

# Sources of Satisfaction and Conflict in Long-term Relationships

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*In regard to nine relationships of 52 subjects, 15 sources of satisfaction and 15 sources of conflict were rated. Three clear satisfaction factors emerged, and there were two conflict factors. There was some evidence for universal sources of satisfaction—the shared-interests factor, although this was low for neighbors. Spouse was in a class by itself, with the highest scores on all three satisfaction and both conflict factors. The ratio of conflict to satisfaction was greater for all the less voluntary relationships and for the lower status relationship. A number of age and sex differences appeared. The implications for exchange theory are discussed.*

## INTRODUCTION

Exchange and equity theory suggest that relationships are maintained by the provision of rewards by both sides. Foa and Foa (1974) suggested that six classes of resource are used in these exchanges—money, goods, services, love, status, and information. Another list of goals or rewards in relationships was produced by La Gaipa (1981)—identity, affective, expressive, sociability, and instrumental aid. On the other hand, Weiss (1969) concluded from a series of case studies that relationships serve five functions—expressing feelings freely, social integration, nurturant or parental roles, reassurance of worth, and assistance by kin. Other writers have distinguished between extrinsic, instrumental rewards such as advice or financial help, and intrinsic rewards, from the sheer presence or behavior of the other (Hinde, 1979). Writers in the exchange theory

tradition have studied the nature of the rewards in different relationships and the development of interdependence and concern with maximum joint profit, which they see as the source of commitment to a relationship (Scanzoni, 1979).

Various forms of conflict also have been discussed in the social psychological literature, especially competition for resources and differences of beliefs. Research on relationships has drawn attention to particular forms of conflict for different relationships. It has been found that disagreement and conflict are common in marriage (Burgess, 1981). In one of our previous studies, we found that “arguing” was one of the distinctive activities of spouses (Argyle and Furnham, 1982). Exchange theories have shown how conflict arises when one partner to a relationship is dissatisfied with the exchange achieved, and how he/she may use hostility as the ultimate bargaining move (Scanzoni, 1979). Recently we developed a functional approach to social situations: common social situations are perpetuated in a culture because they enable certain goals to be attained, which in turn lead to the satisfaction of basic drives (Argyle, Furnham and Graham, 1981). In one study, for example, we analysed the goals and conflicts of a number of common situations (Graham, Argyle and Furnham, 1980). We found that there were usually three main goal fac-

The authors are grateful to the SSRC for financial support.

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tors—concern for own physical well-being, social acceptance and maintaining relationships, and specific task goals related to the task. Subjects were able to report the extent to which such goals interfered with or facilitated each other, both within and between persons, so that simple “goal-structures” could be plotted. For instance, in nurse-patient encounters, nurses experienced a conflict between looking after the patient and looking after themselves. In another study it was found that choice of leisure and social activity was a function of personality and needs (Furnham, 1981).

Some of the situations used in these studies involved definite relationships between those involved, e.g., nurse-patient. It seemed, therefore, that a similar approach might be successful in the study of relationships. This was begun by using the same method that had been used in the study of goal structures of situations; and we asked subjects to rate the importance of various goals, and the links between goals for husband and wife, friends, etc. A pilot study was run along these lines; however, the number of separate goal factors in such relationships proved to be more like seven than three, the number of within-person and between-person goal linkages was very large, and no simple or immediately comprehensible patterns emerged.

A second pilot study was carried out on 40 female occupational therapy students, in which they were asked to rate the strength of conflicts or instrumental linkages within and between both parties, using six provided goals, for a number of different relationships. There was evidence of distinctive goal structures and, in particular, for different levels of conflict. The greatest number of instrumental links (six) were found for same-sex friends, the greatest number of conflicts (seven) for mother-child relationships. While these and other aspects of the results were suggestive, it was felt desirable to incorporate a wider range of possible goals and conflicts. Furthermore, subjects found it very difficult to estimate the degree of conflict or facilitation between some pairs of goals: it did not seem to be a very meaningful task for them. We, therefore, adopted a different method, drawing up lists of possible sources of satisfaction and conflict and asking people to rate the importance of these for a number of relationships.

1. It was predicted that there might be some universal sources of satisfaction and difficulty which are common to all relationships. In our studies of the rules of situations, we had found that there are some rules that are universal to most situations (Argyle et al., 1979), and we expected to find the same for the sources of satisfaction and

conflict in relationships. Previous research suggested that these might include satisfaction from doing things together and talking about things of mutual concern. To some extent these correspond to the male and female orientations, instrumental vs. expressive. Rands and Levinger (1979) found that cooperation over joint activities and affective interdependence formed two separate dimensions; activity and talk, however, may be alternatives rather than universals. The idea that there may be universal or common sources of satisfaction is supported by the finding that one relationship can substitute for another—the widowed live with or see much more of their children or siblings, and the unmarried spend more time with friends and kin (Townsend, 1968).

2. It was expected that goals would vary between different domains—family, friends, work, neighbors, etc.—and different relationships. In a previous study we had found that family, friends, and work associates chose quite different situations and activities in which to meet (Argyle and Furnham, 1982); and it seems likely that this is because different goals are pursued and different kinds of satisfaction obtained. Research has shown that in traditional marriages husbands contribute economically, while wives do most of the housework and childrearing, and perhaps provide more sexual gratification; both receive affection and companionship. Albrecht et al. (1979) found that there had been only small changes in this traditional picture, although younger wives earned more and younger husbands did more with the children.

Research on kinship, and ideas from sociobiology suggest that for kin, help is one of the main factors (Alexander, 1979). Kin relations involve shared identity and continue indefinitely. Friendship, on the other hand, is a more fragile relationship, so that major help is not provided, although joint leisure, conversation, and emotional support are enjoyed (Adams, 1967; Firth et al., 1969). Work associates have less intrinsic attachment but gain instrumental satisfaction from help and advice over work, according to various studies.

Wright and Keple (1981) compare the rewards that adolescents received in different relationships and found that the greatest rewards were received from friends rather than parents, and from mothers rather than fathers; but they did not find much variation in the patterns of reward, probably because their scales were all rather similar.

3. It was expected that there would be distinctive forms of conflict for each relationship. Past research has shown that husbands and wives may have conflict due to the wife's desire for more power (Hawkins et al., 1980), the need for very

close coordination of behavior, their different roles and spheres of activity, and belonging to different kinship groups. Siblings have conflicts based on competitiveness, started in early rivalry, and later over care of elderly parents (Firth et al., 1969). Coworkers also may be in competition or have opposed interests (e.g., managers and shop stewards), while subordinates may resent their superiors' power to control their behavior. Parents and older children may be in conflict for the same reason. Friends are less likely to have conflicts, since friendships can dissolve quite easily.

4. We wanted to explore some of the relations between satisfaction and conflict. Braiker and Kelley (1979) suggested that a closer relationship having deeper commitment often requires working through, rather than avoiding conflicts. Similarly, Scanzoni (1979) argues that at a greater level of interdependence conflict is more likely but that its resolution will lead to a higher level of rewards; hostility may occur, but only if it is believed that the other is committed to the relationship and that it may help to resolve the conflict. All this goes contrary to the common-sense view that conflict is a wholly negative feature of relationships. Recent research on marriage has found that there are two independent factors at work. For example, Jacob et al. (1980) found a factor of warmth, understanding, and involvement, and an independent factor of indifference and uninvolvedness. Gilford and Bengtson (1979) found a positive factor of number of shared activities and a negative factor of frequency of negative affective interaction. On the other hand, overall marital satisfaction has been found to be a positive function of positive interactions and a negative function of negative ones (e.g., Howard and Dawes, 1976).

5. It was expected that satisfaction and conflict would vary with the power and status of the other. Previous findings are rather contradictory here. On the one hand, the superior is found to be a major source of social support and job satisfaction (Payne, 1980); on the other hand, this is seen as a very superficial relationship (Wish et al., 1976). We expect that supervisors will be seen as an important source of instrumental, rather than expressive, reward and that the level of conflict will be high. From general principles of exchange theory, the more powerful person in a relationship would be expected to get a better balance of rewards over costs, corresponding to our satisfactions and conflicts. The only relationship with a clear power difference on our list was that of work superior, so we predicted a lower satisfaction/conflict ratio with work superior compared with work associate. However, there are *some*

rewards from superiors; and we expected more instrumental rewards (e.g., advice) from this source.

6. Exchange theory also led us to expect a lower balance of satisfactions over conflicts in the less voluntary relationships, such as at work, with neighbors, and with certain kin—where the relationship has to be maintained whether it is rewarding or not.

7. It was expected that there would be differences according to the sex of subjects. Previous studies have found that females are more concerned with emotional support, males with shared activities (Riesman, 1981). Studies of marriage have found that husbands on average have more marital satisfaction than wives (e.g., Campbell et al., 1976; Rhyne, 1981). On the other hand, women have closer friendships: male bonds are weaker, perhaps due to conflict over competition (Tognoli, 1980); and women are more active in maintaining kinship links, especially the mother-daughter and sister-sister links (Adams, 1968; Firth et al., 1969), and presumably enjoy more of whatever satisfaction kinship provides.

8. We expected age differences in the sources of satisfaction and conflict. Older people were expected to report greater satisfaction in the domains of kinship and work, less with friends. From our early discussion of the relation between satisfaction and conflict, it follows that older people should experience less conflict in longstanding relationships such as marriage, kin, and friendship.

## METHOD

### *Subjects*

In all, 52 subjects took part in this experiment. They were divided into four groups depending on their sex and age. There were 27 males and 25 females, of whom 25 were between 18 and 25 years of age, and 27 between 38 and 51 years. Subjects were obtained from the departmental subject panel and the Department of External Studies. Nearly all of the older group and about half of the younger group were married, and they were all in part- or full-time employment. Indeed, only subjects that were working and married (or with a "live-in" mate) were selected for this study. They were generally in lower middle-class and working-class jobs, such as electricians, nurses, and machine minders.

### *The Questionnaire*

The questionnaire was divided into two sections, which subjects completed in different orders. In the first section subjects were asked to

rate on a five-point scale the amount of satisfaction that they experienced in each of fifteen areas in their relationships with nine other people. Similarly, in the second section subjects rated on the same scale the amount of conflict that they experienced in each of fifteen different areas in their relationships with the same nine people.

The nine people were chosen to represent relationships in three domains: family, friends, and work colleagues. Previous research has supported this classification (Argyle and Furnham, 1982). The family members were spouse (or equivalent), nearest age sibling, same-sex parent, and adolescent child/sibling; the friends were close same-sex friend, close opposite-sex friend; and the work colleagues included immediate work superior and work associate. The subject's nearest neighbor was added to the list.

The fifteen different sources of conflict and satisfaction were drawn from two sources: previous research in various areas including marriage and the family, and the development of relationships and job satisfaction; and pilot studies with a few subjects asking them to indicate their major sources of satisfaction and conflict within these relationships. The most commonly experienced sources of conflict and satisfaction were retained for use in the experiment.

The questionnaire was administered in small groups in the presence of an experimenter. It was completed anonymously and took about half an hour to answer. The questionnaire generated a considerable amount of interest, and subjects were debriefed afterwards.

## RESULTS

The data were analysed in several ways.

### 1. Principal components and factor analyses

were computed for the 15 sources of satisfaction and conflict separately.

2. A four-way ANOVA was calculated both for satisfaction and conflict as a function of 15 sources of satisfaction or conflict, nine relationships, and the two ages and sexes of the subjects.
3. One-way ANOVAs were calculated for each source of satisfaction and conflict.
4. Correlations were calculated between total satisfaction and conflict for each relationship.

### *Factor Analysis of Sources of Satisfaction and Conflict*

*Satisfaction.* A principal components analysis was computed for the 15 sources of satisfaction, followed by varimax (orthogonal) rotation. The mean scores for each subject's rating of each relationship were used in the factor analysis; hence the *N* was 468 (52 subjects  $\times$  9 relationships) which is sufficiently large for a stable, meaningful factor structure to emerge. Of course, it would have been possible to determine whether the factor structure differed for each of the nine relationships; however, the *N* of 52 was deemed too small to do a factor analysis, as the result may be both unstable and inappropriate. It is suggested, nevertheless, that for further study it may be interesting to demonstrate relationship differences in terms of their divergent factor structures, rather than in terms of their overall factor scores. The factor analysis yielded three orthogonal factors, accounting for 35.8%, 11.4% and 7.2% of the variance.

Factor 1, which takes up most variance, consists of a variety of sources of satisfaction, based on advice, property, money, and joint work. It is dif-

TABLE 1. FACTOR ANALYTIC RESULTS FOR THE SATISFACTION SCALE

Scale	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
1. Satisfaction from doing things together/joint leisure	-0.02	0.07	0.79
2. Satisfaction from talking about things of mutual concern	0.22	0.14	0.80
3. Satisfaction from sharing common beliefs and values	0.16	0.21	0.77
4. Satisfaction from discussing personal problems	0.11	0.62	0.26
5. Satisfaction from sharing the same friends/social group	0.33	0.56	0.29
6. Satisfaction from being seen and identified with the other	0.40	0.58	0.03
7. Satisfaction from working together on a joint task	0.48	0.39	0.27
8. Satisfaction from providing emotional support to the other	0.04	0.80	0.15
9. Satisfaction from getting emotional support from the other	0.38	0.59	0.00
10. Satisfaction from providing financial support to the other	0.60	0.22	0.06
11. Satisfaction from getting financial support from the other	0.53	0.47	-0.05
12. Satisfaction from jointly owning or sharing property/goods	0.67	0.22	-0.05
13. Satisfaction from respecting each other's privacy	0.71	0.08	0.14
14. Satisfaction from simply being with the other person	0.56	0.30	0.22
15. Satisfaction from advice given by the other	0.71	0.06	0.24
Eigenvalue	5.36	1.71	1.07
Variance	35.8%	11.4%	7.2%

TABLE 2. FACTOR SCORES ON SATISFACTION AND CONFLICT

Factors	Spouse	Same-sex Friend	Work Superior	Satisfaction			Opposite-sex Friend	Parent	Neighbor	Work Associate		Adolescent
				Sibling	Conflict	Conflict				Associate	Associate	
I (Instrumental reward)	3.54	2.71	2.32	2.69	1.61	1.53	2.57	2.87	2.11	2.14	2.38	2.38
II (Emotional support)	3.89	3.43	2.22	3.24	1.86	1.64	3.23	3.25	1.93	2.40	2.81	2.81
III (Shared interests)	4.10	4.09	2.94	3.41			3.78	3.57	2.42	2.88	2.93	
I (Emotional conflict)	1.91	1.62	1.75				1.53	1.55	1.43	1.61	1.49	
II (Criticism)	2.05	1.64	1.76				1.64	1.81	1.62	1.52	1.98	

difficult to summarize these elements in a single label, but this factor might be called "instrumental reward." Factor II is easier to label and can be interpreted as "emotional support." Factor III can be called "shared interests."

The factor scores for each relationship were calculated by averaging the ratings for scales that correlated with each factor at .60 or above. These are shown in Table 2 and Figure 1.

*Conflict.* Similarly, a principal components analysis was computed for the 15 sources of conflict, followed by varimax rotation. This yielded two orthogonal factors, accounting for 51% and 9.7% of the variance.

Factor I, which accounts for 51% of the variance, is based on many kinds of conflict, but particularly the kinds of conflict found in more intimate relationships. We call it "emotional conflict." Based primarily on problems with the other's behavior, Factor II is called "criticism." The factor scores for the conflict factors are given in Table 3 and Figure 2.

#### Tests of the Hypotheses

*Hypothesis 1:* Are there universal sources of satisfaction and conflict? The results for the three-way ANOVAs are given in Tables 5 and 6. These were followed by one-way ANOVAs for each source of conflict and satisfaction across the nine relationships. Source of satisfaction was a significant source of variance ( $p < .001$ ) in each case. The means for different sources are given in Tables 4 and 5.

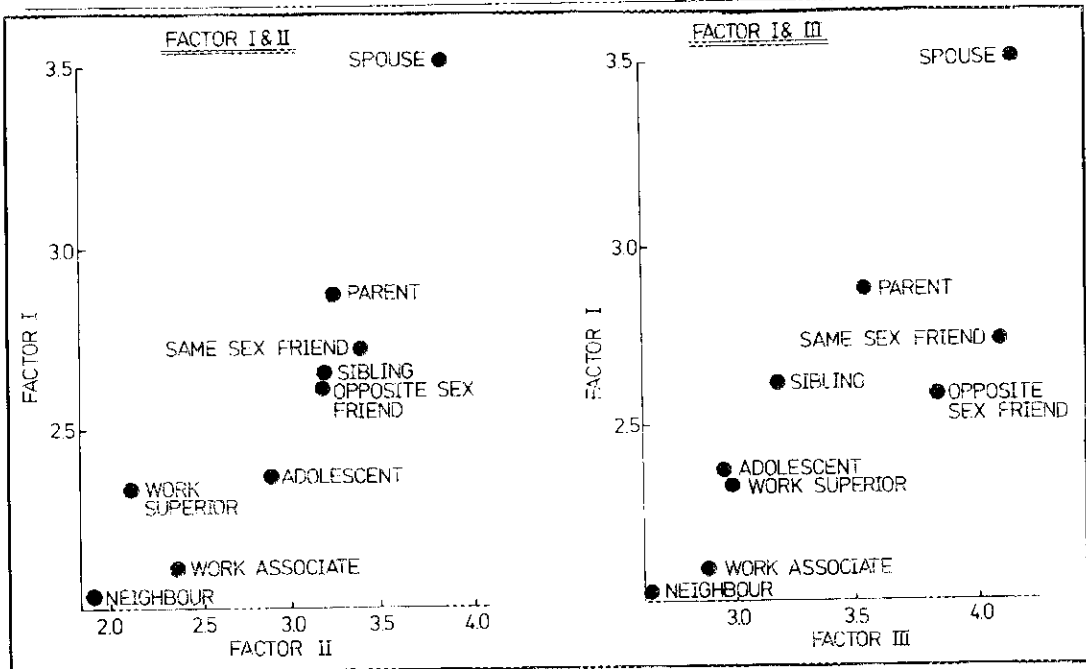
It can be seen that a number of sources of satisfaction have high means across the nine relationships. However, as Table 4 shows, each source has low scores for some of the relationships, although one fell above the mean of 2.87 for all nine relationships—respecting each other's privacy.

The conflict scores are similar, although the levels are lower than for satisfaction, and the overall mean was 1.68 (Table 5). Several sources of conflict were relatively high, and one was above the mean for all relationships—conflict over different beliefs and values. Furthermore, there was no significant difference across the nine relationships on this item.

This hypothesis also can be examined in terms of the factor scores given earlier. Figure 1 shows that work colleagues, neighbors, and adolescents are low in instrumental reward (Factor I); and the same relationships are also low on the other two factors. Factor III, shared interests, is quite high for all relationships except neighbors.

*Hypotheses 2 and 3.* Each relationship was expected to have a distinctive pattern of satisfaction

FIGURE 1. RELATIONSHIPS PLOTTED ON THE SATISFACTION DIMENSIONS



and conflict scores, and these should lead to greater understanding of the relationships. Each is discussed separately.

In this section we shall consider: (a) total satisfaction and conflict scores, (b) scores on the three satisfaction and two conflict factors (Figures 1 and 2), and (c) scores on the 15 satisfaction and 15 conflict scales (Tables 4 and 5).

*Spouse* has the highest overall level of satisfaction on all three factors but especially from jointly

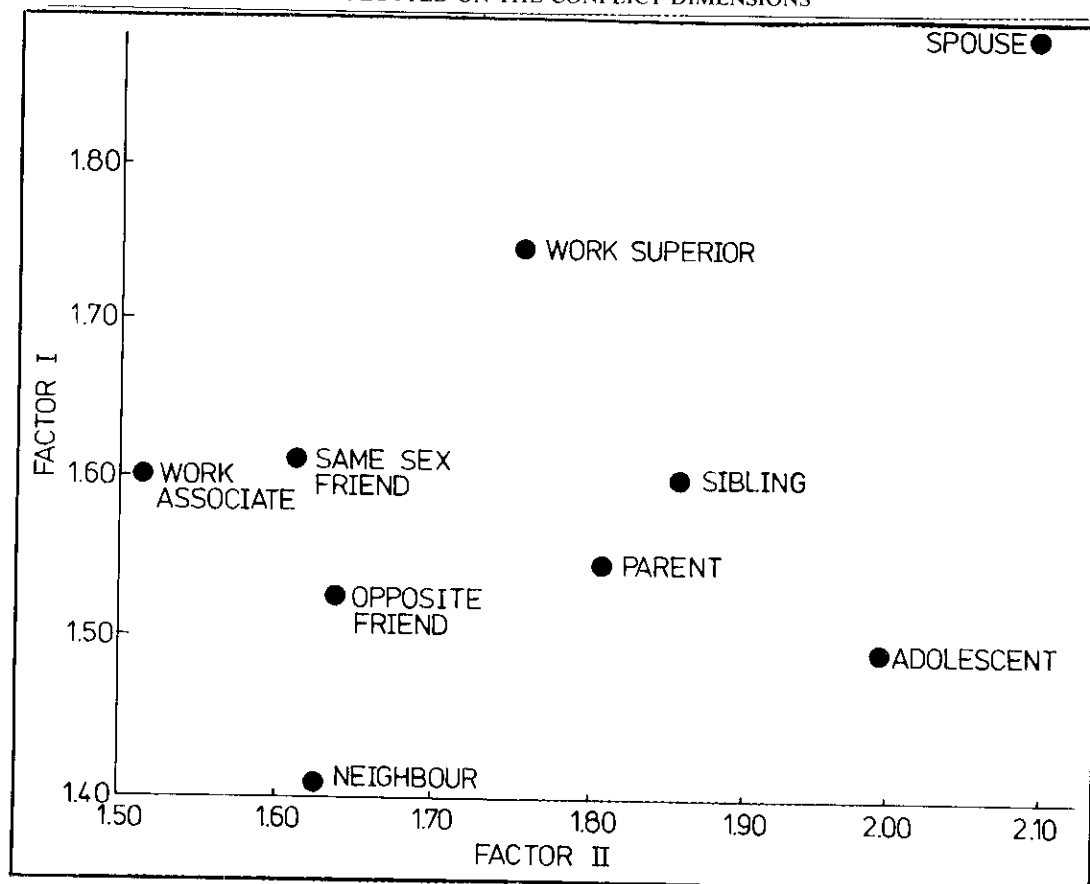
owning property and getting financial support, although less from respecting privacy. Conflict is also greatest on both factors but especially over independence, although less over competition for jobs.

*Neighbor* has the lowest satisfaction score, especially on the emotional-support factor, and on doing things together, being identified with each other, and simply being with the other, with relatively the most satisfaction from respecting

TABLE 3. FACTOR ANALYTIC RESULTS FOR THE CONFLICT SCALE

Scale	Factor 1	Factor 2
1. Compete for jobs and promotion	0.74	0.24
2. Compete for attention/affection of others	0.83	0.09
3. Compete for control over others	0.74	0.18
4. Conflict over money/possessions	0.74	0.22
5. Conflict over different beliefs and values	0.59	0.23
6. Conflict over independence from each other	0.65	0.43
7. Conflict over emotional help and support	0.74	0.20
8. Conflict when engaged in normal daily activity	0.74	0.24
9. Conflict over being able to understand each other (empathize)	0.77	0.28
10. Concern that the other is behaving unwisely	0.21	0.85
11. Conflict over each other's habits and lifestyle	0.21	0.87
12. Conflict over not being able to discuss personal problems	0.25	0.78
13. Conflict over attempts at emotional blackmail	0.47	0.12
14. Conflict over demands on each other's time	0.79	0.27
15. Conflict over each other's friends and social group	0.67	0.20
Eigenvalue	7.64	1.46
Variance	51.0%	9.7%

FIGURE 2. RELATIONSHIPS PLOTTED ON THE CONFLICT DIMENSIONS



privacy. Conflict is also low, especially on the main factor, emotional conflict, and regarding conflict over demands on each factor.

*Same-sex friends* had a high overall level of satisfaction, second only to spouse, especially on the emotional-support and shared-interests factors, and for sharing the same friends, doing things together, and discussing personal problems; but satisfaction was low on providing and receiving financial support and owning property. Conflict was fairly low, especially on the criticism factor, while relatively high in competition for jobs or promotion, competition for the attention or affection of others, and having different beliefs or values.

*Opposite-sex friends* were similar but with lower overall satisfaction, especially for the shared-interests factor—doing things together, discussing personal problems, sharing the same friends, and working together. Conflict was much the same overall, although lower on the emotional-conflict factor, and on competition for jobs.

Conflict was higher on not being able to discuss personal problems and not being able to understand each other.

*Parents* had fairly high satisfaction scores on all three factors, especially instrumental-reward, and on providing financial support; lower on sharing the same friends and respecting privacy. Conflict was fairly high, especially on the criticism factor and competition for the attention or affection of others.

*Siblings* was in the middle of the range for satisfaction on all three factors: it was higher on obtaining emotional support, simply being with the other, and discussing personal problems, while lower on *providing* emotional support. Conflict was high, especially on the criticism factor.

*Adolescent* was low in satisfaction on all three factors, especially on receiving advice and discussing personal problems, while relatively high on providing and receiving emotional support. Conflict was high, especially on the criticism factor and over empathy, in daily activity, demands

TABLE 4. THREE-WAY ANOVA RESULTS FOR EACH SOURCE OF SATISFACTION (*F* LEVELS)

Sources of Satisfaction	Sex	Age	Relationship	Sex x Age	Sex x Relationship	Age x Relationship	Sex x Age x Relationship
1. Satisfaction from doing things together/joint leisure	1.78	0.26	21.08***	0.36	4.51***	3.82***	1.53
2. Satisfaction from talking about things of mutual concern	7.03*	0.34	16.96***	0.59	2.01	3.55***	2.39*
3. Satisfaction from sharing common beliefs and values	2.72	2.37	12.31***	0.41	3.02***	2.84***	0.16
4. Satisfaction from discussing personal problems	6.75*	0.25	27.30***	0.18	2.21*	5.93***	2.80**
5. Satisfaction from sharing the same friends/social group	2.82	2.46	23.09***	0.09	1.72	1.70	0.58
6. Satisfaction from being seen and identified with the other	0.00	1.68	14.54***	0.31	4.93**	1.81	0.99
7. Satisfaction from working together on a joint task	0.89	1.71	10.09**	0.07	2.79*	2.01	0.60
8. Satisfaction from providing emotional support to the other	8.56**	0.71	19.06***	0.66	5.62***	3.60***	0.72
9. Satisfaction from getting emotional support from the other	8.40**	0.66	20.85***	0.25	4.33***	3.38***	1.83
10. Satisfaction from providing financial support to the other	1.11	0.91	13.79***	0.24	3.34**	1.93	0.64
11. Satisfaction from getting financial support from the other	1.21	0.70	21.34***	0.10	1.90	3.10**	2.00
12. Satisfaction from jointly owning or sharing property/goods	0.02	0.42	21.47***	0.93	1.68	6.17***	2.16*
13. Satisfaction from respecting each other's privacy	0.80	4.01	3.40*	0.92	1.29	1.58	1.41
14. Satisfaction from simply being with the other person	11.77***	2.99	24.29***	0.12	4.82***	1.91	1.98
15. Satisfaction from advice given by the other	4.38	0.80	14.42***	0.03	2.62**	1.53	1.90

\**p* < .05.\*\**p* < .01.\*\*\**p* < .001.



TABLE 5. THREE-WAY ANOVA RESULTS FOR EACH SOURCE OF CONFLICT (*F* LEVELS)

Sources of Conflict	Sex	Age	Relationship	Sex x Age	Sex x Relationship	Age x Relationship	Sex x Age x Relationship
1. Compete for jobs and promotion	4.99*	0.50	7.54***	0.08	1.01	1.25	2.21*
2. Compete for attention/affection of others	1.54	2.71	3.59***	0.89	0.30	1.53	1.37
3. Compete for control over others	1.75	2.49	4.47***	0.99	1.86	1.52	1.19
4. Conflict over money/possessions	2.29	3.80	3.20***	3.90	1.45	1.61	1.18
5. Conflict over different beliefs and values	1.95	3.59	1.41	0.01	2.33*	1.53	1.29
6. Conflict over independence from each other	0.58	7.59**	5.35***	0.35	2.51*	3.30**	1.08
7. Conflict over emotional help and support	1.66	1.54	4.53***	0.00	0.79	1.18	1.17
8. Conflict when engaged in normal daily activity	2.99	0.71	1.92	0.10	3.06**	2.14*	2.23*
9. Conflict over being able to understand each other (empathize)							
10. Concern that the other is behaving unwisely	3.25	10.50***	0.75	0.07	1.42	0.40	1.19
11. Conflict over each other's habits and lifestyle	2.15	0.20	3.76***	0.00	0.59	1.88	0.68
12. Conflict over not being able to discuss personal problems	2.51	6.72*	1.57	0.33	0.51	0.58	0.84
13. Conflict over attempts at emotional blackmail	1.43	8.03**	3.13**	0.02	1.40	2.45*	2.09*
14. Conflict over demands on each other's time	1.42	2.22	2.13*	1.29	1.01	1.81	1.54
15. Conflict over each other's friends and social group	1.55	3.19	5.54***	0.11	0.83	1.22	1.63
	2.63	8.55**	3.61***	2.34	0.74	1.02	1.72

\**p* < .05.\*\**p* < .01.\*\*\**p* < .001.

on each other's time, and over money or possessions.

*Work superior* was very low in satisfaction on all three factors, but especially on providing and getting emotional support, simply being with the other, sharing the same friends, and discussing personal problems; and relatively high on receiving advice, working together, and respecting privacy. Conflict was high, especially on the general factor, emotional conflict, second only to spouse, and on competition for control over others, and demands on each other's time; but conflict over friends was relatively low.

*Work associate* differed from work superior. In terms of satisfaction and conflict, the grouping of these relationships is interesting. This can be studied by inspection of Figures 1 and 2 where the factor scores are plotted. For satisfaction (Fig. 1) there are three clusters: (a) spouse; (b) parent, sibling, opposite-sex friend, same-sex friend; and (c) work associate, work superior, neighbor, adolescent. For conflict spouse again is by itself, the two kinds of friends are together, kin other than spouse are adjacent, but the two work relations are separated. Spouse and work superior are highest on emotional conflict (Factor I); spouse and adolescent are highest on criticism (Factor II).

*Hypothesis 4.* We wanted to explore the relationship between satisfaction and conflict. As Table 6 shows, across relationships there is a correlation of .57 (*p* < .06); i.e., the more satisfying relationships also tend to produce more conflict—spouse is highest on both, while neighbor and work associate are lowest.

*Within* most of the relationships there were small positive correlations of about .25 (*p* < .05), but for spouse and parent there were nonsignificant negative relations. The hypothesis, thus, is doubly confirmed.

*Hypothesis 5.* Satisfaction and conflict were expected to vary with the power of the other. Overall satisfaction was similar for work superior and work associate; however, work superior was higher on instrumental reward (Factor I). On individual scales (see Tables 5 and 6) work-superior satisfaction was greater with advice given by the other and with respecting privacy. For the work associate satisfaction was greater from sharing the same friends and from providing and getting emotional support.

Conflict was somewhat higher for work superior (1.77 vs. 1.61, *p* < .05), and this was especially so for criticism (Factor II) but also for emotional conflict (Factor I). On this factor conflict for work superior was second only to that for spouse. Regarding individual scales, conflict for work superior is greater with demands on each

TABLE 6. THE RELATION BETWEEN SATISFACTION AND CONFLICT

Relationships	A—Mean Satisfaction (S)	B—Mean Conflict (C)	Correlation between S and C
1. Spouse	3.81	1.97	-.14
2. Close same-sex friend	3.32	1.67	.04
3. Work superior	2.40	1.77	.24*
4. Sibling	3.01	1.67	.25*
5. Close opposite-sex friend	3.10	1.60	.27*
6. Parent	3.13	1.65	-.17
7. Neighbor	2.07	1.50	.03
8. Work associate	2.43	1.61	.26*
9. Adolescent	2.61	1.72	.23

Note: Correlation between columns A and B is 0.57 ( $p < .06$ ).

\* $p < .05$ .

other's time and not being able to discuss personal problems. Conflict with work associates was greater for competition for attention/affection of others. The ratio of conflict to satisfaction was greater for work superiors (0.75) than for work associates (0.67) ( $p < .05$ ).

*Hypothesis 6.* The balance of conflicts over reward was predicted to be greater for the less voluntary relationships. We took the average of all satisfaction and conflict scores and looked at the ratios of conflict/satisfaction, which were as follows:

More voluntary: same-sex friends, 0.52; opposite-sex friends, 0.52; and spouse, 0.53;

Less voluntary: work superior, 0.75; work associate, 0.67; neighbor, 0.71; adolescent, 0.65; and parent, 0.54.

Siblings have been omitted, since this is a partly voluntary relationship. The separation of the two groups distinguished a priori is complete ( $p < .02$ ), giving some support to the hypothesis.

*Hypotheses 7 and 8.* Differences were expected due to sex and age of subjects. After the four-way ANOVA was computed across all sources of satisfaction and conflict, a three-way ANOVA—sex (2), age (2), relationship (9)—was computed for each source of satisfaction and conflict.

As regards to sex, there were a number of significant main effects and interactions. Females derived more satisfaction from giving and getting emotional support, discussing personal problems and issues of mutual concern, and simply being with the other person. The female subjects derived greater satisfaction from their relationship with friends of both sexes, siblings, neighbors, and adolescent children, while males got more satisfaction from spouses and work superiors. Regarding sex differences only one main effect was significant for conflict: females have less conflict over competition for jobs and promotion. Three sex  $\times$  source-of-conflict interactions were

significant: males have more conflict over different beliefs, independence, and daily activities, particularly with same-sex friends and with people at work.

For age it seems that older people derive more satisfaction (on most of the 8 significant age  $\times$  source-of-satisfaction interactions) from their relationships with spouses, siblings, neighbors, and adolescent children, while the younger subjects receive more satisfaction from friends of both sexes and from work associates. Whereas there were no significant main effects of age for sources of satisfaction, there were five significant main effects for sources of conflict. It was predicted that older people would experience less conflict in long-standing relationships. Younger people have more conflict over all relationships, particularly regarding independence, being able to understand and empathize with each other, over the other's habits and lifestyle, not being able to discuss personal problems, and over each other's friends. This corresponds to the emotional-conflict factor in the varimax analysis. Older people tend to have less conflict in their spousal or equivalent relationships in some areas and more conflict with neighbors and work associates.

There were no significant sex  $\times$  age interactions for either conflict or satisfaction, but there were a few significant three-way interactions. Younger females have the lowest satisfaction from spouses in some areas. Older males have most conflict in some relationships, although younger females have most conflict with siblings (as well as having most satisfaction from them).

## DISCUSSION

The method that was finally used in this study, after trying several others, seems to be simple and meaningful for the subjects and to yield useful results. The satisfaction items produced three factors that were readily interpretable as instru-

TABLE 7. MEAN CONFLICT SCORES FOR EACH RELATIONSHIP

	1a	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Mean
1. Compete for jobs and promotion	1.6	1.9	2.1	1.7	1.5	1.3	1.5	2.0	1.4	1.6
2. Compete for attention/affection of others	1.8	1.9	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.4	1.3	1.8	1.7	1.7
3. Competing for control over others	1.8	1.7	2.0	1.6	1.4	1.3	1.3	1.8	1.5	1.5
4. Conflict over money/possessions	1.9	1.3	1.4	1.6	1.4	1.6	1.4	1.4	1.5	1.5
5. Conflict over different beliefs and values	2.5	2.5	2.3	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.0	2.1	2.1	2.3
6. Conflict over independence from each other	2.3	1.4	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.8	1.5	1.4	1.7	1.6
7. Conflict over emotional help and support	2.0	1.5	1.6	1.5	1.4	1.6	1.3	1.4	1.6	1.5
8. Conflict when engaged in normal daily activity	2.0	1.7	1.9	1.8	1.5	1.7	1.7	1.6	1.6	1.7
9. Concern that the other is behaving unwisely	1.9	1.6	1.9	1.7	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.7	1.8	1.8
10. Conflict over each other's habits and lifestyle	2.1	1.8	1.7	1.9	1.7	1.9	1.8	1.5	1.9	1.8
11. Conflict over not being able to discuss personal problems	1.8	1.3	1.8	1.5	1.4	1.6	1.4	1.4	1.7	1.5
12. Conflict over attempts at emotional blackmail	1.7	1.5	1.4	1.3	1.5	1.6	1.3	1.3	1.7	1.4
13. Conflict over demands on each other's time	2.0	1.5	2.1	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.2	1.6	1.8	1.6
14. Conflict over each other's friends and social group	1.8	1.6	1.3	1.7	1.7	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.8	1.6
Mean ( $\bar{x}$ = 1.66)	2.0	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.6	1.7	1.5	1.6	1.7	—

Note: Conflict scale is 1 = none, 2 = a little, 3 = some, 4 = a moderate amount, and 5 = a lot.

aRelationship codes: 1 = spouse or live-in mate, 2 = close same-sex friend, 3 = immediate work superior, 4 = nearest age sibling, 5 = close opposite-sex friend, 6 = same-sex parent, 7 = nearest neighbor, 8 = work associate, and 9 = adolescent.

TABLE 8. MEAN SATISFACTION SCORES FOR EACH RELATIONSHIP

	1a	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Mean
1. Satisfaction from doing things together/joint leisure	4.3	4.3	2.8	3.4	3.9	3.6	2.3	3.0	3.1	3.4
2. Satisfaction from talking about things of mutual concern	4.2	4.3	3.2	3.6	4.0	3.6	2.6	3.1	3.1	3.5
3. Satisfaction from sharing common beliefs and values	3.8	3.7	2.9	3.3	3.6	3.5	2.4	2.6	2.7	3.1
4. Satisfaction from discussing personal problems	3.9	3.6	2.0	3.1	3.2	3.1	1.9	2.1	2.3	2.8
5. Satisfaction from sharing the same friends/social group	3.6	3.6	1.7	2.4	3.1	2.2	1.9	2.1	2.2	2.5
6. Satisfaction from being seen and identified with the other	3.8	3.1	2.5	3.1	3.1	3.3	1.7	2.4	2.7	2.8
7. Satisfaction from working together on a joint task	3.9	3.9	3.3	3.2	3.5	3.5	2.2	3.3	3.2	3.3
8. Satisfaction from providing emotional support to the other	3.9	3.6	2.2	3.6	3.5	3.4	2.2	2.7	3.4	3.2
9. Satisfaction from getting emotional support from the other	3.9	3.5	2.2	3.4	3.3	3.4	2.0	2.5	2.7	3.0
10. Satisfaction from providing financial support to the other	3.3	1.8	1.6	2.2	1.9	2.3	1.5	1.6	2.3	2.0
11. Satisfaction from getting financial support from the other	3.5	1.8	1.4	2.1	1.7	2.6	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.9
12. Satisfaction from jointly owning or sharing property/goods	3.7	3.8	3.2	3.4	3.5	3.2	3.2	2.9	3.2	3.3
13. Satisfaction from respecting each other's privacy	4.3	3.7	2.3	3.5	3.7	3.5	2.0	2.7	2.8	3.2
14. Satisfaction from simply being with the other person	3.7	3.4	3.1	3.1	3.2	3.3	2.2	2.5	2.2	2.9
15. Satisfaction from advice given by the other	3.8	3.3	2.4	3.0	3.1	3.1	2.1	2.4	2.6	—
Mean ( $\bar{x}$ = 2.87)										

Note: Satisfaction scale is 1 = none, 2 = a little, 3 = some, 4 = a moderate amount, and 5 = a lot.

aRelationship codes: 1 = spouse or live-in mate, 2 = close same-sex friend, 3 = immediate work superior, 4 = nearest age sibling, 5 = close opposite-sex friend, 6 = same-sex parent, 7 = nearest neighbor, 8 = work associate, and 9 = adolescent.

mental reward, emotional support and shared interests. The conflict items produced a large factor centered on emotional conflict and a smaller one which is labeled criticism. These factors were very helpful in the interpretation of the main results and may be of general importance.

Some of the main results were: there was some evidence for universal sources of satisfaction—especially shared interest; spouse was by far the greatest source of both satisfaction and conflict; and there were distinctive patterns of satisfaction and conflict for each relationship. For example, those relationships that produced the greatest satisfaction also had the most conflict, although the relative amount of conflict was greater for work relationships; there also were a number of age and sex differences along the lines predicted.

The implications for exchange theory are discussed below. In the first place, satisfaction and conflict are apparently compatible with each other, and the closer the relationship the more there is of both; e.g., spouse is very high on both, neighbor very low. The relative amount of conflict, however, is greater in those relationships that are less voluntary and where one has less power, e.g., with work supervisor. Young females have a close relationship with their sisters, with whom they report a lot of conflict. The nature of the satisfaction varies to some extent across relationships; for example, parents, spouses, and work superiors provide material or financial help or advice, whereas friends are higher on shared interest. There is really only one rather general conflict factor, although adolescents, spouses, and work superiors were high on a second, smaller factor of criticism. In the study of particular relationships—e.g., marriage—it would be desirable to add to these lists other items that have been found relevant to these relationships in other studies. In the case of marriage, for example, the satisfaction items might well include: sex, children, and anticipating support in old age; the conflicts might include unfaithfulness, trouble with in-laws, trouble with the children, and the wife becoming employed.

We wanted to explore further the relations between satisfaction and conflict. Across relationships there was a positive correlation (.57); also *within* half of the relationships, there was a significant positive correlation for both work relationships and opposite-sex friend and sibling, but not for spouse. These results support the idea that satisfaction and conflict are entirely compatible. We also found that there is more conflict and less satisfaction for younger spouses, supporting the idea that conflicts have to be worked through.

What are the implications for marriage? In the first place, the study confirms that marriage is a uniquely intense relationship, which cannot be grouped with any of the other relationships studied. The most similar relationship in terms of satisfaction is with parents, although on the criticism factor adolescent children are nearest. We found that a high level of conflict is normal in marriage and that satisfaction in marriage was greater for males and for older subjects.

In regard to some of the other relationships studied, work relationships had a low level of satisfaction in relation to conflict, perhaps because they are less voluntary, especially with work superior; friends had high satisfaction scores on emotional support and shared interests, and low conflict, especially criticism. Siblings were high in satisfaction from receiving but not giving emotional support, and they also were high on criticism. Adolescent children were very low in satisfaction and very high in conflict.

The age and sex differences follow the predicted pattern. Females derive more satisfaction in the emotional-support area and from friends and family; men get more satisfaction from spouses and work superiors. Younger females receive the most satisfaction from siblings but also the most conflict with them; younger females had the least satisfaction from spouses, younger males the least from siblings. In some relationships, however, older males have the most conflict.

Also as predicted, older people derive more satisfaction from family and neighbors, younger people more from friends and work associates. Younger people have more emotional conflict and more with spouses, while older people have more conflict with neighbors and work associates.

Finally we should emphasise the sample limitations of this study in that it involved 52 subjects in the Oxford area, employed in lower middle- or working-class jobs. Only those both married and employed, falling into one of two age groups and within a certain range of occupations were selected.

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