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Source: *Journal of Marriage and Family*, Vol. 54, No. 3 (Aug., 1992), pp. 595-608

Published by: National Council on Family Relations

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/353245>

Accessed: 14/03/2010 17:46

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Assessing Commitment in Personal Relationships

A model for conceptualizing relationship commitment is presented and the development of a measure corresponding to this model described. Commitment is considered as two constructs: personal dedication and constraint commitment. In study one, items developed for the Commitment Inventory (CI) were given to a sample of 141 subjects. Item analyses resulted in selection of the items for the inventory. In study two, 279 subjects yielded data used in further testing of the CI. Tests were conducted on the reliability of the subscales, the factor structure of the CI, and the associations between the CI and various other measures of commitment. Further, the CI was examined in relation to various demographic variables and various measures of other relationship constructs. Overall, the research demonstrated that the CI shows promise as a reliable and valid instrument for measuring commitment. Implications are discussed for both the CI and the concept of commitment.

Commitment is receiving increasing attention both in theories of personal relationships (e.g., Cook & Emerson, 1978; Johnson, 1985; Levinger, 1979) and in research on personal relationships (e.g., Beach & Broderick, 1983; Johnson, 1982; Lund, 1985; Rusbult, 1980, 1983). Our paper has four objectives: (a) to present an integrative

framework for relationship commitment; (b) to describe the development of a conceptually rich measure of commitment; (c) to present preliminary reliability and validity data; and (d) to contribute to our understanding of commitment.

Many definitions of commitment have been offered (e.g., Becker, 1960; Leik & Leik, 1977; Rusbult, 1983). Johnson (1978) draws attention to two meanings that commitment has in common usage. The sentence, "John sure is committed to his career" conveys commitment in the sense of dedication. Alternatively, the sentence "John committed to do this, he can't back out now" conveys the sense of obligation or constraint to continue a line of action. In developing our theory of commitment we have been primarily influenced by Johnson's distinction (1978, 1982), along with the work of Levinger (1965, 1979) and Rusbult (1980, 1983).

We view commitment as encompassing two related constructs: *personal dedication* and *constraint commitment*. Personal dedication refers to the desire of an individual to maintain or improve the quality of his or her relationship for the joint benefit of the participants. It is evidenced by a desire (and associated behaviors) not only to continue in the relationship, but also to improve it, to sacrifice for it, to invest in it, to link personal goals to it, and to seek the partner's welfare, not simply one's own.

In contrast, constraint commitment refers to forces that constrain individuals to maintain relationships regardless of their personal dedication

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to them. Constraints may arise from either external or internal pressures, and they favor relationship stability by making termination of a relationship more economically, socially, personally, or psychologically costly. Studies have demonstrated validity for notions of commitment consistent with dedication (e.g., Murstein & MacDonald, 1983; Rusbult, 1980, 1983) and constraint (e.g., Lund, 1985; Udry, 1981).

Why another measure?

Questions have been raised about the psychometric sophistication of the bulk of the measures currently available (e.g., Pramann, 1986). Further, some measures currently available, while useful, are quite simplistic. For example, Beach & Broderick's (1983) one-item measure of personal commitment has demonstrated utility, but it captures little conceptual richness. Our approach has been to identify and develop measures for dimensions of dedication and constraint. These dimensions are described below.

Personal Dedication. The dimensions we see as relevant to personal dedication come from a variety of sources (e.g., Beach & Broderick, 1983; Leik & Leik, 1977; Rusbult, 1980) including our own impressions from research and clinical experience. *Relationship Agenda* is the degree to which a person *wants* the relationship to continue over time. The desire to see a relationship continue over the long run has been directly linked to commitment or its development by several exchange theorists (e.g., Dean & Spanier, 1974; Leik & Leik, 1977; Levinger, 1979). *Primacy of Relationship* refers to the priority level that the relationship holds in a person's hierarchy of activities. *Couple Identity* refers to the degree to which an individual thinks of the relationship as a team, in contrast to viewing it as two separate individuals, each trying to maximize individual gains. We see this dimension as consistent with notions of commitment in exchange theory, commitment being a condition where the market is noncompetitive and the goal is to maximize joint outcomes (Cook & Emerson, 1978). *Satisfaction with Sacrifice* refers to the degree to which people feel a sense of satisfaction in doing things that are largely or solely for their partners' benefit. This dimension is probably negatively associated with exchange ori-

entation as discussed by Murstein and MacDonald (1983), who described people who are closely monitoring the return on their investments. *Alternative Monitoring* refers to a dimension discussed by Leik and Leik (1977) and Cook and Emerson (1978). While these theorists are referring to alternatives in a broad sense, we have specifically focused on the respondent's level of monitoring of potential, alternative partners. The more individuals are attracted to or attuned to other potential partners, the less their personal dedication to their current partners. *Meta-Commitment* refers to the level of commitment one has to commitments. It is not dependent on a particular relationship, but is a value the individual may bring to a relationship.

Constraint Commitment. Most of the dimensions of constraint commitment follow directly from Johnson's work (1978, 1982). *Structural Investments* are those that become intertwined in a relationship, chiefly possessions and the investment of money. Greater investment levels contribute to increased constraint because of a desire not to lose what has been invested (Lund, 1985). *Social Pressure* refers to the pressures that others put on a couple to maintain their relationship, the most important being friends and family. *Termination Procedures* (Johnson, 1982) refers to the difficulty of the steps that would have to be taken to end a particular relationship. *Unattractiveness of Alternatives* (Johnson, 1982) represents the degree to which a person would be unhappy about any or all of a broad range of possible life changes upon the relationship ending (e.g., change in residence, change in economic status). In contrast, with *Availability of Partners* we are focusing specifically on the perceived availability of other suitable partners should the current relationship end. If a person wants a relationship, but perceives that there is no one else available besides the present partner, this person is more constrained to remain with that partner. *Morality of Divorce* refers to the moral acceptability of divorce.

Along with others (e.g., Johnson, 1978, 1982; Rusbult, 1983), we hypothesize the constraints are a major, perhaps the major, determinant of relationship stability. Constraints provide explanation for the existence of stable, dissatisfying relationships. In satisfying marriages, we expect that constraints may help couples weather the inevitable fluctuations in satisfaction. Udry's (1981) and

Lund's (1985) longitudinal studies strongly suggest that factors associated with constraint are better predictors of relationship stability than are measures more related to relationship satisfaction and attraction. In contrast to constraint, we see personal dedication as a key determinant of future relationship quality, as well as an important determinant of future relationship stability.

Personal dedication and constraint commitment are not expected to be independent. For example, high personal dedication during engagement increases constraint as the couple expresses their dedication by committing themselves to marriage, children, joint possessions, and so forth. More is invested, others expect and want the relationship to continue, more complicated procedures are required to end the relationship, and alternatives may become less attractive. Simply put, today's dedication is tomorrow's constraint. Except Morality of Divorce, all of the constraints should increase with the changes typically associated with relationships over time. While this thinking is really longitudinal, we predicted the pattern cross-sectionally.

Two studies are presented. Study one presents scale development procedures. Study two presents further reliability analyses, a principal components analysis, and analyses relevant to the validity of the CI.

STUDY ONE: SUBSCALE DEVELOPMENT

The objective of this study was to use inter-item correlations to identify a set of six reliable items to assess each content domain. Two predictions were made for this study: (a) An ideal selection of 6 items from the pool of 16 items written for each subscale will yield Cronbach's alphas of at least .70 for each subscale of the CI; and (b) personal dedication subscales will generally be more highly correlated with one-item measures of commitment and relationship satisfaction than constraint subscales.

Method

Subjects

The sample consisted of 141 subjects (79 females, 62 males) solicited from a variety of sources, including: 47 subjects from two church groups, 18 graduate students in psychology, and

76 subjects from undergraduate psychology courses and various community contacts of research assistants. The average age of this sample was 30.98 years ($SD = 2.85$), and average yearly household income was \$27,500 (parent's income for undergraduates). The relationship stages were: regular dating ($n = 13$), exclusive dating ($n = 26$), engaged or planning marriage ($n = 16$), and married ($n = 84$).

Measures

A demographic data form assessed income level, education, age, length of time in relationship, religious affiliation, ethnicity, living arrangement, relationship stage, and so forth. Two 1-item measures were used to aid in evaluating the commitment items selected using this sample: relationship satisfaction (adopted from the first item of the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test, Locke & Wallace, 1959), and a question asking "All things considered, how committed would you say you are to your partner?" Both one-item measures were answered on 20-point Likert scales, with satisfaction anchored "very unhappy" = 1 and "very happy" = 20, and commitment anchored "not at all committed" = 1, and "as committed as can be" = 20.

Procedure

Data collection. Subjects were asked by the leaders of their groups or by the first author if they would participate in a research project on relationships. Willing subjects were given a packet of forms and asked to return them in sealed envelopes at the next regular meeting of their group.

Item selection. The authors and associates wrote 16 items believed to reflect each dimension, each set of items being viewed as a subscale. Half the items for each subscale were worded in the positive direction while half were worded in the negative. Each item was answered on 7-point Likert scales anchored from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." Six items were selected for each subscale to meet these criteria: (a) three positively worded (scaled) items and three negatively worded items; (b) a coefficient alpha of .70 or greater for each subscale; and (c) each item correlating more highly with the corrected-item total of the subscale in question than the total of each other subscale. Item content, means, and stan-

TABLE 1. COEFFICIENT ALPHAS AND ASSOCIATIONS WITH OTHER MEASURES FOR SUBSCALES OF THE COMMITMENT INVENTORY

Subscale	Study One Alphas	Average Correlation with Other 9 Subscales	Correlation with One-Item Commitment Measure	Correlation with One-Item Satisfaction Measure	Study Two Alphas
Morality of divorce	.94	.30	.32**	.22**	.82
Availability of partners	.82	.33	.43**	.22**	.80
Social pressure	.92	.52	.63**	.39**	.88
Structural investments	.82	.20	.21*	.04	.70
Unattractiveness of alternatives	—	—	—	—	.91
Termination procedures	—	—	—	—	.89
Relationship agenda	.94	.56	.77**	.48**	.88
Meta-commitment	.79	.39	.46**	.32**	.75
Couple identity	.90	.54	.56**	.50**	.81
Primacy of relationship	.87	.56	.69**	.48**	.80
Satisfaction with sacrifice	.84	.46	.38**	.51**	.74
Alternative monitoring	.89	.53	.72**	.61**	.86

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

dard deviations were also examined to determine the items to retain in the final subscales.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 displays the coefficient alphas and average correlation of each of the 10 subscales developed in this study with the other nine 6-item subscales. All 10 subscales met all of the criteria for item selection discussed above.

As expected, dedication subscales generally correlated more highly with the one-item measure of relationship satisfaction than the constraint subscales (Table 1). These results are consistent with our theory that personal dedication is associated with, though independent from, relationship satisfaction. Table 1 also shows the correlations between the subscales and the one-item measure of commitment. We believe that these data demonstrate that when people rate their levels of "commitment," they are generally thinking more about what we are calling personal dedication than constraint commitment. Note that throughout this paper, we have scaled all subscales of the CI such that higher scores reflect higher levels of commitment.

STUDY TWO: INTERNAL CONSISTENCY, PRINCIPAL COMPONENTS ANALYSIS, CONCURRENT VALIDITY, AND CONSTRUCT VALIDITY

The objectives of this study were to use a new sample to reassess the internal consistency of the subscales, examine the factor structure of the in-

ventory, and assess the associations between the inventory and other measures of relationship commitment. We predicted:

1. The alpha coefficients for the subscales will be at an acceptable level (.70 or above).

2. The personal dedication subscales will show a greater degree of interrelatedness than the constraint subscales; and thus a principal components analysis will yield at least two factors, one reflecting personal dedication and one or more reflecting the less homogenous construct of constraint.

3. In general, the new subscales will show greater correlations with other researchers' scales of similar intent and relatively lower correlations with other scales of dissimilar intent.

The construct validity of the CI was tested by assessing the associations between it and other variables. Several predictions were tested:

4. Females will show higher levels of personal dedication.

5. Relationship satisfaction and personal dedication will be positively correlated (and to a greater degree than satisfaction and constraint), and problem intensity and personal dedication will be negatively correlated.

6. Constraint commitment scores (except the Morality of Divorce scale) will increase across relationship stage.

Method

Subjects

The sample consisted of 279 subjects (162 females and 117 males). These subjects were solic-

ited from a variety of groups, including 10 religious groups (one Jewish and nine Christian; $n = 137$), several undergraduate speech-communication classes from two local universities ($n = 118$), and a subsample of subjects who have been participating in an ongoing marital research project ($n = 24$). Reformed Jewish, Presbyterian, United Church of Christ, United Methodist, Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Nondenominational Evangelical, and Southern Baptist groups participated. These groups were chosen to capture a spectrum of subjects from religiously liberal to conservative (Stanley, 1986; see Roof & McKinney, 1987, pp. 211–214, as an example of how to classify such groups). Among these 279 subjects, 79 couples completed forms ($n = 158$). To reduce dependency in the data set, one or the other partner from each couple was randomly deleted from the analyses, except the analyses dealing with gender differences. The average age of this sample was 32.07 ($SD = 14.72$) with a range of 17 to 86 years old. These subjects were predominantly white (96%) with an average education level of 14.76 years and an average household income of \$30,700. Sixty percent were married, 12.5% were engaged or planning marriage, 23.5% were “exclusively dating,” and 4% were “regularly dating.” Twenty-three percent were Catholic, 56% were Protestant, 4% were Jewish, and the rest specified no preference or another choice.

Measures

Demographic Form is the same device used in study one. To the packet of forms, we added a one-item measure of religiosity: “All things considered, how religious would you say that you are?” answered on a 9-point Likert scale anchored “not at all religious” = 1 and “very religious” = 9.

The Commitment Inventory (CI) is composed of the 60-item, 10-subscale inventory developed in study one combined with two other measures originally developed by Johnson (1978). Johnson’s measures (below) were modified for use with a more diverse population and added to form the current 12 subscales of the CI. The complete CI appears in the appendix.

Termination Procedures (Johnson, 1978) is a 14-item measure that assesses the number and difficulty of the steps necessary to end a relationship.

Items such as “get a divorce” were added to make the original scale more applicable to married populations.

Unattractiveness of Alternatives (Johnson, 1978) is a 27-item scale designed to assess the number and undesirability of potential changes necessary if the relationship ended (e.g., “live someplace else”). This scale was similarly modified as the one above. Johnson demonstrated reliability and validity for his version of these two measures. Combined with the 60 items developed in study one, the two revised Johnson scales bring the CI to a total of 101 items.

Marital Adjustment Test (MAT) (Locke & Wallace, 1959) is a frequently used measure of marital satisfaction. It has excellent reliability and validity in discriminating between distressed and nondistressed couples (Gottman, Markman, & Notarius, 1977). A premarital version of the MAT (Markman, 1981) was used with unmarried couples.

The Relationship Problem Inventory (RPI), Knox, 1971) was used as an index of problem intensity in relationships. This is Knox’s original scale modified by Markman, Jamieson, and Floyd (1983). Scores are the total of subjects’ ratings on 11 common problem areas (on a scale of 0 to 100).

Johnson’s Personal Commitment Measure (Johnson, 1978) contains two items, the first one asking “How long would you like this relationship with your partner to last?” and the second asking how strongly the subject wants it to last that long. Johnson and Shuman (1983) found this measure to discriminate between subjects in various relationship stages.

Johnson’s Social Pressure Measure (Johnson, 1978) assesses the percentage of persons that are important to the subject who would disapprove of the ending of the relationship. This scale has performed according to theory (Johnson & Shuman, 1983).

Beach and Broderick’s Commitment Measure (Beach & Broderick, 1983) assesses the general degree of commitment on a zero-to-100 scale. We feel the content of this measure is more consistent with personal dedication than constraint. This measure has proven predictive of gains in marital therapy (Beach & Broderick, 1983).

Udry’s Marital Alternatives Scale (Udry, 1981) measures both “the respondent’s perception of how much better or worse off he or she would be without their present spouse, and how easily that spouse could be replaced with one of comparable

quality" (p. 889). Udry (1981) found this scale to be predictive of future relationship stability. We report data from the subscale that measures perceived spousal replaceability.

Rusbult's Commitment Measure is a 4-item measure with good reliability (C. E. Rusbult, personal communication, April 11, 1985).

Disclosure Scale is a measure originally developed as part of the CI (Stanley, 1986). We attempted to develop a subscale of intrinsic investments (including self-disclosure), but five of the six items needed to develop a reliable subscale had to do with self-disclosure (e.g., "I have disclosed much of my true self to my partner"). Therefore, the resulting 5-item measure was analyzed separately here, as a correlate of commitment. The coefficient alpha for this measure is .84.

Procedures

The procedures for data collection were identical to study one. To conserve subjects' time, all subjects received the key measures (CI, MAT, RPI, and personal data form) but subsets of subjects received the other researcher's measures of commitment. Except for Johnson's social pressure scale and Rusbult's measure, most subjects received all the measures. A number of dating subjects have missing data on the Locke-Wallace measure due to items that are not applicable to dating relationships. The return rate for forms distributed was approximately 70%.

Results and Discussion

Internal Consistency and Reliability

Table 1 displays the coefficient alphas for the 12 subscales of the CI. Every subscale met or exceeded the .70 criterion. The 12 subscales of the CI were combined to form two composite scores: *z* scores of the dedication subscales were added for "total dedication," and *z* scores of the constraint subscales were added to form "total constraint." *Z* scores were used in forming composites because the scaling and variances on Termination Procedures and Unattractiveness of Alternatives were very different from the other scales. The reliability of these composites was .95 and .92 for total dedication and total constraint, respectively.

Factor Structure

To assess the factor structure of the CI, the 12 subscales were subjected to principal components analysis with Varimax rotation. Three factors provided the most interpretable structure (Table 2). With notable exceptions, the solution was suggestive of the expected structure: one factor dominated by dedication subscales, one factor dominated by the constraint subscales, and a third factor dominated by the Morality of Divorce subscale along a substantial loading for the Satisfaction with Sacrifice subscale.

The loadings not easily explained by theory are for the Social Pressure and Availability of Partners subscales. We expected these to load highest on the second or third factor, rather than on the first. We can come up with theoretical explanations, but it may be simply explained as an artifact of this sample. The Social Pressure and Availability of Partners subscales correlate more than would be expected with several dedication subscales; this is especially true for Social Pressure. These intercorrelations were substantially lower in another sample using the CI (Pramann, 1986). We have no explanation why this would be the case in this sample, but the factor structure reflects this phenomenon. Social Pressure also loads substantially on Factor 2, more in line with theory. Factor 3 is represented by the Morality of Divorce and Satisfaction with Sacrifice. It may be that this factor represents an underlying moral dimension, such that belief that divorce is morally unacceptable and that one should sacrifice for one's partner are associated, reflecting more of a moral dimension than Factors 1 and 2.

Concurrent Validity

Table 3 displays the correlations between the CI and the other commitment measures. Johnson's (1978) measure of personal commitment correlated moderately highly with more of the personal dedication subscales than constraint subscales, and it correlated more highly with the total dedication scale than the total constraint scale, $t(137) = 2.46, p < .02$. Johnson's measure simply asks how long the respondent wants the relationship to last, without really discriminating between the kinds of forces (e.g., dedication versus constraint) that could motivate someone to

TABLE 2. PRINCIPAL COMPONENTS ANALYSIS ON COMMITMENT INVENTORY SUBSCALES: VARIMAX ROTATION

	Factor I	Factor II	Factor III
Relationship agenda	.77	.41	.14
Couple identity	.74	.38	.23
Primacy of relationship	.72	.36	.29
Meta-commitment	.71	.13	-.27
Alternative monitoring	.69	.19	.15
Social pressure	.60	.58	.05
Availability of partners	.55	-.24	.35
Satisfaction with sacrifice	.51	-.13	.51
Termination procedures	.22	.84	-.01
Unattractiveness of alternatives	.21	.79	-.08
Structural investments	.03	.58	.22
Morality of divorce	.07	.21	.83
Variance accounted for	42%	13%	8%

want it to last. Hence, both total dedication and constraint were related to this measure, but dedication more highly.

Rusbult's commitment measure appears, by content, to focus on personal dedication more than constraint. Thus, as expected, the correlation between this commitment scale and the total dedication scale was significantly greater than the correlation between this scale and the total constraint scale, $t(17) = 2.36, p < .05$. Beach and Broderick's (1983) measure correlated significantly with both the total dedication and total constraint scales, though the correlation with total dedication was greater, $t(74) = 2.12, p < .05$. The scores on Udry's (1981) Spouse Replaceability subscale significantly correlated with many CI subscales though the highest correlation was ob-

served with the Availability of Partners subscale (-.55). We cannot, though, demonstrate that this correlation is statistically greater than others in the same column. The Social Pressure subscale of the CI (finding not depicted in Table 3) showed the highest correlation of all the CI subscales with Johnson's measure of social pressure, $r(11) = .97, p < .001$.

The data provide some evidence for the concurrent validity of the CI. Further, some CI subscales have some clear advantages over some of these other measures. The Social Pressure subscale takes much less time to complete than Johnson's (1978) measure of similar intent, and the Availability of Partners subscale was less confounded with relationship satisfaction than was Udry's (1981) measure of alternatives. Clearly,

TABLE 3. CORRELATIONS BETWEEN CI, RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION, AND OTHER MEASURES

Measure	Johnson's Personal Commitment Measure ($n = 164$)	Rusbult's Commitment Scale ($n = 25$)	Beach and Broderick's Commitment Scale ($n = 91$)	Udry's Spouse Replacement Scale ($n = 57$)
Morality of divorce	.20**	.35	.21*	-.14
Availability of partners	.20**	.19	.26*	-.55***
Social pressure	.47***	.65**	.50***	.30*
Structural investments	.26**	.26	.20	.08
Unattractiveness of alternatives	.30***	.52**	.21*	.20
Termination procedures	.38***	.63**	.29**	.17
Relationship agenda	.73***	.92***	.66***	-.42**
Meta-commitment	.42***	.46*	.37***	-.44**
Couple identity	.53***	.72***	.51***	-.47***
Primacy of relationship	.56***	.81***	.55***	-.48***
Satisfaction with sacrifice	.16*	.61**	.50***	-.39**
Alternative monitoring	.42***	.67***	.48***	-.28*
Total constraint	.49***	.69***	.48***	-.11
Total dedication	.61***	.85***	.63***	-.61***
Relationship satisfaction	.36***	.45*	.62***	-.51***

Note: n = average for each column.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

TABLE 4. CORRELATIONS OF CI SCALES AND RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION WITH KEY VARIABLES

Measure	Relationship Satisfaction (<i>n</i> = 143)	Disclosure (<i>n</i> = 188)	Months Known (<i>n</i> = 176)	Religiosity: Marrieds (<i>n</i> = 106)	Relationship Stage (<i>n</i> = 189)
Morality of divorce	.14	.04	.05	.41***	.16*
Availability of partners	.21*	.09	.27***	.06	.24**
Social pressure	.35***	.28***	.52***	.23*	.68***
Structural investments	.08	.06	.27***	.08	.31***
Unattractiveness of alternatives	.04	.09	.22**	.09	.46***
Termination procedures	.04	.04	.43***	.19	.69***
Relationship agenda	.51***	.30***	.33***	.12	.53***
Meta-commitment	.36***	.36***	.36***	.24*	.38***
Couple identity	.40***	.37***	.39***	.23*	.51***
Primacy of relationship	.37***	.36***	.34***	.14	.49***
Satisfaction with sacrifice	.44***	.42***	.06	.28**	.03
Alternative monitoring	.57***	.38***	.32***	.11	.38***
Total constraint	.24**	.12	.48***	.33**	.71***
Total dedication	.57***	.49***	.41***	.26**	.51***
Relationship satisfaction	1.00	.52***	.28**	.26**	.07

Note: *n* = average for each column.

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

more research will be needed to fully validate individual subscales of the CI, since this was beyond the scope of this study.

Construct Validity

We contrasted males' and females' scores on the CI by comparing the males with the females of the couples we had in the sample. We did not find the predicted gender difference on total dedication, nor was there a difference on total constraint, $t(71) = .39$, ns, and $t(51) = 1.77$, ns, respectively. Other studies have found females scoring higher in total dedication using the CI (e.g., Pramann, 1986). It could be that this sample has males who are more dedicated than average with respect to their mates.

Table 4 displays correlations between the CI and other variables. As can be seen, every dedication subscale correlated strongly with relationship satisfaction, while only one constraint scale did so. The total dedication score was more strongly correlated with relationship satisfaction than was total constraint, $t(109) = 5.04$, $p < .001$, and the dedication scale was more strongly, negatively correlated with problem intensity than was constraint, $r(152) = -.58$ versus $r(152) = -.33$, $t(149) = 4.79$, $p < .001$. Also, the total dedication scale was moderately correlated with the self-disclosure scale. Hence, the prediction that total dedication would be more associated with measures of relationship quality than total constraint received support, with personal dedication being positively associated with relationship

satisfaction, self-disclosure, and negativity associated with problem intensity. The number of months subjects had known their partner was associated with a number of subscales, especially social pressure. Religiosity correlated significantly with Morality of Divorce, as expected.

The prediction that constraints would be associated with relationship stage received clear support (Table 4). We have presented these associations using correlations to save space. Linear trend analyses show the same results. Importantly, total constraint showed greater association with relationship stage than with the number of months known, suggesting that factors associated with changes in stage (e.g., a childless couple having children) do more to increase constraint than simply spending more time in a relationship. Also, while most of the subscales demonstrated increases over stage, relationship satisfaction did not. Therefore, there was correlational evidence that the measures of satisfaction, dedication, and constraint behave differently and according to theory.

A series of analyses of variance helped clarify the nature of the relationship between the CI scales, relationship satisfaction, and relationship stage. All three analyses on these key variables revealed significant differences between the groups (Table 5). Examination of the means demonstrated the commitment scales to be tapping constructs different from relationship satisfaction, along generally expected lines. An analysis for linear trend was significant for total constraint, $F(1,$

TABLE 5. CONTRASTING RELATIONSHIP STAGE GROUPS ON RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION AND COMMITMENT

	Regular/ Exclusive Dating	Engaged/ Planning Marriage	Married, No Children	Married, Some or All Children Under 21	Married, All Children 21 or Over
	Relationship Satisfaction (MAT) ^a				
<i>M</i>	114.73	121.53	113.45	108.13	130.86
<i>SD</i>	21.92	24.22	22.64	22.23	17.26
<i>n</i>	15	15	42	55	22
	Total Constraint ^b				
<i>M</i>	-4.43	-0.45	-0.23	1.64	3.01
<i>SD</i>	2.43	2.34	3.13	2.40	2.86
<i>n</i>	49	22	28	49	18
	Total Dedication ^c				
<i>M</i>	-4.17	0.63	0.79	0.52	4.14
<i>SD</i>	4.20	3.69	4.35	3.35	2.26
<i>n</i>	50	23	41	55	17

^a $F(4, 144) = 4.64, p < .001$.

^b $F(4, 161) = 44.86, p < .0001$.

^c $F(4, 181) = 20.62, p < .0001$.

161) = 116.26, $p < .0001$. Planned comparisons demonstrated that there was really no difference on overall constraint between the engaged group and the married without children group, $F(1, 161) = .08$, ns. However, the subjects who were married and have children (the two groups with children were combined for this planned comparison) show greater constraint than those who were married without children, $F(1, 161) = 17.81, p < .0001$. Thus, the greatest increases in constraint may come when married couples have children.

The pattern for dedication was different. Tukey post-tests were used to evaluate the pattern of means, since no particular pattern was predicted (Honestly Significant Difference = 1.83 with an experimentwise error rate of .05). The dating group scored lowest in overall dedication, and the married group with older children scored the highest. However, there was no significant difference in dedication between the engaged, married without children, and married with all or some children under 21 groups. We can think of various reasons why *any* of these three groups might have scored higher on dedication than the other two, so we are not troubled by the lack of difference. It is reasonable to find the engaged and married subjects scoring higher on dedication than those who are merely dating.

Relationship satisfaction shows a different pattern than either type of commitment. Planned comparisons contrasting both the engaged group and the married with older children group (combined for this comparison) with the other three

groups combined demonstrated that the former groups scored higher than the latter groups on satisfaction, $F(1, 144) = 10.35, p < .01$. Married subjects with children under 21 scored lower than the other four groups (combined for this comparison) on relationship satisfaction, $F(1, 144) = 9.73, p < .01$. We expected these patterns, which are very consistent with those typically found in cross-sectional research on this variable. The couples with older children in this sample scored highest on both types of commitment as well as satisfaction. It seems likely that older marrieds have some positive characteristics that allowed their marriages to endure, characteristics related to commitment and satisfaction. More research should be devoted to long-term marriages in our culture.

Again, we have evidence that the Commitment Inventory displayed patterns consistent with theoretical expectations, and in a manner divergent from what was expected and found for relationship satisfaction. While satisfaction was moderate for dating subjects, dedication and constraint were very low. In contrast, while married subjects with children likely still to live at home showed the lowest levels of satisfaction, these subjects were far more dedicated than dating subjects. As expected, constraints generally increased across stage, with particularly big jumps noted from dating to engagement, and from married without children to married with children.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

In this preliminary evaluation of the Commitment Inventory there was substantial evidence pointing to the reliability and validity of the measure. Adequate internal consistencies were found for the subscales, and very good reliability coefficients were obtained for both dedication and constraint over all scales. Furthermore, the associations between the CI and other variables were generally consistent with expectations. While there were no data to test the discriminant validity of a number of the subscales, what we did find was encouraging. We expect other differences to emerge between dedication, constraint, and satisfaction in future research. For example, we theorize that personal dedication will be a more dynamic, and causally direct, predictor of future relationship quality than would be current relationship satisfaction.

Eventually, the CI may show utility for use in clinical work. Low satisfaction along with some dedication should translate into motivation to work on the relationship, while low satisfaction with little or no dedication translates into poor prognosis for therapy. We expect that low satisfaction, low dedication couples will remain intact only with significant constraint. The development of some dedication would be a key first step in therapy. Dedication to a relationship should yield motivation to look at patterns and try new skills in therapy (e.g., Beach & Broderick, 1983); in other words, to give "voice" to making the relationship better (Rusbult, Zembrodt, & Gunn, 1982).

Researchers and clinicians frequently attach a negative connotation to constraint. Yet, it seems clear that constraints are perceived as negative by couples only when personal dedication and satisfaction have diminished. In fact, the couples with older children in this study showed the very highest scores on dedication, satisfaction, and *constraint*. Couples often talk about how constraints help them maintain a long-term perspective and weather day-to-day conflicts. Thus, constraints should not be dismissed as negative without considering the stabilizing role they play (Rusbult et al., 1982).

We argued that it is important to develop more sophisticated measures for commitment. At the minimum, researchers must distinguish between dedication and constraint in studying commitment. The correlates are clearly different, both in

this study and others (e.g., Johnson & Shuman, 1983). While it remains an empirical question, we feel it is also important to distinguish between *patterns* of commitment, not only dedication versus constraint, but by looking at *dimensions* of constraint. Two people could have the same functional level of constraint, but for very different reasons. The clinical implications of different commitment patterns are enormous, and research addressing these kinds of questions will greatly aid in validating the CI and advancing the field.

We can criticize this work on several fronts. First, the factor structure, while explainable and relatively simple, was not exactly what we expected. Second, not all subscales have been sufficiently validated on their own. Further, some subscales may be superfluous. Fewer subscales can undoubtedly capture the construct of dedication, though we have found the ones studied to be intuitively appealing to couples. We are working on refinement of the CI, including the development of other constraint subscales, that is, economic dependence, social dependence, concern for partner's welfare, fear of sexually transmitted disease, and concern for children's welfare. Third, while we believe the sampling captured a range of beliefs, the sample is probably more religiously inclined than the general population. We are trying to address sampling issues in our ongoing research.

This research is also limited in that some of the most important predictions about dedication and constraint that could be tested are only addressable in longitudinal research. The patterns obtained cross-sectionally are encouraging, but longitudinal studies are needed. On a theoretical note, in measuring constraints, we have focused (as have others) on forces that *may* lead people to stay in relationships they otherwise might want to leave. We have not actually measured a psychological sense of being constrained (which would, of course, be highly related to relationship satisfaction). In current research, we are attempting to measure this concept with items such as "I feel trapped in this relationship." Finally, it is beyond the limits of the research presented to provide some of the most important validity information about the CI and the underlying theory. Most specifically, this research examined no behavioral correlates of commitment (though the relationship status variable comes close in that it reflects a behavioral status that subjects undoubtedly re-

port without bias). One study we are conducting will test the potential of dedication versus other constructs in predicting outcome in marital therapy. In another study, a short version of the dedication scale was the best predictor of completion of a preventive, cognitive-behavioral program for couples (Renick, Blumberg, & Markman, 1991). Such ongoing research provides very valuable validity data, and valuable information for clinicians.

We hope our research accomplished two goals. First, we developed (and continue to develop) a useful, well-designed measure of an underutilized construct. Our second goal was to stimulate thinking and research that deals with commitment. When you ask couples what is important in their relationships, they often mention commitment. Yet, compared to other key constructs in the empirical literature (e.g., satisfaction, communication), commitment has been under-researched. We are committed to changing this.

NOTE

Preparation of this manuscript was supported in part by NIMH grant MH35525-02 awarded to the second author. We would like to thank Lisa LaViolette and Elizabeth Collins for their work in our ongoing research on commitment. Direct correspondence to Scott M. Stanley.

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APPENDIX

THE COMMITMENT INVENTORY
*Constraint Commitment Items**Morality of divorce*

- Except when a spouse dies, marriage should be a once-in-a-lifetime commitment (+).
- People should feel free to end a marriage as long as the children are not going to be hurt (-).
- Divorce is wrong (+).
- If a couple works hard at making their marriage work but find themselves incompatible, divorce is the best thing they can do (-).
- It is all right for a couple to get a divorce if their marriage is not working out (-).
- A marriage is a sacred bond between two people which should not be broken (+).

Availability of partners

- It would be very difficult to find a new partner (+).
- I would have trouble finding a suitable partner if this relationship ended (+).
- If for any reason my relationship ended, I could find another partner (-).
- I believe there are many people who would be happy with me as their spouse or partner (-).
- Though it might take awhile, I could find another desirable partner if I wanted or needed to (-).
- I am not very attractive to the opposite sex (+).

Social pressure

- My friends would not mind it if my partner and I broke up (or divorced) (-).
- My family would not care either way if this relationship ended (-).
- It would be difficult for my friends to accept it if I ended the relationship with my partner (+).
- My friends want to see my relationship with my partner continue (+).
- My family really wants this relationship to work (+).
- My family would not care if I ended this relationship (-).

Structural investments

- This relationship has cost me very little in terms of physical, tangible resources (-).
- I have not spent much money on my partner (-).
- I would lose money, or feel like money had been wasted, if my partner and I broke up (divorced) (+).
- I would lose valuable possessions if I left my partner (+).
- I have put a number of tangible, valuable resources into this relationship (+).
- I have put very little money into this relationship (-).

*Dedication Commitment Items**Relationship agenda*

- I may decide that I want to end this relationship at some point in the future (-).
- I want this relationship to stay strong no matter what rough times we may encounter (+).
- I want to grow old with my partner (+).
- My relationship with my partner is clearly part of my future life plans (+).
- I may not want to be with my partner a few years from now (-).
- I do not have life-long plans for this relationship (-).

Meta-commitment

- I don't make commitments unless I believe I will keep them (+).
- I do not feel compelled to keep all of the commitments that I make (-).
- I have trouble making commitments because I do not want to close off alternatives (-).
- I try hard to follow through on all of my commitments (+).
- Fairly often I make commitments to people or things that I do not follow through on (-).
- Following through on commitments is an essential part of who I am (+).

Couple identity

- I want to keep the plans for my life somewhat separate from my partner's plans for life (-).
- I am willing to have or develop a strong sense of an identity as a couple with my partner (+).
- I tend to think about how things affect "us" as a couple more than how things affect "me" as an individual (+).
- I like to think of my partner and me more in terms of "us" and "we" than "me" and "him/her" (+).
- I am more comfortable thinking in terms of "my" things than "our" things (-).
- I do not want to have a strong identity as a couple with my partner (-).

Primacy of relationship

My relationship with my partner comes before my relationships with my friends (+).

My career (or job, studies, homemaking, child-rearing, etc.) is more important to me than my relationship with my partner (-).

When push comes to shove, my relationship with my partner often must take a backseat to other interests of mine (-).

When the pressure is really on and I must choose, my partner's happiness is not as important to me as are other things in my life (-).

My relationship with my partner is more important to me than almost anything else in my life (+).

When push comes to shove, my relationship with my partner comes first (+).

Satisfaction with sacrifice

It can be personally fulfilling to give up something for my partner (+).

I do not get much fulfillment out of sacrificing for my partner (-).

I get satisfaction out of doing things for my partner, even if it means I miss out on something I want for myself (+).

I am not the kind of person that finds satisfaction in putting aside my interests for the sake of my relationship with my partner (-).

It makes me feel good to sacrifice for my partner (+).

Giving something up for my partner is frequently not worth the trouble (-).

Alternative monitoring

I know people of the opposite sex whom I desire more than my partner (-).

I am not seriously attracted to people of the opposite sex other than my partner (+).

I am not seriously attracted to anyone other than my partner (+).

Though I would not want to end the relationship with my partner, I would like to have a romantic/sexual relationship with someone other than my partner (-).

I do not often find myself thinking about what it would be like to be in a relationship with someone else (+).

I think a lot about what it would be like to be married to (or dating) someone other than my partner (-).

Note: All items above are answered on seven-point Likert scale with "1" anchored "strongly disagree," "4" anchored "neither agree nor disagree," and "7" anchored "strongly agree." Items with a minus sign are reverse scored, i.e., 7 = 1, 6 = 2, 5 = 3, 3 = 5, 2 = 6, and 1 = 7. All items are scaled so that higher scores reflect higher degree of commitment according to theory. Not all subscales need to be used together, but all the items for subscales that are used should be mixed together in a random order rather than giving all items of one subscale in sequence.

Termination Procedures

If for some reason you and your partner were to decide right now to end your relationship (break up or divorce), there are a number of specific actions which you would have to take in order to do that. You will find below a list of some such short-term immediate actions, and we would like you to indicate how difficult you think each of these actions would be for you. Answer by writing a number corresponding to the answers below next to each of the actions on the list.

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| 0—Would not have to do it | 3—Indifferent |
| 1—Very easy | 4—Somewhat difficult |
| 2—Somewhat easy | 5—Very difficult |

- Simply tell my partner
- Talk over the decision with him/her and provide an explanation
- Explain my reasons to my friends
- Explain my reasons to my parents
- Explain my reasons to my partner's parents
- Search for a new place to live
- Move my things somewhere else
- Help my partner move
- Sell our house
- Decide how to split up joint possessions
- Search for a new roommate/housemate
- Find a job
- Get a divorce
- Settle custody of the children
- Other (please explain)
- Other (please explain)

Unattractiveness of Alternatives

In addition to the specific steps you would have to take if you were to end your relationship, there are probably some other changes that would come about if you and your partner decided to end your relationship. We're referring here to relatively long-term changes in your daily life or plans for the future. We'd like you to indicate how you would feel about each of the changes listed below, by writing the appropriate number in the blank space in front of it.

- | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 0—Probably wouldn't change | 3—I'd be indifferent |
| 1—I'd be very happy | 4—I'd be somewhat unhappy |
| 2—I'd be somewhat happy | 5—I'd be very unhappy |

- a. Date new people
- b. Become involved with someone else
- c. Change my circle of friends
- d. Be with current friends more
- e. Have less social involvement
- f. Live someplace else
- g. Get a job or get a new job
- h. Make decisions more independently
- i. Live alone
- j. Live with someone of my own sex (roommate)
- k. Have financial problems
- l. Have fewer possessions
- m. Buy furniture, car, etc.
- n. Not see in-laws
- o. Not have a secure base
- p. Not be socially accepted
- q. Change what I do for fun
- r. Learn to do household chores
- s. Reorganize cooking and household chores
- t. Deal with custody arrangements for my children
- u. Be a single parent
- v. Have to take more responsibility for child-rearing
- w. Not get to see my children as frequently
- x. Go to social events alone
- y. Changes in sexual life
- z. Change to a new church/synagogue
- aa. Sleep alone
- bb. Other (please explain)
- cc. Other (please explain)

Note: These two subscales, Termination Procedures and Unattractiveness of Alternatives, were modified from those developed by Johnson (1978). While they are in a different form, they are used along with the other subscales to form the entire Commitment Inventory. Both of these subscales are scored simply by totalling the numbers given for each item. When totalling these subscales with other constraint subscales, Z-score transformations should be used for each subscale to control for differences in scaling.

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