

Marital Conflict Strategies as Personal and Situational Attributes:
A Study of Korean Couples*

한국 부부의 갈등해소 방법 선택에 있어서
개인적 변인과 상황적 변인의 상대적 중요성*

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<국문요약>

대부분의 갈등해소에 관한 연구들은 갈등해소방법 사용의 상황에 따른 일관성을 미리 가정하고 있다. 그러나 몇몇 연구에서 갈등해소방법에 있어 성격의 효과와 함께 상황적 효과가 있음을 보고하고 있다. 아직까지는 갈등의 쟁점, 감정, 관련 인물과 이들의 상호작용을 고려한 갈등해소방법의 일관성에 관한 연구가 부족한 실정이다. 본 연구는 상황에 따른 갈등해소 방법 선택의 일관성의 수준과 결혼 적응도에 있어서의 이들의 영향을 조사하였다. 나아가, 갈등해소의 과정 및 절차를 관찰하였다. 350쌍의 한국 부부들에게 설문조사(1차연구)를 실시하였으며, 이를 바탕으로 50쌍을 선발하여 갈등해소 과정을 관찰하였다(2차연구). 설문조사 결과에 의하면, 쟁점의 종류나 관련 대상에 따라서는 비교적 일관성 있는 방법을 사용하였으나, 감정상태에 따라서는 비일관적인 해소방법을 사용하였다. 안정형 애착유형자는 건설적 해소 방법을 사용하는 반면, 불안정 애착유형자는 파괴적 또는 회피적 해소방법을 사용하는 경향을 보였다. 관찰 연구 결과에 의하면, 건설형 및 회피형 사용자는 설문조사와 관찰연구에서 일관성 있는 행동을 보였으며, 파괴형 해소방법 사용자는 설문조사와 관찰연구에 있어 일관성이 결여되어 있었다. 갈등해소의 과정, 즉 시작, 진행, 종료에 있어 유의한 차이가 발견되었으며, 이것이 결혼 적응도에 영향을 주었다. 연구결과들은 갈등해소와 결혼 적응에 관한 이론과 연계되어 논의되었다.

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Several researchers have been interested in the issue of behavioral consistency, considering the relative importance of personality and situational factors. Mischel (1968, 1984) suggested that behaviors are not consistent across situations but dependent upon situational factors. In contrast, Epstein (1979) reported cross-situational consistencies in behaviors and the behaviors are predicted by personal dispositions. Several studies have suggested that both personal and situational variables influence individual's behaviors (Bem & Allen, 1974; Bem & Funder, 1978; Cantor, Mischel, & Schwartz, 1982; Magnusson & Endler, 1977; Nezleck, 1993).

The research on cross-situational consistency in conflict resolution behavior are even scantier. Some researchers examined whether individuals are consistent on their use of conflict resolution strategies across situations, while others have examined the associations between personal dispositions and either strategy use or relationship satisfaction, assuming cross-situational consistency within individuals.

Few studies report cross-situational consistencies in conflict resolution behavior (Sternberg & Soriano, 1984; Sternberg & Dobson, 1987). Gottman (1980) reports that the consistency of the nonverbal behavior of married couples on two tasks. However, other research results suggest that individuals are inconsistent in their use of conflict strategies and that the choice of strategy is dependent upon situational factors, such as other's position, gender, and context. Kozan (1990) reports that conflict management styles are affected by the position of the other party (subordinate, superior, or peer). Similarly, several studies report that married people are far less polite to their spouses than they are to strangers (Birchler, Weiss, & Vincent, 1975; Ryder, 1968; Winter, Ferreira, & Bowers, 1973).

Comstock and Buller's (1991) results posit individual's strategy choice would be driven by behavioral dispositions, while in a highly salient conflict, their strategy use would be induced by the other's strategy use, which is a situational cue. Utley et al.(1989) point to the importance of both personality and situational factors in understanding responses to interpersonal conflict. According to Canary and Cupach (1988), distributive strategies were used more when defending oneself, whereas integrative tactics were used more to change one's relationship.

However, there is no systematic which has simultaneously investigated cross-situational consistency in conflict resolution, concerning issues, emotions, persons, and their interactions. It would be helpful for examining cross-situational consistency and individual differences in conflict resolution strategies to investigate interactions between persons and situations in the use of conflict resolution strategies, rather than personal or situational variables in isolation.

The goal of this were (a) to investigate the level of consistency of using conflict resolution strategies across situations, (b) to examine the relationship between individual differences in the level of consistency of using each strategy, and their effects on marital adjustment, and (c) to observe process and sequence of resolving conflict which could provide insight into the dynamic system of conflict resolution.

I. Questionnaire Study

1. Method

1) Subjects

Three hundred and fifty married couples living in

Seoul and Pusan, Korea, were invited to participate in Study 1. The age range of subjects was from 23 to 59 years-old, with a mean age of 35 years. The length of commitment before marriage ranged from 1 to 144 months, with a mean of 24 months and a median of 12 months. Length of marriage in the sample ranged from 1 month to 30 years, with a mean of 12 years and a median of 7 years. Educational level ranged from primary school to graduate school; however, most subjects had high school (31.9%) or college educations (46.9%). Most subjects were from middle (45.9%) or lower-middle (38.5%) classes. Attachment styles of this sample were secure (49.5%, $n=256$), anxious (27.5%, $n=142$), and avoidant (23.0%, $n=119$).

2) Procedure

Persons employed at several banks, companies, and Pusan City Hall, and persons living in several apartment complexes were selected and were sent a letter describing the study and inviting participation. The couples were selected from each source when one of the spouses expressed an interest in the study. Also, several research assistants asked their neighbors or relatives to be subjects. All together 350 couples were selected. Each couple was sent two identical questionnaires in separate envelopes labeled 'for wife' and 'for husband'. Spouses were asked to complete the questionnaire independently and to mark whether they were interested in participating in the home observation study; they were guaranteed that their responses would be confidential and would be used only for the purposes of this research.

The completed forms were placed back in the envelope and returned to the researcher. Of the 350 couples who received questionnaires, 310 couples (both wife and husband) completed and returned them, for a response rate of 89%. Fifty-one couples

were excluded for insufficient data. Each subject was assigned a code number, allowing researchers to be blind to all for Measurers of personal identification of the subjects.

3) Measures

The Conflict Resolution Strategy Across Situations Scale (Jeon, 1993) was used to assess conflict resolution strategies' (constructive, distributive, and avoidant) in various situations. Strategies were studied in terms of six marital issues over which couples frequently have conflict, seven different emotional states related to conflict, and varying levels of personal and social power among conflicting parties. Six issues which most frequently provoke conflict among married couples are money, in-laws, sex, recreation/leisure, children, and household chores. The seven different emotions are anger, resentment, neglect, fear, sadness, sympathy and humor. Levels of power refer to interactions either with persons who have equal or less power, such as friends and siblings, or with persons who have more power, such as bosses, professors, or parents-in-law. For each situation, participants are asked about the frequency with which they use each strategy, what they view as their dominant strategy, their motivation for using that strategy, and what they think an ideal or effective strategy is in each situation. Before being asked about their conflict resolution strategies for specific situations, participants are asked about the global conflict strategies used by themselves and their partners. One big difference between this scale and other conflict strategy measurements is that this scale can assess not only the conflict strategy in use but also motivations for using the strategy in a specific situations that vary according to issues, emotions, and persons.

The Adult Attachment Scale (Hazan & Shaver,

1992) which is composed of 21 items, was used to measure individuals' attachment style and their degree of adherence to each style of attachment (secure, anxious, and avoidant).

Marital Adjustment was measured by the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) developed by Spanier (1976). The Korean version of the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Jeon, 1991) was used for this study.

2. Results and Discussion

1) Conflict Strategies Overall and for Each Situation

The choices of conflict strategy are somewhat dependent upon the power of the persons involved, their emotional states (angry, resentful, neglectful, fearful, sad, understanding, humorous), and the issues over which they are in conflict. Table 1 shows self-reported conflict resolution strategies across situations (issues, emotions, and persons). The proportion of husbands who claimed to use constructive, distributive, and avoidant strategy overall were 63%, 21%, and 17%, respectively. The proportions of wives who reported themselves as using constructive, distributive, and avoidant strategy overall were 66%, 21%, and 13%, respectively. In each specific case, husbands and wives reported much higher proportions of constructive strategy and much lower proportions of distributive and avoidant strategy than they reported with regard to overall strategies. They reported more constructive strategies especially when they were dealing with third persons, such as children and in-laws or relatives. Husbands claimed to use constructive strategies in conflicts over in-laws/ relatives (91%) and children (90%); wives claimed to use constructive strategies in conflicts over in-laws/ relatives (86%), children (90%), and

money (88%).

The proportions of conflict strategy usage varied in relation to the emotional states of both husbands

<Table 1> Conflict Resolution Strategy in Each Situation

Situations	Conflict Strategy		
	Constructive	Distributive	Avoidant
	Husband		
Self-Report Overall	63%	21%	17%
Issues			
Money	78%	5%	16%
In-Laws/Relatives	91%	7%	2%
Sex	76%	7%	17%
Recreation	80%	5%	14%
Child	90%	8%	3%
Household Chores	72%	7%	21%
Emotional States			
Angry	39%	37%	24%
Resentful	42%	28%	30%
Neglect/Put Down	30%	44%	27%
Fear/Terrified	38%	33%	29%
Sad/Depressed	50%	20%	30%
Understanding	88%	8%	5%
Humor	87%	7%	6%
Person			
Higher power	84%	5%	10%
Equal or Less power	84%	8%	8%
	Wife		
Self-Report Overall	66%	21%	13%
Issues			
Money	88%	5%	7%
In-Laws/Relatives	86%	12%	2%
Sex	78%	5%	17%
Recreation	82%	8%	10%
Child	90%	6%	4%
Household Chores	71%	9%	20%
Emotional States			
Angry	42%	36%	22%
Resentful	36%	35%	29%
Neglect/Put Down	29%	40%	31%
Fear/Terrified	38%	29%	33%
Sad/Depressed	46%	19%	36%
Understanding	85%	8%	8%
Humor	86%	8%	6%
Person			
Higher power	80%	4%	16%
Equal or Less power	84%	10%	7%

and wives. When their wives tried to understand husbands' situations or to change the atmosphere of conflict situations with humor, almost all husbands used constructive strategies (88% and 87%); when they felt afraid of their wives, or felt that their wives neglected them, large numbers of husbands used distributive strategies (44% and 33%, respectively). Similarly, when their husbands tried to understand wives' situations or to change the atmosphere of conflict situations with humor, almost all wives used constructive strategies (85% and 86%). When they felt their husbands' neglect, however, 40% of wives used distributive strategies.

Both men and women tended to use mostly constructive strategies with people regardless of their relative power; however, they used more avoidant strategies than distributive strategies with people of higher power than themselves, while the opposite was true for people of lesser or equal power.

2) Consistency of Conflict Strategy Use

· Across Situations

Do Korean couples use the same general strategies for resolving conflicts, regardless of the situation? The results suggest that individuals use relatively consistent strategies in resolving a range of issues, and with a range of different people, but their strategies tend to vary with emotional state.

Fifty percent of subjects showed perfect consistency in using conflict strategy across all six marital issues: 49% constructive, 1% distributive, and 0% avoidant. Further, 21% of subjects used constructive strategies, and 0.2% used distributive strategies in five situations out of six; therefore 21% of subjects showed 83% consistency in marital issues. In other words, 71% of subjects showed at least 83% consistency in using conflict strategy across issues.

On the other hand, only 14%, 1%, and 0% of subjects used constructive, distributive, and avoidant strategies, respectively, regardless of emotional state, that is, only 16% of subjects showed perfect consistency in using conflict strategy across emotional states. Five percent, 1%, and 0% of subjects used constructive, distributive, and avoidant strategies respectively, in six emotional states out of seven. Only 23% of subjects showed at least 86% consistency in using conflict strategy in various emotional status.

In conflicts with persons ranging in power (partner, higher power and less or equal power person), 57% of subjects showed perfect consistency in using conflict strategy across all three persons: 55%, 1%, and 2% of subjects used constructive, distributive, and avoidant strategies, respectively. Twenty-seven percent, 5%, and 5% of subjects used constructive, distributive, and avoidant strategies, respectively, across two persons out of three. Therefore, 97% of subjects reported at least 75% consistency in using conflict strategies across persons. Individuals who used constructive strategies were more likely to use those strategies regardless of with whom they interacted. These results suggest that individuals were more likely to use strategies consistently across issues and persons, but to change them depending emotional states. The most consistent people used constructive strategies regardless of issues, emotions, or persons involved.

Table 2 shows the proportions of people using each strategy across issues, emotions, and person in each overall strategy. The baseline use of each strategy which was assessed with all subjects, measures the average amount that strategy was used in all situations. The proportion of people using each strategy was computed for each situation. Student t was used for testing the

<Table 2> Proportion of Conflict Strategy Use across Situations

Self-Reported Overall Conflict Strategy	Proportion of Strategy Use		
	Constructive	Distributive	Avoidant
Across Six Issues			
Baseline	82%	7%	11%
Constructive	90% ^{b, c}	3% ^{a, c}	7% ^{a, b}
Distributive	68% ^{b, c}	18% ^a	15% ^a
Avoidant	68% ^{b, c}	8% ^{a, c}	23% ^{a, b}
F (2,510) ¹	62.64***	38.07***	39.17***
Across Seven Emotional States			
Baseline	53%	25%	22%
Constructive	61% ^{b, c}	19% ^a	20% ^a
Distributive	40% ^c	40% ^c	20% ^{a, b}
Avoidant	34%	28%	38%
F (2,510) ¹	52.84***	34.56***	22.26***
Across People			
Baseline	83%	7%	10%
Constructive	90% ^{b, c}	4% ^a	6% ^a
Distributive	68% ^c	14% ^c	18% ^{a, b}
Avoidant	72% ^b	9% ^{a, c}	19% ^b
F (2,510) ¹	336.82***	396.87***	222.07***

*** p < .001

Note.

a indicates that the percentage is significantly different from the proportion of using constructive strategy within each overall strategy.

b indicates that the percentage is significantly different from the proportion of using distributive strategy within each overall strategy.

c indicates that the percentage is significantly different from the proportion of using avoidant strategy within each overall strategy.

¹F (2,510) indicates that differences in the proportion of using each strategy across situations among three conflict strategy groups.

differences among the proportion of using each strategy in each overall strategy group. The proportion of using constructive strategy was higher than that of distributive and avoidant strategies across situations regardless of their overall strategy. Within overall constructive strategy group, the proportions of using constructive strategy across issues, emotions, and people were significantly

higher than that of distributive and avoidant strategies. Within overall distributive strategy group, the proportions of using distributive strategy was significantly lower than that of constructive strategy across issues, while those were significantly higher than that of avoidant strategy across emotions and people. Within overall avoidant strategy group, the proportion of using avoidant strategy was significantly higher than that of distributive strategy across issues and people; however, there was no significant differences across emotions.

Analysis of variance was also conducted to see the overall strategy effects on the proportion of using each strategy across situations. Table 2 also presents that there were significant effects of overall conflict strategy on the proportion of using each strategy (p < .001 for all). Overall constructive strategy group showed higher proportion of using constructive strategy across issues, emotions, and persons. Distributive and avoidant strategy users showed significantly higher proportion of using distributive and avoidant strategies across situations, respectively.

The results suggest that emotions are more important in explaining individual differences in strategy usage than are issues and persons, which show high proportions of constructive strategy use, regardless of overall strategies. The large discrepancy in the proportion of persons reporting overall constructive strategies in regard to each issue raises validity questions about conflict strategy. In overall conflict strategy questions, individuals might tend to report their use of strategies based on emotionally charged problems, regardless of the situation. In conflict strategy questions for each issue, they may be more likely to report how they deal with each issue generally, without considering severe or emotionally charged conflicts over that issue.

3) The Effects of Partner Strategies on the Level of Consistency

The results suggest that the degree to which individuals use constructive strategies varied with their partners' conflict strategy: individuals with constructive partners were more likely to use constructive strategies across issues, while those with avoidant partners were less likely to do so.

Table 3 shows the proportions of individuals using each strategy for nine combinations (3 X 3) of strategies between spouses. The baseline usage of each strategy, assessed for all couples across six issues, were 81% constructive, 7% distributive, and 12% avoidant for husbands, and 83% constructive, 8% distributive, and 10% avoidant for wives. Concerning the effects of partner strategies on the level of consistency of one's strategy, the proportions of using each strategy across issues for husbands and wives were computed. Constructive husbands who married constructive wives used constructive strategy across 92% of issues, a percentage higher than baseline and that of other groups. Constructive husbands who married distributive wives used constructive strategy in 88% of issues, which was higher than baseline. Constructive husbands who married avoidant wives used constructive strategy in 81% of situations, which was slightly lower than the baseline. Similarly, constructive wives who married constructive husbands used constructive strategy across 92% of issues, a percentage higher than baseline and that of any other group. Eighty-six percent of constructive wives who married distributive husbands reported using constructive strategy across issues, which was higher than baseline. Seventy-nine percent of constructive wives who married avoidant husbands used constructive strategy.

<Table 3> Proportion of Using Conflict Strategies across Issues in Each Couple Combination

Self-Reported Overall Conflict Strategy		Proportion Using Strategy ¹		
		Constructive	Distributive	Avoidant
Baseline	Husband.	81%	7%	12%
	Wife	83%	8%	10%
Husband Wife				
Constructive-Constructive	Husband	92% ^c	1% ^{b, c}	7%
	Wife	92% ^c	4%	4% ^c
Constructive-Distributive	Husband	88%	5% ^c	7%
	Wife	80%	13%	7%
Constructive-Avoidant	Husband	81% ^a	10% ^{a, b}	10%
	Wife	73%	10%	18%
Distributive-Constructive	Husband	69%	12%	19%
	Wife	86%	6%	9% ^c
Distributive-Distributive	Husband	68%	24%	8%
	Wife	58%	26%	17%
Distributive-Avoidant	Husband	47%	30%	23%
	Wife	64%	9%	27%
Avoidant-Constructive	Husband	70%	6%	24%
	Wife	79% ^a	5%	17% ^{a, b}
Avoidant-Distributive	Husband	68%	3%	30%
	Wife	65%	15%	19%
Avoidant-Avoidant	Husband	64%	14%	21%
	Wife	61%	19%	19%

Note. ¹ was assessed as the proportion of using each strategy across six issues in each combination of conflict strategy between Husbands and wives.

a indicates that it is significantly different from the level of using constructive strategy in the same self-report strategy group.

b indicates that it is significantly different from the level of using distributive strategy in the same self-report strategy group.

c indicates that it is significantly different from the level of using avoidant strategy in the same self-report strategy group.

Distributive husbands with constructive, distributive, or avoidant wives used distributive strategy in 12%, 24%, and 30% of situations, percentages higher than the distributive baseline (7%). Similarly, distributive wives with constructive, distributive, or avoidant husbands used distributive strategy in 13%, 26%, and 15% of situations,

percentages higher than the distributive baseline (8%). There was a gender difference in the use of distributive strategy. Distributive husbands with avoidant wives used distributive strategies more than did distributive husbands with distributive wives. But distributive wives with distributive husbands used distributive strategies more than did distributive wives with avoidant husbands. These results suggest that husbands' level of distributive strategy usage was intensified by their wives' avoidant strategy.

Avoidant husbands with constructive, distributive, or avoidant wives used avoidant strategy in 24%, 30%, and 21% of situations, percentages higher than the avoidant baseline (12%). Within the avoidant husband group, the use of avoidant strategy varied; Avoidant husbands with distributive wives were more likely to use avoidant strategy than were avoidant husbands with avoidant wives across the issues. Similarly, avoidant wives with constructive, distributive, or avoidant husbands used avoidant strategies in 18%, 27%, and 19% of issues, respectively, percentages higher than the baseline of avoidant (10%). Within the avoidant wives group, the level of avoidant strategies usage varied; avoidant wives with distributive husbands were more likely to use avoidant strategies than were wives with avoidant husbands. These results suggest that the level of avoidant strategy usage was intensified by partner's distributive strategy.

One-way analysis of variance was conducted to see the effects of partner's strategy on the level of using each strategy across issues within each self-report strategy group. For constructive husbands, the level of using constructive and distributive strategies was dependent upon their wives conflict strategies ($F=6.29$, $p < .01$ constructive, $F=6.55$, $p < .01$ for distributive). According to a Tukey test,

constructive husbands with constructive wives were more likely to use constructive strategy across issues than those with distributive wives, and constructive husbands with constructive wives were less likely to use distributive strategy than those husbands with distributive or avoidant wives. Similarly, for constructive wives, the level of using each strategy was dependent upon their husbands strategies ($F=6.0$, $p < .01$ for constructive, $F=7.0$, $p < .001$ for distributive, $F=3.12$, $p < .05$ for avoidant). According to a Tukey test, constructive wives with constructive husbands showed higher level of using constructive strategy across issues than constructive wives with avoidant husbands. Constructive wives with distributive husbands showed higher level of using distributive strategy than constructive wives with constructive or avoidant husbands.

On the other hand, there were no significant effects of partner's strategy on the level of using each strategy for distributive or avoidant husbands. Similarly, there were no significant effects of husband's strategy on the level of using each strategy for distributive or avoidant wives, except on distributive wives' level of using avoidant strategy ($F=4.24$, $p < .05$).

Individuals' level of using each strategy was significantly dependent upon their partners' strategy, regardless of their own strategy. There were significant effects of wives' conflict strategies on the level of using constructive and distributive strategies for husbands ($F=11.11$, $p < .00$ for constructive, $F=15.68$, $p < .00$ for distributive). There were also significant effects of husbands' conflict strategies on the level of using each strategy for wives ($F=11.62$, $p < .00$ for constructive, $F=6.17$, $p < .01$ for distributive, $F=8.36$, $p < .00$ for avoidant).

The results showed that individuals' level of using each strategy varied with their partners'

conflict strategy. The significance is also a function of the individual's own strategy. For constructive strategy users, the level of using each strategy significantly varied with their partner's strategy, while it is not so for distributive and avoidant strategy users.

4) Effects of Attachment Style on Conflict Strategy

Can conflict resolution strategies be predicted from personality (i. e. attachment style)? Individuals who have secure attachment tend to use constructive strategy, whereas individuals who have insecure attachment tend to use distributive or avoidant strategies.

Table 4 shows attachment style was correlated with conflict resolution strategy. The level of secure style was significantly positively correlated with the level of using constructive strategy ($r=.1148, p < .05$), whereas secure style was negatively correlated with distributive and avoidant strategy. The level of anxious style was negatively related to constructive strategy, whereas anxious style was significantly positively related to distributive ($r=.1219, p < .01$) and avoidant strategy ($r=.1760, p < .01$). The level of avoidant style was negatively related to

constructive strategy, whereas avoidant style was positively related to distributive ($r=.1027, p < .05$) and avoidant strategy ($r=.09$). Although the correlations between attachment and conflict strategies were statistically significant, they were quite low.

In addition to correlation, analysis of variance was conducted to investigate strategy differences in each level of personal variables. There was a significant difference of the level of avoidant attachment among three conflict strategy groups ($F=4.66, p < .01$). Distributive strategy users reported significantly higher avoidant attachment than constructive strategy users.

5) Effects of Attachment and Consistency of Conflict Strategy Use on Marital Adjustment

How are attachment and the level of consistency across situations related to marital adjustment? The results suggest that there are significant associations between marital adjustment and both personal disposition and level of consistency in strategy usage across situations. Individuals who had secure attachment were more likely to show higher marital adjustment, while individuals who had anxious or avoidant styles were more likely to show lower marital adjustment.

Table 4 shows significant correlations between each subscale of dyadic adjustment scores and all of the suggested variables: attachment style and the level of consistency. Secure style was significantly positively related to all subsets of dyadic adjustment ($p < .01$ for all subsets), while anxious and avoidant styles were significantly negatively related to dyadic adjustment scores ($p < .01$); anxious style was not significantly related to cohesion, however. In addition, regression analysis was conducted to see the effects of attachment on marital adjustment. In

<Table 4> Correlations between Personal Dispositions and Dyadic Adjustment

Variables	Dyadic Adjustment			
	Consensus	Satisfaction	Cohesion	Affect
Attachment Style				
secure	.19**	.15**	.19**	.21**
anxious	-.13**	-.15**	-.08	-.16**
avoidant	-.18**	-.22**	-.19**	-.22**
Level of Consistency in Strategy				
Constructive	.34**	.46**	.35**	.40**
Distributive	-.21**	-.33**	-.20**	-.27**
Avoidant	-.29**	-.34**	-.30**	-.31**

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

the equation with attachment style, the level of secure and anxious attachment were significant predictors of marital adjustment for husbands (Beta=.17, $p < .05$ for secure, Beta=-.20, $p < .05$ for anxious), while the level of secure and avoidant attachment were significant predictors of marital adjustment for wives (Beta=.16, $p < .05$ for secure, Beta=-.23, $p < .01$).

The level of consistency in constructive strategy was significantly positively correlated with all subscales of marital adjustment ($p < .01$ for all subscales), while the level of consistency in distributive and avoidant strategies was significantly negatively correlated with all subscales of marital adjustment ($p < .01$). Individuals who use more constructive strategies across situations tend to report higher marital adjustment, while individuals who use more distributive and avoidant strategies across situations tend to report lower marital adjustment. According to regression analysis, individuals' level of using constructive strategy across issues was a significant predictor of marital adjustment for both husbands and wives (Beta=.30, $p < .01$ for husbands, Beta=.50, $p < .001$ for wives).

II. Observational Study

The purpose of Study 2 were to investigate whether individuals' behavior is consistent with their self-report conflict resolution strategies, and to describe the process and sequencing of conflict resolution behaviors as they occur over time.

1. Method

1) Subjects

From among 259 couples, 50 were selected for the

observational study. Forty-six couples were used for final analysis, excluding four couples who were not willing to interact and to answer the researcher's questions. Couples in the observational study did not differ significantly from the larger sample (Study 1) in the prevalence of the three conflict resolution strategy and attachment styles and conflict resolution strategies or in terms of age, education, SES, length of commitment before marriage, length of marriage.

2) Procedure

Fifty couples who volunteered for observational study or who were selected by the researcher based on their combination of conflict resolution strategies were telephoned to schedule a home (17.4%) or lab visit (82.6%), at their convenience. During the visits, the researcher asked the couples to discuss a marital conflict reported in the questionnaire, choosing for discussion the issue identified as most problematic by both partners or the issue of greatest discrepancy between partners.

Each couple was asked to discuss the issue for 10-15 minutes with the goal of coming to a resolution "as they normally would". Interactions were videotaped. The researcher facilitated interactions by asking what the couple said or did in specific conflict situations, whether they had difficulties interacting or were unwilling to interact in front of the researcher or a video camera, during observation. Participants were asked to provide detail regarding the sequence of events that typically occur during an intense disagreement on selected issues.

3) Measures

Videotaped couple interactions were coded, using the Coding Scheme for Nonverbal and Verbal Behavior in Marital Couples (Jeon, 1993). This

scheme was designed to assess spouses' nonverbal and verbal behaviors including the process and sequence of resolution behaviors during a dyadic discussion and interview concerning marital conflict. Two trained research assistants independently coded each couple's behavior. Discrepancies between raters were rare. All were resolved by additional viewing and discussions that included the researcher and both assistants.

2. Results and Discussion

1) Behavioral Confirmation of Self-Reported Strategies

Is conflict resolution behavior consistent with self-reports of resolution strategy? Individuals who self-reported constructive or avoidant strategies exhibited relatively consistent resolution behaviors in observation. Individuals who reported distributive strategy, in contrast, showed relatively inconsistent resolution behavior in observation. These results suggest that either distributive strategies are not easily manifested in behavior during the observational study because persons purposefully avoid distributive style in front of the researcher or camera (e. g., they consider it less socially acceptable) or that persons reporting the use of distributive strategies in fact use inconsistent strategies across situations .

Among individuals who reported constructive strategies in Study 1, 73% (n=44) showed consistently constructive strategies, while 7% (n=4) and 20% (n=12) showed inconsistently distributive and avoidant strategies, respectively. Among individuals who reported distributive strategies in the questionnaire study, 25% (n=4) showed consistently distributive strategies, while 44% (n=7) and 31% (n=5) showed constructive and avoidant strategies, respectively. Among individuals who

reported avoidant strategies in the questionnaire study, 64% (n=9) showed avoidant strategies consistent with self-report, while 29% (n=4) and 7% (n=1) showed constructive and distributive strategies, respectively. The results showed that 73% of those self-reporting as constructive and 64% of those self-reporting as avoidant use those strategies under observation, whereas only 25% of individuals who reported distributive strategies used the distributive strategies in the observation. All together, 63% of subjects used during observation the strategy they self-reported: 49% for constructive-constructive, 4% for distributive-distributive, and 10% avoidant-avoidant. These results suggest that constructive and avoidant strategies tend to be manifested in behavior even under observation, while distributive strategies are not. There was a tendency to show avoidant behavior under observation among self-reported constructive and distributive strategy users (20% for constructive, 31% of distributive).

2) Differences in the Process of Conflict Resolution

How are the dimensions of conflict strategy—such as initiation, escalation, and conflict-ending behaviors—related to marital adjustment? In the beginning of conflict resolution, constructive and distributive strategy users were more likely to initiate discussion, while avoidant strategy users were less likely to initiate discussion. In the middle of conflict resolution, a relatively larger group of constructive strategy users showed constructive behaviors (negotiation, compromise) throughout the conflict resolution. Most distributive strategy users showed distributive behaviors during at least part of the conflict resolution process. Similarly, most avoidant strategy users showed avoidant behaviors during

at least part of the conflict resolution process. In the ending of conflict, the majority of the constructive strategy group ended up with reasonable solutions; a relatively larger group of distributive strategy users ended with their own opinions; most avoidant strategy users followed their partner or a reasonable solution.

In order to see the differences between conflict processes, the proportions of processes (i. e., initiation, escalation, and ending of conflicts) were assessed in each strategy group. Table 5 presents the proportion each behavior is used in each group. Constructive and distributive individuals were relatively likely to initiate the discussion in conflict situations (65.5% for constructive, 56.3% for distributive). The level of initiation was positively associated with constructive and distributive strategy and negatively associated with avoidant strategy.

In the sequence of conflicts, most of the self-reported constructive group showed one of the following constructive behavior during at least a period of the conflict resolution process: constructive behavior (33.9%); constructive behavior after a period of avoidance (14.3%); constructive behavior after a period of avoidance followed by a constructive trial (14.3%); avoidant behavior after a constructive trial (10.7%). Most of the distributive group showed one of the following distributive behaviors during at least a period of the conflict resolution process: distributive behaviors after a period of avoidance (12.5%) or a period of constructive trial (12.5%), constructive behavior (18.8%); constructive behavior after a period of avoidance followed by a constructive trial (14%); avoidant

behavior (12.5%); distributive behavior (6.3%); and so on. Most of the avoidant group showed one of following avoidant behaviors during at least a

<Table 5> Proportion of Use of Each Conflict Resolution Process

Conflict Process	Conflict Strategy		
	Constructive	Distributive	Avoidant
Initiation			
Never/Rare	14%	13%	14%
Occasionally	21%	31%	29%
Often/Frequent	35%	25%	50%
Always	31%	31%	7%
Sequence of Conflict			
A ¹	7%	13%	14%
AD ²	2%	13%	7%
AC ³	14%	6%	29%
D ⁴	4%	6%	7%
DA ⁵	2%	6%	7%
DC ⁶	2%	6%	0%
C ⁷	34%	19%	14%
CD ⁸	7%	13%	
CA ⁹	11%	0%	7%
CAC ¹⁰	14%	13%	14%
INC ¹¹		4%	6%
End			
Partner	19%	0%	43%
Self		10%	44%
14%			
Reasonable	64%	31%	36%
Each	0%	19%	7%
DI ¹²	3%	6%	
NS ¹³	3%		

Note.

A¹: Avoidant AD²: Avoidant→Distributive

AC³: Avoidant→Constructive

D⁴: Distributive DA⁵: Distributive→Avoidant

DC⁶: Distributive→Constructive

C⁷: Constructive CD⁸: Constructive→Distributive

CA⁹: Constructive→Avoidant

CAC¹⁰: Constructive→Avoidant→Constructive

INC¹¹: Inconsistent (dependent on partners' strategy)

DI¹²: Dependent on issues NS¹³: No Solution

period of the conflict resolution process: constructive behavior after a period of avoidance (28.6%); avoidant behavior (14.3%); constructive behavior (14.3%); constructive behavior after a period of avoidance followed by a constructive trial

(14.3%). Therefore, 33.3% of the constructive group, 6.3% of the distributive group, and 14.3% of the avoidant group used only constructive, distributive, and avoidant behavior, respectively, throughout the period of conflict resolution. The results suggest that almost all the constructive strategy group (82.1%) used some constructive behaviors. Similarly, most of avoidant group (68.5%) used some of avoidant behaviors during conflict resolution. A relatively smaller proportion of the distributive group (43.9%) showed some distributive behaviors during conflict resolution.

The results of conflict-resolution were as follows: the constructive group ended up with reasonable resolution (i. e., compromising with each other, 64%), some adopted their partners' opinion (19%), stuck with their own opinion (10%), got different results depending upon issues (3%) or reached no solution (3%). Most distributive group members ended up with their own opinion (44%), while others reached reasonable resolution (31%), and different results dependent upon issues; 19% of distributive group kept their own opinion without negotiation. Most of the avoidant group ended up adopting their partners' opinion (43%), while others reached reasonable resolution (36%), or kept their own opinions (14%); 7% of this group kept their own opinion without negotiation. The constructive group was more likely to compromise, while the distributive group was more likely to end up with their own opinion, and the avoidant group was more likely to follow their partners' opinion.

3) Processes of Conflict and Marital Adjustment

How are the processes of resolving conflicts—initiation, sequence, and ending behaviors—related to marital adjustment? Individuals who initiate discussion tend to report especially higher marital

adjustment, as do individuals who show constructive behavior after a period of distributive trial.

The level of initiation of discussion had somewhat significant effects on marital adjustment. While there were relatively positive correlation between the level of initiation and marital adjustment, these correlations were not significant ($r=.22$ for consensus, $r=.15$ for satisfaction, $r=.15$ for affection). Analysis of variance was conducted with three groups excluding "always" group because there was only 1 person in this group. The results of one-way analysis a significant main effect of initiation on marital adjustment ($F=3.26$, $p=.026$). Individuals who "often" initiate discussion ($m=108.52$) showed higher marital adjustment than did those in the other groups, and individuals who "occasionally" initiate discussion ($m=92.58$) showed lower marital adjustment than those in the "never/rare" group ($m=102.45$). This progression might be due to the effects of conflict strategies themselves; individuals in the "occasionally" group, for example, tended to use distributive strategies, which to lower marital adjustment scores. The "never" group on the other hand, was composed of more constructive or avoidant types.

The sequence of conflict resolution has significant effects on marital adjustment. Individuals who use constantly constructive behavior or constructive behavior after a distributive trial showed relatively higher marital adjustment than others. In order to test the effects of sequence on marital adjustment, analyses of variance by sequence with or without a controlling conflict strategy were conducted. Analysis of variance was conducted with 9 groups of sequence, excluding DC group which had only 1 person. There was significant main effect of sequence on marital adjustment ($F=3.14$, $p=.003$). However, there were no significant differences

between two groups, according to a Tukey test. After controlling conflict strategy, there were still significant effects of sequence on marital adjustment ($F=4.00$, $p=.004$). This suggests that individuals tend to use different strategies in the process of conflict resolution; Therefore, examining the sequence of resolution would be better for predicting marital adjustment than would relying on the three styles of conflict strategy alone.

Analysis of variance was conducted to see marital adjustment differences among 5 groups of endings. There are significant effects of ending behavior on marital adjustment. There was the significant main effect of ending behaviors on marital adjustment ($F=6.10$, $p=.0001$). Comparing the means of each group (Tukey procedure), individuals who ended conflicts with reasonable solutions ($m=109.42$) showed higher marital adjustment than the others.

Table 6 shows significant effects of the conflict resolution process on marital adjustment. Sequence and ending behaviors had main effects on marital adjustment ($F=2.68$, $p=.01$ for sequence, $F=5.63$, $p=.00$ for end); however, there was no significant effect of initiation. These results suggest that individuals who use more constructive behaviors or who end with reasonable solutions tend to have greater marital adjustment.

<Table 6> Effects of Processes of Conflict Resolution on Marital Adjustment

Sources	df	MSE	F	Sig of F
Main Effects				
Initiation	3	908.46	.496	.687
Sequence	9	584.19	2.68	.011
End	5	1225.45	5.63	.000
Explained	171	908.46	4.17	.000
Residual	56	217.77		
Total	73			

III. General Discussion

Most studies of conflict resolution presume consistency of using conflict strategy across situations. However, several studies reported context effects as well as trait effects on conflict strategies. This study was concerned with both personal and situational factors, including attachment styles, various issues, emotions, and type of person. In the present study, individuals tended to use consistent strategies across issues and persons, while they tended to use inconsistent strategies across emotional states. This indicates that emotional states can explain more about the variation of strategy selection than issues or type of person within individuals. Studies of marital conflict suggest that emotions are central to escalation of conflict (Katz, 1988; Lansky, 1987; Retzinger, 1991; Scheff, 1987). The level of consistency is also associated with attachment style and self-reported overall strategy. These results are consistent with those of Utley et al. (1989) and Magnusson & Endler (1977), which point to the importance of both personality and situational factors in understanding responses to interpersonal conflict.

Unexpectedly, distributive strategies were positively correlated with avoidant strategies. This indicates either inconsistency among distributive and avoidant strategy users, or in the sequence of using different strategies throughout the conflict resolution. Individuals who use distributive or avoidant strategies might choose either strategy dependent upon situations, or they might use both strategies in the process of resolving a single conflict.

Individuals tend to report more constructive strategies for each issue than for overall. This discrepancy suggests that individuals interpret

questions about overall strategy usage and usage around each issue differently; they tend to report, as their overall strategy, the strategy they use in severe or emotionally charged relational conflict. On the other hand, when they report the strategy they use to deal with each issue, they tend to focus on more mundane discussions around the issue itself and less on conflicts around the issue. This is consistent with the findings that the relationship-oriented scenes were more threatening to participants, aroused stronger emotions, and led to more use of coercion and threat than the issue-oriented scenes (Raush et al., 1974). This suggests that more elaborate questions may have been needed to measure the use of conflict strategies in various situations.

There were significant differences in the processes of conflict resolution—initiation, sequence, and end— and their effects on marital adjustment. This suggests that individuals use different strategy behaviors depending on their partners' verbal and non-verbal behavioral response in the process of conflict resolution, even though their behaviors are associated with their overall conflict strategies. These results suggest that the sequence of the conflict resolution, provide a more comprehensive view than conflict strategy alone.

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