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Measuring Relationship Beliefs: An Individual Differences Scale

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This article details the development of a scale that measures the beliefs concerning what makes close relationships successful: The Relationship Beliefs Scale. After determining the 18 belief categories to be used in the scale, it was administered to 981 subjects. A factor analysis produced four belief factors we labeled Intimacy, External Factors, Passion, and Individuality. The results generally showed these belief factors possessed adequate internal reliability and test–retest reliability, and the four-factor structure was replicated across four separate groups (men, women, those currently involved in romantic/sexual relationships, and those not involved in such relationships). Two further studies provided convergent and discriminant validity for the four belief factors: The belief factors were not correlated with relationship satisfaction or social desirability, but were generally related in the predicted fashion to relationship attachment dimensions, love attitudes, and the self-reported frequencies of close relationship behaviors. As expected, the final study found evidence that the relationship beliefs moderated the relations between self-reports of belief-related behaviors in close relationships and relationship satisfaction. Future research uses for the scale are discussed.

If an alien anthropologist were to visit Earth, listen to some popular music stations, take in some TV, and generally immerse itself in popular culture, we think it would soon acquire the impression that humans are almost obsessively concerned with something called love and other phenomena associated with intimate interpersonal relationships. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that people do not enter into close relationships as cognitive tabula rasa. Rather, they come into such liaisons replete with knowledge structures concerned with close relationships including attitudes, expectations, causal attributions, and beliefs.

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Indeed, recent theoretical statements treat such stable knowledge structures as central factors in understanding the links between social cognition and close relationships (e.g., Fincham, Bradbury, & Scott, 1990; Fletcher & Fincham, 1991a; Miller & Read, 1991; Scott, Furhman, & Wyer, 1991). However, despite the burgeoning research interest concerning the role of cognition in intimate, sexual relationships (i.e., close relationships) over the last decade or so (see Fletcher & Fincham, 1991b), there are few appropriate individual difference measures specifically directed at stable knowledge constructs that are available for research. This article describes the development and testing of a scale, designed to help fill this gap, which measures the beliefs concerning what makes such close relationships successful.

The Nature and Function of Relationship Beliefs

We understand close relationship beliefs to be a species of knowledge structure, schema, or judgment that concerns all aspects of intimate close relationships. This is an exceptionally heterogeneous class that could presumably embrace expectations, intentions, attributions, and memories of behavior. Beliefs are also often viewed as components of affective constructs such as emotions or attitudes. There is good evidence, for example, that emotions in close relationships are intimately linked to elaborate knowledge structures that include beliefs concerning the typical course of an emotion including its eliciting events, physiological symptoms, associated urges, and consequences (Fitness & Fletcher, 1992). In addition, attitudes are usually held to contain some sort of cognitive component or belief, in addition to an affective or evaluative dimension (McGuire, 1985). We draw two implications from this discussion. First, any attempt to measure beliefs should be clear about the class of beliefs being examined. And, second, we would expect beliefs concerning particular topics (e.g., the role of communication in close relationships) to overlap with more affectively loaded constructs, such as attitudes, that deal with the same topics.

A key assumption in recent theoretical statements concerning social cognition in close relationships is that beliefs or judgments that apply to *specific* close relationships are theoretically distinct from those that apply to close relationships more generally (see, Fletcher & Fincham, 1991b). Although the two classes of knowledge structures are related they are different constructs. For example, an individual might believe that in general sex is not an important factor in close relationships, but simultaneously believe that sex is the central raison d'etre for his or her current relationship.

We agree with Baucom, Epstein, Sayers, and Sher's (1989) conclusion that one reason for the lack of progress in close relationship research has

been the tendency to ignore or blur the distinctions noted above (also see Fletcher & Fitness, in press). Accordingly, for the current scale we chose to frame the scale so as to apply to *general relationship beliefs* and not to specific relationships, and also took particular care to design the scale items to measure what we think may be the most important class of relationship beliefs: those factors that will produce success or happiness in close relationships. Such beliefs represent generalizations concerning the impact that various content areas (e.g., communication, sex, friends) have on the outcomes of intimate sexual relationships (happiness, dissolution, conflict, and so on). Thus, they are akin to causal beliefs and are likely to be embedded in overarching naive psychological models concerning what makes sexual, close relationships tick (see Miller & Read, 1991).

Of course, one cannot simply assume that a particular scale measures a particular class of beliefs rather than other knowledge constructs or judgments. Consistent with the previous discussion, we were especially concerned to test the Relationship Beliefs Scale's disciminant validity with respect to judgments and constructs focused on specific close relationships, such as relationship satisfaction and self-reports of belief-related relationship behaviors.

Reflecting our previous comment about the alien anthropologist, general close relationship beliefs will presumably develop as a function of the media and popular culture. In addition, they are likely to be powerfully influenced by both personal experiences in relationships (Harvey, Agostinelli, & Weber, 1989), and observations of other relationships such as one's parents (Franklin, Janoff-Bulman, & Roberts, 1990). From a social cognitive perspective, relationship beliefs, like other knowledge constructs, are viewed as chronically accessible constructs that permanently influence the way relationship behaviors and information are encoded, stored, and retrieved (Fletcher & Fincham, 1991a). To give a simple example, a woman with a strong and central belief that openness and trust are essential to a healthy relationship may readily interpret her partner's behavior of grunting when spoken to, or of reading the newspaper at breakfast, as evidence that the relationship is in trouble. And, as this example implies, such beliefs may also be determinants of subsequent behavior.

However, although such theoretical speculation is well grounded in social cognition research and theory, relatively little research has examined the role of such beliefs in close relationships. One possible exception is the body of research that has utilized the Relationship Belief Inventory developed by Eidelson and Epstein (1982). We now turn to a brief discussion of this scale and related research.

The Relationship Belief Inventory (Eidelson & Epstein, 1982)

The Relationship Belief Inventory (Eidelson & Epstein, 1982) measures five categories of beliefs (eight items per subscale) that are thought to be dysfunctional in close relationships: *Disagreement is destructive, mindreading is expected, partners cannot change, sexual perfectionism,* and the *sexes are different.* Our proposed scale focuses on general beliefs concerning close relationships, rather than dysfunctional beliefs per se, and so has a different focus to the Relationship Belief Inventory. Nevertheless, we imagine some readers may be asking at this point, do we really need *another* individual differences scale? We think the answer is yes, in part, because the Relationship Belief Inventory is deficient as a measure of relationship beliefs in ways that mirror the weaknesses of research in the close relationship arena already outlined.

First, the belief items in the Relationship Belief Inventory do not focus on one class of beliefs but represent a mishmash of attitudes, expectancies, affective and behavioral reports, and general beliefs. More seriously, the scale mixes items that apply to the respondent's close relationship (21 out of 40 by our count) and items that apply to close relationships generally. To give a few illustrative examples from the scale of the former class of items: I take it as a personal insult when my partner disagrees with an important idea of mine; I get very upset if my partner does not recognize how I am feeling and I have to tell him/her; I cannot tolerate it when my partner argues with me; My partner does not seem capable of behaving other than s/he does now; When I do not seem to be performing well sexually, I get upset; and When my partner and I disagree, I feel like our relationship is falling apart.

One problem with including measures of positive or negative feelings, cognitions, and behaviors that apply to a particular relationship, in a scale of this sort, is that these kinds of items are also typically included in measures of relationship satisfaction. This is unfortunate, because the significant correlations between these subscales and relationship satisfaction have been cited as evidence for the construct validity of this scale (Eidelson & Epstein, 1982). Moreover, most published research using this scale has focused on the relations between the Relationship Belief Inventory and relationship satisfaction, or other constructs which are strongly related to marital satisfaction such as positivity of communication (Bradbury & Fincham, 1988; Epstein, Pretzer, & Fleming, 1987; Fincham & Bradbury, 1987; Gaelick, Bodenhausen, & Wyer, 1985).[1] It seems likely

[1] The disagreement is destructive belief subscale suffers the most from this problem, with all eight items referring to positive or negative items directed at the current relationship. Consistent with our reasoning, two separate studies have reported that, of the five belief constructs, the disagreement is destructive belief attained the highest correlations with

that the reported relations between the two constructs in such research (relationship beliefs and relationship satisfaction or a related construct) may be, in part, an artifact of item overlap between the measures used.

The Relationship Beliefs Scale

Returning to the present belief scale, we intended to design a measure that satisfied various requirements. First, we wanted the scale to cover a wide domain of belief categories that are part of an accessible and widely held account concerning the factors that make relationships successful. Second, to maximize the usability of the scale, we wanted to make the items applicable to marital and nonmarital close relationships. Third, we intended the scale to measure relationship beliefs in general rather than specific beliefs concerning a particular relationship.

The first study to be reported here describes how the belief content categories in the scale were derived. Study 2 details the internal reliability and factor analysis findings, and study 3 concerns the discriminant and convergent validity results obtained. The final study attempts to test the predictive validity of the scale.

STUDY 1

Study 1 was designed to determine the major belief categories to be assessed in the final version of the Relationship Beliefs Scale. In order to check that we were extracting commonly shared, prototypical beliefs in the community, two samples were used: a university-based student sample and a nonstudent sample.

Method

Subjects. Subjects were 100 psychology students at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand (67 women and 33 men) and a sample of 51 subjects not attending University. The latter sample were contacts of the original respondents or were secretarial staff working at the University of Canterbury. As expected, the profiles of the two samples were quite different. Of the student sample, 25% were married or in de facto marriages, 35% were involved in romantic/sexual relationships (but not living with their partners), and 40% were not currently in a romantic relationship (mean age = 23.4 years, SD = 6.1 years). The nonstudent sample was an older group than the student sample (mean age = 38.4 years, SD = 15.9 years), 57% were married or in de facto marriages, 16% were currently in a romantic/sexual relationship (but not living with their partners), and 27% were not currently involved in a romantic relationship.

Procedure. Subjects were randomly allocated either an unmarried scenario (n = 77) or a married scenario (n = 74). The married scenario stated that Karen and Mark had been in an unmarried relationship (not living together) for 2 years. The married scenario stated

relationship satisfaction (−.57 and −.54) (Eidelson & Epstein, 1982; Epstein, Pretzer, & Fleming, 1987).

TABLE 1
FACTORS CONSIDERED IMPORTANT IN RELATIONSHIP SUCCESS ACROSS SAMPLES

Category	Student sample (n = 100)	Nonstudent sample (n = 51)	Examples
Trust	69%	65%	Mutual trust
Commonality	60%	78%	Similar interests
Support	56%	80%	Being supportive and encouraging
Communication	62%	45%	Ability to talk freely
Sex	53%	47%	Good sexual relationship
Independence	52%	41%	Respecting each others' space
Relationship vitality	38%	41%	Fun, romance, and humor
Love	30%	51%	Being in love
Equity	28%	51%	Share the duties of family life
Friendship	33%	27%	Good friends as well as good lovers
Coping	24%	20%	Handling conflict constructively
Compromise	27%	31%	Ability to make concessions
Respect	30%	24%	Respect one another's differences
Acceptance	25%	10%	Accepting each others' faults
Children	11%	22%	Children cement relationships
Finance	11%	20%	Make money, have a budget
Personal security	10%	20%	Partners coming from loving families
Important others	07%	18%	Getting on with each other's friends

that Karen and Mark had been married for 10 years and had two children. Both scenarios then proceeded as follows:

They love each other very much and have an extremely happy and successful relationship. We are interested in what you believe are the important factors in producing such a successful relationship. Mention as many factors as you think are important—be as specific or as general as you wish. There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in your own beliefs. Please describe each factor that you believe leads to a successful relationship, such as Karen and Mark's.

Each response was written on a separate slip of paper. Respondents were given as much time as they required to complete the task.

Results and Discussion

Subjects produced a mean number of 7.1 beliefs. Each item was initially categorized independently by three coders (the two authors and Julie Fitness) according to similarity of meaning, but blind to the scenario category. The general brief was to produce a relatively fine-grained set of content categories, that was neither under- nor overinclusive. Although the coders had certain expectations (e.g., the presence of love, communication, and sex as important elements), we wanted to develop the coding scheme as inductively as possible. The resultant sets of categories were then discussed, disagreements were resolved, and 18 belief categories were

finally decided upon. These 18 categories are shown in Table 1, with examples of the sort of statements provided by subjects.

To provide some evidence concerning the extent to which the current taxonomy represents a reliable and "natural" way of grouping the belief statements provided, half of the items in each category were given to an independent coder (Tanya Tremewan) who was unaware of the results of the present research. She was instructed to develop her own set of groupings, based on semantic similarity and with the aim of producing a reasonably fine-grained set of categories (between 5 and 30 groups), all sets to be accompanied by brief descriptive headings. She produced 16 sets in total, of which 15 were identical to, or very similar to, our own group descriptions. The one odd category was Awareness/humor (in our taxonomy "awareness," which includes factors such as awareness of each other's needs, was part of Support and "humor" was part of Relationship Vitality). In addition, two of her categories were clearly combinations of our own groupings: Respect was placed with Acceptance and Children with Important Others. In sum, the results suggest our taxonomy was not overly idiosyncratic or implausible.

To further test the reliability of our coding scheme, half of the belief items in each category were coded into the 18 categories by a different independent coder (William Hayward) who was provided with a list of the belief categories accompanied by brief descriptions of each category (1 or 2 lines).[2] This coder was ignorant of the findings reported here concerning belief frequency. The worst category attained a correct hit rate of 75% (Personal Security), with the remainder ranging from 80 to 100%. An overall Cohen's' Kappa of .94 was attained.[2]

Differences in the frequencies of responses for each category were tested across the two scenarios (unmarried versus married relationship) and across the two samples (student versus nonstudent), with a series of χ^2. As we expected, practical concerns such as children, finance, and important others were cited more frequently for the married scenario. However, no significant differences were found in either set of comparisons (all $\chi^2 < 3.8$). As can be seen, the frequencies of responses were similar across the student and nonstudent samples—the two sets of data produced a rank order correlation of .86 ($p < .001$). The rank order correlation between the married and unmarried scenario percentages was .89 ($p < .001$).

In summary, this coding scheme of 18 beliefs appears to provide a reliable and straightforward taxonomy of commonly shared beliefs concerning the causes of relationship success. We do not claim this taxonomy is the only way of grouping the belief statements provided, but we believe

[2] A copy of this coding taxonomy can be obtained from the first author.

that it represents a plausible and reasonably comprehensive set of categories upon which to base the subsequent scale. The fact that there were no substantive differences across the married or unmarried scenarios, or between the student and nonstudent sample, further supports our view that we have unearthed a set of general and prototypical factors that are embedded in our shared naive theories concerning the causes of happy and successful relationships.

STUDY 2

The Relationship Beliefs Scale was derived from the 18 categories shown in Table 1, with items being developed to capture the most representative statements, produced by subjects in the first study, for each belief category. The provisional scale was tested with two samples of University students (n = 128 and n = 159) to check the comprehensibility and face validity of each item, and to examine the internal reliability of the subscales for each belief (using 4 items for each belief). On the basis of this work, 3 items were selected for each of the 18 beliefs, giving a total of 54 items for the final scale (see Appendix).

In this study we examined the scale's internal reliability, test–retest reliability, and factorial structure across samples differing in gender and relationship status (currently involved versus not involved in a romantic relationship). Previous research suggests that there may be gender differences in relationship beliefs; for example, a common finding is that men place more emphasis on the role of sex in relationships than women (Fletcher, 1983; Frazier & Esterly, 1990; Kelley, 1979). Hence, we examined whether subjects would differ in their belief ratings as a function of gender as well as relationship status.

Method

Subjects and procedure. The Relationship Beliefs Scale was administered to 981 students (590 women and 391 men) attending the University of Canterbury, New Zealand. Four hundred and sixty-four of the subjects were not currently in an ongoing romantic or sexual relationship (dating or married), 110 were married or in de facto marriages, and 407 were in romantic/sexual unmarried relationships. The mean age was 23.4 years (SD = 6.1 years). Fifty-two subjects also filled out the questionnaire 3 weeks after the first administration to assess the test–retest reliability of the scale.

Relationship beliefs scale. Each of the 54 items (see Appendix) had a scale below it ranging from 1 to 6 (1 = do not hold this belief at all, 2 = slightly hold this belief, 3 = moderately hold this belief, 4 = quite strongly hold this belief, 5 = strongly hold this belief, and 6 = very strongly hold this belief). All items were worded so that the statements were expressed as factors leading to relationship success.

After demographic information was elicited, the following written instructions were presented: "We are interested in what you believe are the important factors in determining whether long-term heterosexual relationships are successful. The kind of relationships we are referring to could be long-term stable unmarried relationships, long-term relationships

TABLE 2
MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, CORRECTED ITEM-TOTAL *r*s, AND FACTOR LOADINGS OF SUBSCALES ON EACH RELATIONSHIP BELIEF FACTOR

Factor labels and subscales	*M*	*SD*	Corrected item–total *r*s	Factor loading
Intimacy				
Trust	15.21	2.63	.4,.6,.6	.75
Respect	14.27	2.30	.3,.4,.4	.71
Communication	14.25	2.45	.2,.5,.4	.69
Coping	13.17	2.50	.2,.5,.4	.67
Support	13.84	2.33	.2,.3,.2	.66
Acceptance	13.22	2.76	.4,.4,.3	.63
Love	11.43	2.81	.2,.3,.3	.62
Friendship	15.01	2.71	.6,.6,.4	.59
Compromise	13.50	2.58	.4,.4,.3	.49
External factors				
Personal security	12.03	2.89	.3,.2,.4	.71
Important others	9.64	2.50	.4,.4,.4	.65
Finance	7.60	2.98	.5,.6,.6	.65
Commonality	11.16	2.59	.3,.2,.2	.56
Children	6.10	3.06	.5,.5,.6	.54
Passion				
Sex	10.10	3.42	.6,.7,.6	.78
Vitality	12.99	2.92	.4,.5,.4	.64
Individuality				
Independence	14.04	2.53	.2,.3,.3	.72
Equity	13.94	2.71	.3,.3,.3	.61

Note. Only belief subscales with loadings over .4 are shown for each factor. The only variable to attain a loading over .4 on a different factor was Commonality which attained a loading of .46 on the Intimacy factor. Means and *SD*s were derived from the three-summed 6-point scales in each belief. The corrected item–total correlations for each item are in the same order as shown under each belief heading in the Appendix.

in which people are living together, or married relationships. There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in your own general beliefs about such relationships."

The rating procedure was then described, and subjects were instructed to indicate the extent to which they presently believed each statement by circling one number on each scale.

Results and Discussion

Means, standard deviations, and internal reliability of the belief subscales. The means and standard deviations of each belief subscale are shown in Table 2. The mean totals varied widely from 6.1 (children) to 15.21 (trust). The highest belief ratings were given to those beliefs most directly concerned with intimacy or interpersonal attitudes and interaction, such as

trust, friendship, respect, and communication (with the interesting exceptions of sex and love), while external factors such as finance and children received somewhat lower importance ratings. The standard deviations were all similar but showed reasonable variance (from 2.30 to 3.42). The corrected item–total correlations of each belief subscale were also satisfactory, especially given the relatively multifaceted nature of most of the beliefs being assessed. The associated internal reliabilities varied for each belief from .37 to .77, with a mean α of .56. It should be noted that α levels are sharply reduced with only 3 items included in a scale. For example, an α level of .56 with a 3-item scale corresponds to .80 with a 20-item scale.

Factorial structure of the scale. All 54 items in the scale were initially factor analyzed by a principal components analysis, with an orthogonal rotation. Fourteen factors emerged with eigenvalues greater than 1.0, accounting for 55.1% of the variance. Inspection of the loadings showed that 9 of the factors represented the individual belief subscales (with the 3 relevant items loading on each factor). Three of the factors comprised items from two of the belief subscales: "Communication" and "coping," "personal security" and "commonality," and "sex" and "relationship vitality." The remaining two factors contained a mixture of items from the remaining three subscales: "respect," "support," and "love." Although these results were roughly interpretable in terms of the original beliefs, they suggest that many items may tap into higher-order belief constructs.

To assess the existence and interpretability of a higher-order factorial belief structure, a further exploratory principal components factor analysis was carried out on the belief subscale totals (18 variables in total), using both an oblique and an orthogonal rotation. The results were very similar for both types of rotation. Only the orthogonal results will be reported here. For the total sample (n = 981) four factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 accounted for 53.1% of the variance. These factors appeared meaningful and were labeled Intimacy (eigenvalue = 5.12), External Factors (eigenvalue = 1.98), Passion (eigenvalue = 1.38), and Individuality (eigenvalue = 1.05). These factors are presented with their belief factor loadings in Table 2.

To assess whether this factorial structure was stable across different kinds of sample, the same type of factor analysis was repeated on four subsamples drawn from the main sample: Subjects in romantic/sexual relationships (n = 517), those not in romantic/sexual relationships (n = 464), men (n = 391), and women (n = 590). The rotated matrices revealed similar results, with all four analyses producing four factors with eigenvalues higher than 1, with very similar total amounts of variance accounted for (either 53% or 54%), and with the same variables loading on the same factors as in the factor analysis of the whole sample (see Table 2).

TABLE 3
ALPHAS AND TEST–RETEST CORRELATIONS FOR THE FOUR RELATIONSHIP BELIEF FACTORS

	Factor alpha	Test–retest correlation
Intimacy	.87	.89
External factors	.78	.67
Passion	.74	.86
Individuality	.51	.64

However, two variables did attain loadings over .4 on different factors to those in the main analysis. For the sample of women, the importance of children loaded .57 on the Passion factor (with a .37 loading on the External Factors factor), and for the sample in romantic/sexual relationships, equity loaded .46 on the Intimacy factor (with a .32 loading on the Individuality factor). The former finding can perhaps be explained in terms of sex-role differences in attitudes toward relationships and sex, i.e., sex may be linked more closely to procreation for women than men. The latter finding perhaps means that the issue of equity in relationships becomes more saliently connected to overall intimacy for people involved in romantic/sexual relationships, compared to those not in such relationships.

To statistically assess the degree of rotated factor similarity between samples, coefficients of congruence were calculated (Levine, 1977). These indices are sensitive to both the overall pattern of loadings and the absolute differences in loadings and are generally considered to reveal substantial factor similarity when higher than .9 (Levine, 1977). For the comparison between men and women, the coefficients of congruence ranged from .97 to 1.0 for the four factors, and for the comparison between those who were in and those not in romantic/sexual relationships they ranged from .96 to 1.0. These figures indicate a high degree of similarity, in the loadings for the four factors, between the two sets of samples. In summary, the four-factor solution appears to be a stable structure which varies relatively little according to gender and relationship status.

Internal and test–retest reliabilities, and correlations among the belief factors. The internal reliabilities of the belief factors are shown in Table 3. Internal reliability coefficients are generally considered adequate if they are over .7, because correlations with such scales are not unduly attenuated by measurement error (Nunnally, 1978). Using this criterion, the factors had adequate to good internal reliability, with the exception of the Individuality factor. The retest correlations (n = 52), measured over a period of 3 weeks, ranged from .64 to .89. In sum, the four belief factors

TABLE 4
CORRELATIONS AMONG THE FOUR RELATIONSHIP BELIEF FACTORS

	1	2	3	4
1. Intimacy	—	.40*	.31*	.31*
2. External factors		—	.39*	.05
3. Passion			—	.23*
4. Individuality				—

* $p < .001$.

showed adequate internal reliability and test–retest reliability, except perhaps for the Individuality factor which attained borderline reliability coefficients.

There were moderate positive correlations between some of the belief factors (see Table 4) indicating, perhaps not surprisingly, that beliefs about relationship success are to some extent related. In particular, the strength of Intimacy beliefs was positively related to the importance of the other three factors, the strength of Passion beliefs was positively related to the belief in the importance of overcoming external factors, and Passion obtained a small, albeit significant, positive correlation with Individuality.

Differences in belief strength according to gender and relationship status. Four separate 2 (gender) × 2 (in–out of romantic/sexual relationship) analyses of variance on each belief factor score revealed four main effects. Converting each belief factor subscale to a 6-point scale, we found that women ($M = 4.8$) had stronger beliefs concerning Individuality than men ($M = 4.5$), $F(1, 978) = 40.3$, $p < .001$, whereas men ($M = 3.9$) had stronger beliefs than women ($M = 3.8$) concerning the importance of Passion, $F(1, 978) = 6.6$, $p < .01$. This latter finding is consistent with the research suggesting that men place more importance on sex in relationships than women. In addition, those in romantic/sexual relationships ($M = 4.6$) gave more importance to Intimacy than those not in relationships ($M = 4.5$), $F(1, 978) = 7.9$, $p < .01$, and also placed more importance on Individuality ($M = 4.8$) than those not in romantic/sexual relationships ($M = 4.6$), $F(1, 978) = 14.6$, $p < .001$. No other main effects or interactions were significant.

These significant results were consistent with previous research and not theoretically surprising. Moreover, it should be noted that this was an exceptionally large sample so that the differences between the groups, although statistically significant, were not large (with all main effects accounting for less than 5% of the variance).

Summary

In summary, Study 2 has established that the scale generally possesses adequate internal and test–retest reliability. In addition, although the

strength of these beliefs varied somewhat according to gender and relationship status, there seemed to be a meaningful and robust four-factor structure inherent in the close relationship beliefs assessed in this scale. The first factor (labeled Intimacy) was composed of beliefs that center on interpersonal attitudes or interaction such as respect, communication, compromise, and so forth. The second factor (External Factors) was composed entirely of items that were external influences on the relationship, and the third factor (sex and vitality) clearly represented a Passion component. Interpretation of the final factor was perhaps less obvious or clear-cut than the others, but we considered Individuality to be the most appropriate label.

The analyses for the next two studies (3 and 4) were conducted on both the 18 individual belief subtotals and the four summed scores derived from the variables loading on the four belief factors shown in Table 3. The two sets of results were similar, but the belief factor results were more compact and clear-cut. Hence, only the results from the belief factor analyses will be reported.

STUDY 3

In this study, the convergent and discriminant validity of the Relationship Beliefs Scale were examined.

Discriminant Validity

We previously cricitized the Relationship Belief Inventory (Eidelson & Epstein, 1982) on the grounds that it was confounded with attitudes, expectations, and behaviors that are strongly related to relationship satisfaction. Accordingly, we felt it important to show that the beliefs in the Relationship Beliefs Scale were not strongly, or even moderately, related to relationship satisfaction. In addition, to test whether this scale was contaminated by social desirability biases, we proposed to compare scores from a measure of social desirability with scores from the Relationship Beliefs Scale. Subjects in romantic/sexual relationships completed a measure of relationship satisfaction, a social desirability scale, and the Relationship Beliefs Scale. We predicted that none of the four sets of beliefs (Intimacy, External Factors, Passion, and Individuality) would be significantly related to either social desirability or relationship satisfaction.

Convergent Validity

Consistent with our previous discussion, it seems likely that relationship beliefs will be associated with other cognitive or attitudinal constructs that measure general knowledge structures. The two we selected for this study have enjoyed recent popularity in the field of close relationships—attachment styles and love attitudes.

Hazan and Shaver (1987; Shaver & Hazan, 1988) have recently proposed

that bonding and love in intimate, interpersonal relationships are rooted in three fundamental dimensions: *Avoidance* (marked by fear of closeness and lack of trust), *Anxiety/ambivalence* (marked by pain and anxiety), and *Security* (characterized by trust, friendship, and positive emotions). Although the jury is still out on whether these dimensions are as fundamental as claimed (Hammond & Fletcher, 1991), a considerable body of research has found that the attachment styles are related to memories of parent/child relationships (e.g., Mikulincer, Florian, & Tolmacz, 1990) and a range of relationship attitudes and beliefs (e.g., Collins & Read, 1990; Hazan & Shaver, 1987). There seems to be some conceptual overlap between the Attachment constructs and the components of the Intimacy belief factor (trust, acceptance, love, etc.). Thus, we expected that people with strong beliefs in the importance of Intimacy, compared to those with weak beliefs, would be more Secure, less Avoidant, and less Anxious/ambivalent. In contrast, the theoretical connections between the remaining relationship belief factors (External Factors, Passion, and Individuality) and the attachment dimensions seem less clear-cut. Hence, we predicted no significant correlations between these constructs.

The second set of hypotheses concerned Hendrick and Hendrick's (1986) Love Attitudes scale, which was developed to measure Lee's (1973) theory of six basic love styles: Eros (passionate love), Ludus (game-playing love), Storge (friendship love), Pragma (logical love), Mania (possessive, dependent love), and Agape (selfless love). There is sufficient overlap between some of the constructs measured by Hendrick and Hendrick's scale to expect some convergent correlations with the Relationship Beliefs Scale, namely that the Pragma love attitudes should correlate with the External belief factor with this factor's focus on practical considerations such as finance and important others. In addition, we expected that the Ludus and Eros love attitudes (both with significant physical or sexual components) would be associated positively with the Passion belief factor, that the Storge love attitude would be negatively associated with Passion (because of Storge's explicit nonsexual orientation), and that the Agape love attitude would be positively associated with the Intimacy belief factor (through their shared focus on support and acceptance).

Method

Subjects. Seventy-five second-year business administration and psychology students (29 men and 46 women) were recruited for this study. Twenty-five of the subjects were not currently in an ongoing sexual relationship, 17 were married or in de facto marriages, and 33 were in unmarried heterosexual relationships.

Procedure. A series of questionnaires was administered to small groups of subjects: the Marlowe–Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Crowne & Marlowe, 1964), Hendrick and Hendrick's (1986) Love Attitude Scale, and Hazan and Shaver's (1987) Attachment Scales. Hazan and Shaver (1987) used a forced-choice technique for the three attachment styles

TABLE 5
CONVERGENT AND DISCRIMINANT CORRELATIONS WITH BELIEF FACTORS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BELIEFS SCALE

	Belief factors			
Scales	Intimacy	External factors	Passion	Individuality
Social desirability	.13	.11	.01	.03
Relationship Satisfaction	.28	.00	−.13	−.06
Love attitudes				
Eros	.24*	.06	.14	−.10
Ludus	−.11	.13	.32**	.02
Storge	.03	−.14	−.32**	.07
Pragma	.23	.45***	.05	−.03
Mania	.05	.02	.07	−.10
Agape	.36***	.13	−.11	−.07
Attachment dimensions				
Avoidant	−.18	−.04	−.12	−.12
Anxious/ambivalent	−.24*	−.25*	−.07	−.06
Secure	.24*	.21	−.08	.09

Note. All correlations used two-tailed tests of significance, and were based on an n of 75 except for the relationship satisfaction correlations which had an n of 50.

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

(Avoidance, Anxiety/ambivalence, and Security) which were presented to subjects in the form of paragraphs. This study used the same paragraphs but, following other research (e.g., Hammond & Fletcher, 1991), used 6-point Likert rating scales attached to each paragraph to measure self-endorsement. In addition, the 50 people within this group who were in close relationships completed a relationship satisfaction measure developed by Fletcher, Fitness and Blampied (1990). This 6-item scale was specificallty designed for use with either married or unmarried subjects, and shows good internal reliability, convergent validity, and predictive validity (Grigg, Fletcher & Fitness, 1989; Fletcher, Fitness, & Blampied, 1990).

Results and Discussion

As expected (see Table 5), neither social desirability nor relationship satisfaction were significantly related to any of the four belief factors, although relationship satisfaction did attain a .28 correlation with the Intimacy set of beliefs. These results indicate that the Relationship Beliefs Scale is not contaminated by social desirability biases. Importantly, they also suggest that the relationship beliefs do not overlap with relationship satisfaction.

The convergent validity correlations with the attachment style variables were largely as expected (see Table 5). People with more Secure attachment styles and less Anxious/ambivalent styles had stronger beliefs in the importance of Intimacy. In addition, people with more Anxious/ambivalent attachment styles held weaker beliefs concerning the importance of overcoming external problems. Although not predicted, this latter finding is not surprising. Presumably, people who are more anxious and ambivalent about being close to others are not secure enough to recognize and deal with the enormous influence that external factors can exert on close relationships.

The correlations between the relationship beliefs and love attitudes were generally as predicted. Subjects with stronger beliefs in the importance of Intimacy rated selfless love (Agape) very highly. Those who believed more strongly in the importance of External Factors tended to think of love in a pragmatic way (Pragma). And people who thought passion was an especially important factor in relationship success tended to think of love more in a game-playing way (Ludus), but less in a platonic fashion (Storge). However, the correlations between Eros (passionate love) and relationship beliefs were not as predicted: Eros and Passion beliefs were not significantly correlated, while those who endorsed the concept of passionate love (Eros) also believed more strongly in the importance of Intimacy. It is not implausible that those who believe in the importance of intimacy also think very highly of passionate love, but the absence of a significant correlation between the Passion belief factor and Eros is more problematic.[3]

To summarize, with a few exceptions, the pattern of discriminant and convergent correlations is encouraging and gives provisional but solid support for the construct validity of the Relationship Beliefs Scale.

STUDY 4

In the final study we attempted to test the predictive validity of the Relationship Beliefs Scale by determining whether relationship beliefs moderate the relation between self-reports of relationship behavior and relationship satisfaction. It is a commonplace assumption and observation in social psychology that people tend to strive for consistency or balance between their behavior and cognitions. Hence, strong beliefs in the im-

[3] One possible reason for this null finding is that the items in the Eros construct are all directed at the individual's current sexual relationship (e.g., Our lovemaking is very intense, I feel that my lover and I were meant for each other). The portion of our sample not in sexual relationships may have experienced difficulty in answering these items. Accordingly, the correlation between the Passion belief factor and the Eros construct was recalculated, including only those subjects currently in sexual relations ($n = 50$). Consistent with our reasoning, the resultant correlation was positive and significant ($r = .38$, $p < .01$).

portance of a particular factor (e.g., passion), as compared to weak beliefs in the same domain, should result in stronger links between memories of the occurrence of satisfactory belief-related behavior (e.g., sexual behavior) and overall relationship satisfaction.

We also expected that the strength of relationship beliefs would be related to assessments of the occurrence of belief-related behavior in relationships. This could be so for two reasons. First, people may overestimate or underestimate the frequencies of belief-related behaviors in order to retain consistency between their behavior judgments and their beliefs. Second, individuals with strong beliefs in the importance of particular domains could change the belief-relevant relationship behaviors of themselves and their partners to actually bring about a tighter fit between their beliefs and behaviors. Hence, we expected that there would be moderate relations between relationship beliefs and their associated behaviors. And, finally, we predicted that relationship satisfaction would be related to recall of behavior frequencies, given that many of the behavioral items are clearly framed along a positive–negative dimension (e.g., love, communication, acceptance, vitality, etc.)

To test these hypotheses, 18 items were created to measure specific exemplars of relationship behaviors that were representative of the 18 relationship belief subscales. For example, the following item was formulated to represent the communication item: "Are you (Is your partner) able to express your (his or her) private thoughts and feelings to your partner (to you)?" In addition, to preclude the possibility that subjects would simply respond to demand characteristics and self-consciously present their relationship beliefs and behaviors in a consistent fashion, the Relationship Beliefs Scale was administered 2 to 3 weeks before the other two constructs (relationship satisfaction and behavior) were assessed.

Method

Subjects. Eighty-five business administration and psychology students (28 men and 57 women) were recruited for this study. Sixty-five of the subjects were in unmarried relationships and 20 were married or in de facto marriages.

Procedure. The Relationship Beliefs Scale was administered 2 to 3 weeks prior to subjects completing the behavioral questionnaire and the Relationship Satisfaction Scale (Fletcher et al., 1990).

Behavioral questionnaire. The behavioral questionnaire comprised 35 items, accompanied by a 6-point scale (end points: never occurs to always occurs). The first set of items referred to the person's own behavior. The second set of items included the same behaviors but referred to their rate of occurrence for the partner (except for the Equity item which had one item applying to the relationship only). The behavioral items were (phrased to apply to self): *Communication:* Are you able to express your private thoughts and feelings to your partner? *Love:* Do you cuddle, or express affection readily to your partner? *Trust:* Are you sexually faithful to your partner? *Independence:* Does it upset you if your partner wants time to him/herself? *Support:* Do you provide lots of practical support for your

TABLE 6
CORRELATIONS BETWEEN THE BEHAVIORAL SELF-REPORTS, THE RELATIONSHIP BELIEF FACTORS, AND RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION

Behavior category	Relationship satisfaction	Relationship belief factors			
		Intimacy	External factors	Passion	Individuality
Intimacy	.68***	.41***	.15	.11	.41***
External factors	.28**	.15	.32**	.03	−.11
Passion	.44***	.04	.03	.25*	.09
Individuality	.21*	.11	.14	.09	.22*

Note. All correlations used two-tailed tests of and are based on an n of 85.
* $p < .05$.
** $p < .01$.
*** $p < .001$.

partner? *Acceptance:* Do you show approval for your partner, even when he/she acts unwisely or badly? *Sex:* Do you sexually satisfy your partner? *Compromise:* Do you make compromises for the sake of your relationship? *Relationship Vitality:* Do you do things to make your relationship exciting? *Commonality:* Do you share in your partner's interests and hobbies? *Personal Security:* Is your family background secure and caring? *Friendship:* Is your partner your best friend? *Finance:* Do you have financial problems? *Children:* Do you want children? (Note: if you have children and were given the chance again, would you still want them?) *Important Others:* Do you get on well with your partner's friends and family? *Coping:* When conflict emerges in your relationship do you confront it directly? *Respect:* Do you show respect for your partner's attitudes and beliefs? *Equity:* Do you and your partner have equal say in what you do socially?

Results and Discussion

Because the measures of relationship beliefs and relationship satisfaction used in this study focused on the *relationship* (rather than the self or the partner per se), we thought it advisable to calculate behavioral recall indices that combined the self and partner recall measures. In fact, 13 of the 17 self–partner behavior correlations were significant, with a mean r of .43 ($p < .01$) for all 17 correlations. Accordingly, the self and partner scores were summed to produce 17 separate scores (plus the single measure of Equity behavior). Next, these combined scores were summed to mirror the structure of the four belief factors to produce four behavior scores for Intimacy, External Factors, Passion, and Individuality.

As expected, those who reported more regular occurrences of these positive behaviors also reported significantly higher relationship satisfaction, with correlations ranging from .21 to .68 (see Table 6). These findings give some convergent validity support to these self-report behavioral measures. Moreover, the fact that the belief factors did not attain significant

TABLE 7
CORRELATIONS BETWEEN BEHAVIORAL ESTIMATES AND RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION WITHIN STRONG AND WEAK RELATIONSHIP BELIEF GROUPS

Behavior/belief category	Relationship belief intensity				
	Strong	*n*	Weak	*n*	*z* Score
Intimacy	.69***	25	.32	25	1.71, $p < .05$
External factors	.49***	26	−.01	27	1.92, $p < .05$
Passion	.75***	24	.46*	22	1.51, $p < .07$
Individuality	.39*	32	.31	25	0.32, ns.

Note. The *z* scores assess whether the correlations across the belief intensity groups are significantly different (using one-tailed tests).

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

correlations with relationship satisfaction in Study 2 (see Table 5) is good evidence that the memories of behaviors are not simply self-reports of relationship beliefs in another guise.[4]

The correlations between the belief factors and the self-report behavioral measures can also be seen in Table 6. As predicted, the relationship beliefs attained significant but weak to moderate correlations with their associated sets of belief-relevant behaviors (e.g., Intimacy beliefs with intimacy behaviors). However, with one exception (the correlation between Individuality beliefs and intimacy behavior), the relationship beliefs did not attain significant correlations with the belief-irrelevant sets of behaviors (which are the correlations off the diagonal; e.g., Intimacy beliefs with passion behaviors). These findings, together with the convergent and discriminant correlations cited previously, provide persuasive evidence that the behavioral and belief self-reports represent independent and discriminable constructs and also furnish added construct validity to the Relationship Beliefs Scale.

For the major analysis, tertile splits were used to divide the sample into those with strong beliefs and those with weak beliefs on each of the four belief factors. The results, as shown in Table 7, generally confirm our predictions. For all four beliefs, subjects with strong beliefs on each of the belief dimensions had stronger associations between self-reports of their actual behavior and relationship satisfaction than those with weak

[4] The correlations between the belief factors and relationship satisfaction from this sample were very similar to the results in study 2 with a .28 correlation between relationship satisfaction and Intimacy and correlations close to zero for the other three belief factors.

beliefs. The differences in the correlations between the strong and weak belief groups were statistically significant in two out of the four cases and marginally significant in another. These results suggest that relationship beliefs do moderate the link between relationship satisfaction and memories of belief-related relationship behaviors. There was no evidence that the lower correlations in the weak-belief groups were an artifact of low variances in the weak belief groups compared to the strong belief groups (a restriction of range problem). For each correlation the standard deviations were very similar across weak and strong belief groups and for both variables in the correlations (relationship satisfaction and relationship behavior).

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The results of these studies provide encouraging support for the reliability and validity of the Relationship Beliefs Scale. Study 2 showed that the 18 belief categories initially derived in the first study had adequate internal reliability, and the factor analysis revealed a meaningful four-factor solution that was remarkably stable across four different samples (men, women, those currently involved in sexual relationships, and those not currently involved in sexual relationships). Moreover, we think these factors are clearly interpretable. The first factor (Intimacy) focused on beliefs concerning interpersonal attitudes and interaction that all appeared to be related to the development of intimacy or closeness. The second factor (External Factors) included beliefs related to the importance of external factors or problems. The third factor combined sex and vitality and seemed best summed up as a belief in the importance of Passion. Finally, the fourth factor combined independence and equity which we thought best labeled as Individuality. Researchers may wish to use either the 18 separate beliefs or the factor belief scores depending on their research aims.

Study 3 provided convergent and discriminant validity for the belief factors. None of the belief factors were significantly related to social desirability or relationship satisfaction. Given our earlier criticisms of the overlap between previous scales and relationship satisfaction, this latter result was an important finding. In addition, the pattern of correlations between the relationship belief factors and the three attachment dimensions (Hazan & Shaver, 1987) as well as the six love attitudes (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1986) was generally as expected: Of the 36 correlations, only 4 were unpredicted.

There were a few differences in the rated importance of the beliefs according to gender and relationship status, but these differences were small and generally theoretically feasible. For example, the finding that men had stronger beliefs than women concerning the importance of pas-

sion to relationship success is consistent with research findings that show men place more importance on sex and romance in close relationships than women (Fletcher, 1983; Kelley, 1979; Sprecher & Metts, 1989).

Study 4 also supported the convergent and discriminant validity of the scale by showing that (a) the relationship belief factors were weakly to moderately related to their associated reported frequencies of belief-relevant behaviors, but unrelated to the reported frequencies of belief-irrelevant behaviors; and (b) relationship satisfaction was moderately related to the reports of positive relationship behaviors, but was largely unrelated to relationship beliefs (see Study 3). These results suggest that the self-reports of beliefs and behaviors represent discriminable and separate constructs.

Moreover, study 4 found that relationship beliefs tended to moderate the relations between relationship behavior judgments and relationship satisfaction, namely, those with strong beliefs in the importance of a factor like Intimacy, compared to those with weak beliefs, evinced a stronger relation between their reported frequencies of prototypical intimacy behavior and their levels of relationship satisfaction. This finding gives provisional but valuable predictive validity to the scale. More generally, the pattern of findings in Study 4 provides further empirical support for the central distinction, drawn in recent models of social cognition in close relationships (e.g., Fletcher & Fincham, 1991b), between beliefs or judgments that apply to specific close relationships and those that apply to close relationships in general. In our view, researchers would be advised not to include items from these two domains in the same scale or measure.

In summary, we think there is sufficient evidence to warrant the use of this scale to investigate the role of general relationship beliefs in close relationships.

Future Research with the Scale

One limitation of the present research is that we mostly used a university-based student population, and the scale was developed and tested to apply to heterosexual close relationships. Two important directions for further research would be to test the scale with older nonstudent samples and also to develop the scale for use with same-sex close relationships.

A second issue the Relationship Beliefs Scale could be used to investigate concerns how relationship beliefs are formed and influenced. As noted previously, relationship beliefs are undoubtedly molded by the media and other societal sources of information (e.g., films, books, plays, TV). However, there is evidence that beliefs and expectations concerning close relationships are influenced both by observations of the close relationships of friends and family and by personal experiences in close relationships. Franklin et al. (1990) reported that people whose parents

were divorced had more pessimistic expectations concerning their chances of a successful marriage than those whose parents had not been divorced. Harvey et al. (1989) found that university students who identified a difficulty with communication as a major cause of a previous relationship breakup, compared to those who did not, also believed they would need to work especially hard on communication to make a future relationship successful. Such findings suggest that past relationship experiences may selectively influence beliefs concerning the importance of various factors in close relationships. The present scale may be useful in further investigating how relationship beliefs are generated and sustained.

A third general question concerns how relationship beliefs influence information processing and behavior within close relationships. Based on the application of commonly accepted ideas in social cognition to close relationships (e.g., Scott et al., 1991), we would expect close relationship beliefs to selectively prime the processing of belief-relevant behaviors within relationships. A strongly held belief, compared to a weakly held belief, should produce initial processing of belief-relevant behavior that is fast and automatic, but also lead to more controlled and in-depth processing under certain conditions (see Fletcher & Fincham, 1991a; Uleman & Bargh, 1989). Such belief-relevant behavior is also more likely to be stored in long-term memory, probably in relation to a trait or dispositional construct (e.g., my partner can't communicate) according to standard social cognitive theory (Higgins & Bargh, 1987).

Relationship beliefs may also influence a wide range of other judgments or processes including recall of behavior, predictions of future behavior or events, and causal attributions for behavior. For example, a strongly held belief in the importance of passion in close relationships, compared to a weakly held belief, may lead to passion-related behavior being recalled more readily and to more confident predictions of passion-related behavior.

The association between causal attributions in close relationships and close relationship beliefs is of particular interest, given the focus of the Relationship Beliefs scale (the success of close relationships). Presumably, a strongly held belief in the importance of a particular factor (e.g., External Factors) will make it more likely that the presence of such a factor will be cited as a major cause for the success or failure of a relationship, or of relationship problems or events. Research into attribution processes in close relationships has been the dominant research area concerned with the role of cognition in close relationships (Fletcher & Fincham, 1991a). The Relationship Beliefs Scale could be profitably used to explore the links between relationship beliefs, causal attributions, and other constructs. We are currently using the Relationship Beliefs Scale to test some of these ideas and hypotheses outlined above.

To conclude, we hope that the Relationship Beliefs Scale will prove useful in developing a better understanding of what we believe is an important knowledge construct in intimate relationships: beliefs concerning what leads to happiness and success in close relationships.

APPENDIX: THE RELATIONSHIP BELIEFS SCALE

The items are organized by subscales. The numbers to the left denote the position of the item in the original scale.

Communication

1 People must always listen to their partner's underlying messages.
19 Partners must be able to speak freely with each other on any topic no matter how distressing.
37 It is essential for partners to express all their feelings in relationships.

Love

2 In successful relationships partners constantly show how much they love one another.
20 Close relationships cannot work without love.
38 Love between partners is enough to ensure a successful relationship.

Trust

3 There must be complete honesty between partners.
21 The best relationships depend on being absolutely loyal to one another.
39 Partners must be completely faithful to one another in close relationships.

Independence

4 Each partner has a right to absolute personal privacy.
22 Partners in close relationships must have time apart from each other.
40 It is essential for partners to remain individuals no matter how close they are.

Support

5 Partners must support one another completely in close relationships.
23 In the best relationships partners work hard at satisfying each other's needs.
41 Partners must provide practical support for each other to the utmost of their capabilities.

Acceptance

6 In happy relationships partners totally accept each other.

24 Partners in the best relationships have unconditional approval of one another.
42 If partners do not accept each other, they cannot really love each other.

Sex

7 The best relationships are built on strong sexual attraction.
25 Without good sex relationships do not survive.
43 Sexual compatibility is essential to good relationships.

Equity

8 Men and women must equally share household chores.
26 Without equality between partners, relationships die.
44 The best relationship is one in which the partners take equal responsibility for its maintenance.

Compromise

9 Both partners must make sacrifices in relationships.
27 Partners must be prepared to compromise for the sake of a relationship.
45 Within a healthy relationship partners accommodate each others' needs, even if this involves self-denial.

Relationship Vitality

10 Relationships must be full of laughter.
28 Relationships must be exciting.
46 Romance is an essential element of a relationship.

Commonality

11 Sharing interests and hobbies keeps relationships healthy.
29 Partners must share the same beliefs and values.
47 The more time partners spend together the better.

Personal Security

12 People from similar backgrounds will have more successful relationships.
30 To have a good relationship each individual must feel secure within him/herself.
48 If both partners come from secure and caring families the relationship is much more likely to succeed.

Friendship

13 Partners must be best friends as well as lovers.

31 Your partner should be your best friend.
49 Relationships cannot survive without a very close friendship between partners.

Finance

14 Financial problems wreck relationships.
32 Close relationships depend on economic security.
50 Money is as important as love in a relationship.

Children

15 Having children brings couples together.
33 Long-term relationships are shallow without children.
51 Having children leads to total fulfillment in close relationships.

Important Others

16 Not getting on with each other's friends or families wrecks relationships.
34 Having friends in common cements relationships.
52 Your own friends must be your partner's friends.

Coping

17 A good relationship is strong enough to survive anything.
35 Conflict in a relationship must be confronted directly.
53 The success of a relationship depends on how well any conflict is dealt with.

Respect

18 In most successful relationships partners are completely sensitive to each others feelings.
36 Mutual respect is the foundation for the best relationships.
54 Courtesy toward the partner is one of the most important factors in the success of the best relationships.

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