with the way in which conflict was managed is concerned, similar findings were made: In marriages where either spouse avoided conflict, both males and females reported very low satisfaction. In particular, females reported the lowest level of satisfaction with the way conflict was managed in the marriage when they themselves avoided conflict. These low satisfaction scores can probably be explained by the fact that avoiding conflict results in a resurgence of conflict issues as well as emotional distance in relationships (Gottman, 1993; Johnson, 1990; Wilkinson, 1983).

As has been pointed out, the accommodating conflict management style is associated with seeking harmony, often at the expense of the individual's own goals. In this study, dissatisfaction with both the marriage and the way in which conflict was managed was evident in marriages where one or both spouses used this style. It is implied by the definition that the partner that adopts the accommodating conflict management style gives in to the other's demands. The implication is that the other party "wins." It is interesting, therefore, to note that in this study the males whose wives were accommodating showed the lowest marital satisfaction scores.

Although previous research has shown that cultural factors may influence the use of conflict management styles (De Kock, 1995; Fry, 1993; Hoppe et al., 1977; Kagan et al., 1982; Ohbuchi & Takahashi, 1994), the participants of this particular study show results similar to most previous research (Alberts & Driscoll, 1992; Gottman, 1993; Noller & Fitzpatrick, 1988; Schaap et al., 1988). Furthermore, because most of the reported research was based on younger couples, older couples were selected for this research. The results of this study support the findings of Carstensen et al. (1995) that patterns found among older couples are highly similar to those found in younger couples. The males and females of this study did not differ significantly on which style led to greater satisfaction both with the marriage and the way conflict was managed. It is, however, evident that the genders differed on preference of style. Where the males tended to use avoidance, compromise, and competition to manage conflict, the females tended to identify with accommodation, compromise, and avoidance styles. These findings support previous research (Duane, 1989; Korobik et al., 1993; Mc Dowall, 1990; Thomas & Kilmann, 1978).

In most cases, both partners in the marital couple did not have the same style of conflict management. However, in marriages where collaboration strategies were used, there was a very strong likelihood that both spouses had reported using this conflict management style. A possible explanation for the high levels of satisfaction may be that both spouses used the same conflict management style. There was not a single case in which both spouses used the competitive conflict management style. In cases where one of the spouses compromised or avoided conflict, there was a fair chance the other did too. In cases where one spouse used the accommodating conflict management style, there was the least chance that the other would too. Keeping this in mind, it can be assumed that there is a possibility that marital satisfaction was also influenced by whether partners used the same style or not. Rands et al. (1981) found that marital partners frequently had differing ways of managing conflict and that it is logically possible for one spouse to be a typical competer and the other an avoider. These spouses' differences may actually reflect complementarity.

It is evident from the results of this study that couples in which either one or both of the spouses make use of the collaborative conflict management style both males and females report the highest levels of both marital

satisfaction and satisfaction with conflict management in the marriage. The opposite may be said for the competitive conflict management style. Spouses reported the lowest satisfaction scores when either their spouses or they themselves were competitive. Conflict management programs for married couples can be developed and implemented on the basis of the results of this study.

A shortcoming of this study is that the results are true only for a population of Afrikaans-speaking members of a Protestant church who are living in the Stellenbosch area. Further research in this area should thus try to include a larger population and focus on other homogenous population groups.

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