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DOES PERSONAL INTELLIGENCE PROMOTE CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS?

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ABSTRACT

Conflict is an inevitable occurrence in most romantic relationships given that most couples enter their relationships with a variety of backgrounds, opinions, and experiences. Previous research has implicated a number of variables that influence how couples navigate conflict resolution, including attachment style, conflict style, and certain facets of the Big Five socioemotional traits. The present research explores whether personal intelligence, or the ability to reason about the personality, traits, goals, and motives of others also plays a role in how individuals approach conflict resolution in their romantic relationships. Given that individuals who are high in personal intelligence are better at understanding others, they may be better able to solve problems they encounter in their interactions with others, such as conflict. In an exploratory study, I demonstrated that personal intelligence predicts both positive and negative indicators of conflict in relationships, using both traditional self-judgment, narrative, and lifespace measures of conflict. Results suggests that individuals who are better able to reason about others tend to approach conflict – and their relationships more generally – in a more positive manner than individuals who struggle to understand others.

INTRODUCTION

Most couples will not see eye to eye on every topic, and as a result, disagreement is commonplace in most romantic relationships (Brehm, Miller, Perlman, & Campbell, 2002). Given that conflict is inevitable to most couples, key to how conflict impacts romantic relationships is how it is approached (Cramer, 2000; Gottman, 1994; Halford, Hahlweg, & Dunne, 1990; Pistole, 1989; Zeidner & Kloda, 2012). Indeed, romantic relationship conflict is linked to a number of positive and negative relationship outcomes: For instance, poor conflict management is associated with less relationship satisfaction and more negative outcomes such as dissolution of the relationship (Bradbury, Rogge, & Lawrence, 2001; Cramer 1998), whereas couples who engage in more positive and constructive conflict resolution strategies report greater intimacy following conflict than couples who use more problematic conflict resolution strategies (Christensen & Shenk, 1991). As a result, it seems important to understand how couples communicate with one another during times of conflict.

A number of variables related to conflict in relationships have been explored in the past, including (a) the individuals' attachment style (Bonache, Gonzalez-Mendez, & Krahé, 2017; Shi, 2003; Simpson, Rholes, & Phillips, 1996), (b) agreeableness (one trait of the Big Five; Missotten, Luyckx, Leeuwen, Klimstra, & Branje, 2016), and (c) conflict resolution style (Bonache et al., 2017; Kurdek, 1994; 1995). Note that those variables share in common that they describe a person's customary interpersonal styles: For example, attachment style reflects a person's comfort level in relationships; agreeableness reflects a person's tendency to go along with others and avoid conflict.

Perhaps successful conflict resolution involves not only these customary, preferred ways of behaving, but also the ability to reason about and understand oneself and others, and to adjust

to the specifics of a relationship partnership. The present research will examine not only customary styles of relationship behavior, as have been studied in the past, but add to those a measure of people's capacity to reason about their own characteristics, and the personalities of others, termed personal intelligence (PI; Mayer, 2008). To the extent that understanding people is key to resolving conflict (Mayer, Lortie, Panter, & Caruso, 2017), personal intelligence should help facilitate how couples navigate romantic relationship conflict.

Given that personal intelligence involves more active reasoning regarding oneself and others, it is likely to be distinct from other key variables in the area and may predict above and beyond those customary personality styles such as attachment of the Big Five. In the next sections, I'll describe conflict in relationships as an outcome. Then I will discuss personal intelligence, and then the three aforementioned variables that are commonly found to successfully predict good resolution.

Conflict and Successful Conflict Resolution

Relationship conflict can be defined as a disagreement between two individuals on the basis of conflicting goals, opinions, or actions. Within romantic relationships, conflict can revolve around a number of different topics from whether your partner treats you fairly or how they behave towards other individuals, to things like finances or the future of the relationship (Reese-Weber, Kahn, & Nemecek, 2015). Based on this definition, conflict could include a disagreement between two romantic partners about financial goals such as to whether to save for a vacation or a home in the next year to opinions as to how a partner should conduct themselves with others who may pose a threat to a relationship.

Conflict Resolution. Conflict resolution refers to the manner in which a given conflict is resolved. Poor resolution involves behaviors that fail to address the source of the conflict, including avoiding the problem at hand, engaging one's partner in conflict, or complying with the demands of one's partner without expressing one's own opinion. In contrast, successful resolution involves behaviors that directly address the source of the conflict in a way that leads to more positive relationship functioning.

Success at Conflict Resolution. With this in mind, I define successful conflict resolution as a multidimensional quality that involves three features: (a) a general sense of relationship satisfaction after the conflict, (b) indicators of behaviors, interactions, shifts in setting (e.g., lifespace) that reflect successful conflict resolution, and (c) a personal narrative that makes positive sense of the interaction. This narrative would typically focus on and accurately represent what happened, include an understanding of both partners' role in the interaction, and the degree to which each partner considers the conflict successfully resolved, along with a realistic rationale behind the account. Conflict resolution, as discussed throughout the rest of the present research will have these multiple criteria in mind.

Assessing Conflict Resolution. Conflict resolution in relationships can be assessed in a number of ways, and previous research has employed a variety of methods, from self-report scales such as the Conflict Resolution Inventory (CRI; Kurdek, 1994) to laboratory observation, as couples are recorded discussing a common source of conflict between them in the lab (for examples see Peterson & DeHart, 2014; Shulman et al., 2006), to daily diary methods, where individuals or couples are asked to complete daily questionnaires regarding conflict in their relationship over a week or other time period (see Campbell, Simpson, Boldry, & Kashy, 2005; Kennedy, Bolger, & Shrout, 2002 for examples).

In addition to these established methods, lifespace items may be useful as an index of relationship conflict. These items ask about discrete, verifiable, and objective aspects of an individual's environment, including interactive behaviors (Brackett & Mayer, 2003). As a result, they allow us to measure an individual's relationship activities in a manner that is not as subject to social desirability bias as are self-evaluations (i.e. self-report; Mael & Hirsch, 1993; Brackett & Mayer, 2003).

The present research employs self-judgment, narrative, and lifespace methodologies in its assessment of conflict resolution. The advantage of such multiple approaches to assessment are that each tells us something different. Self-judgment indicates a person's self-appraisal, but perhaps absent is the individual's full appreciation of the range in nature of other couples' conflicts. Moreover, such self-assessments are limited by social desirability. Lifespace provides a measure grounded in specific interactions that can potentially be verified, and narratives allow participants to tell us what they believe in their own words rather than in an experimenter defined fashion such as self-judgement measures.

Personal Intelligence and Relationship Outcomes:

Relationship Behavior is Multiply Determined.

Relationship behavior is multiply determined, drawing on a diverse group of personality (and social) qualities. The personality-relevant qualities, which are the focus here, depend not only on an individual's socio-emotional styles and her coping skills, but also potentially on her intellectual resources as they pertain to understanding oneself and others.

Personal Intelligence as a Predictor of Successful Conflict Resolution. Intelligence researchers increasingly recognize a group of broad intelligences that people use to understand one another: These vary from long-term retrieval to verbal-comprehension reasoning, to broad

intelligences more focused on people; these latter intelligences include the personal, emotional, and social intelligences (Bryan & Mayer, 2017; Mayer, 2018; Mayer & Skimmyhorn, 2017). Personal intelligence, the focus here, involves the ability to accurately reason about personality, the motives, traits, and goals of one's self and others (Mayer, 2008). Individuals high in personal intelligence are better able to solve problems about themselves and others (Mayer, Panter & Caruso, 2017), meaning that they may also have greater propensity to reason effectively in their interactions with others (Mayer, Lortie, Panter, & Caruso, 2017), particularly during times of relationship conflict.

Intelligence researchers have also begun to recognize that active problem solving about other people is an important component of intelligence—and a tool in navigating everyday relationships above-and-beyond customary styles of behavior such as agreeableness and attachment style. Such customary styles are of great importance in how a person behaves, but problem solving allows for contextual responses that complement such default behavior. For example, researchers have widely studied how emotional intelligence, another person-centered intelligence (Mayer, Caruso & Salovey, 2016), is involved in how individuals resolve conflict in their relationships (Zeidner & Klauda, 2012). With this in mind, the present work addresses the application of people-centered intelligence to active problem solving in relationships by studying the prototypical member of the set—personal intelligence.

The Measurement of Personal Intelligence. Personal intelligence can be measured with the Test of Personal Intelligence (TOPI; Mayer, Panter, & Caruso, 2017), which provides an overall scale and two factor-based subscales. An individual's overall personal intelligence should help members of couples not only better understand themselves, but also anticipate how they may respond to the conflict and to gauge the actions needed to successfully resolve the

disagreement. Of the two subscales, Consistency-Congruency is said to reflect people's ability to reason about specific traits and then subsequently use this information to predict a person's behavior (Mayer et al., 2017). Consistency-Congruency personal intelligence might help someone recognize that their partner dislikes confrontation and has a tendency to withdraw or close themselves off when they are upset about something. Therefore, an individual high in Consistency-Congruency personal intelligence may be better at understanding and predicting this behavior in their partner during times of conflict. Dynamic-Analytic personal intelligence is thought to help us understand complex and sometimes conflicting information regarding an individual (Mayer et al., 2017). Therefore, Dynamic-Analytic personal intelligence may help one recognize when a partner is lashing out at them owing to personal stress as opposed to something that they have done. As a result, rather than being angry with them, they can recognize that their partner does not intend to be reactive towards them and that this is not their natural way of interacting with others, but rather is being influenced by their current stressful state.

Variables to Predict Successful Conflict Resolution

To demonstrate personal intelligence's efficacy in predicting conflict outcomes, it is necessary to see if it correlates with such outcomes and examine its incremental predictive powers relative to other distinct variables. Although the number of psychological qualities with some evidence for predicting relationship outcomes is reasonably large, among the most-studied are (a) Conflict Styles (b) Attachment Style, and (c) agreeableness and neuroticism (two factors of the Big Five).

Conflict Styles and Successful Conflict Resolution

Measurement Classification of Conflict Styles. How individuals approach conflict in their relationships is key to whether the conflict will be resolved and the effectiveness of the

solution (Christensen, 1988; Schneewind & Gerhard, 2002; Sternberg & Soriano, 1984). One widely used measure of conflict style, the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (CRI), aims specifically to measure how conflict is approached by both partners in a romantic relationship and divides conflict style into 4 categories including positive problem solving, conflict engagement, withdrawal, and compliance (Kurdek, 1994). Positive problem solving includes things that are beneficial to the relationship such as negotiating or compromising, as well as constructively discussing one's differences with their partner. The other three conflict styles, while not necessarily always detrimental to the overall functioning of a relationship in the short term (Gabrielidis, Stephan, & Ybarra, 1997), tend to fail to address the root of the conflict. Specifically, withdrawal includes behaviors such as avoiding discussing the matters at hand or creating physical or emotional distance from one's partner. Conflict engagement can involve behaviors such as launching personal attacks or becoming physically or verbally aggressive during times of conflict. Compliance, which can include actions such as giving in to one's partner's demands without defending one's position (Bonache et al., 2017; Kurdek, 1994; 1995).

It seems intuitive then, to suggest that each of these approaches to conflict resolution would have differing implications for whether conflict is successfully resolved. By the definition I provided earlier, escalating conflict usually would reflect poor conflict resolution, whereas positive problem solving would reflect successful engagement.

Conflict Style and Personal Intelligence. Whereas conflict style is habitual, personal intelligence involves greater flexibility by allowing a person to decide, in the midst of a specific conflict, whether withdrawal or problem engagement will work best. For example, an individual high in personal intelligence may recognize that during a particularly heated disagreement with their partner, it may be best to give their partner space by withdrawing, before attempting to

resolve the conflict any further. Rather than label withdrawal as always good or bad, in other words, people with high personal intelligence may more flexibly choose a style of resolution that is mutually beneficial for both individuals in an interaction (Mayer et al., 2017).

Adult Attachment and Successful Conflict Resolution

Attachment styles refer to our characteristic ways of responding in relationships that people learn as infants interacting with caregivers; according to attachment theory, people then perpetuate aspects of those styles when they relate with close others throughout their lives (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1979; Bowlby, 1978; 1982).

Measurement Classification of Attachment Styles. Research on attachment suggest that individuals vary on their degrees of attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance, with those scoring low on both attachment anxiety and avoidance possessing a secure attachment style (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2012). These individuals are characterized by positive working models of the self and others and are more likely to see themselves as worthy of love and valued in their romantic relationships (Collins & Read, 1990).

Attachment anxiety is characterized by a hyperawareness of the availability of close others (Cassidy & Kobak, 1988). While an anxiously attached individual may desire intimacy from their romantic partner, they often shy away due to fear of rejection (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2012). Individuals with an avoidant attachment style tend to downplay attachment needs more generally due to distrust in their partner's availability during times of need, and a result tend to emphasize self-reliance.

Influence on Conflict Resolution. Research further demonstrates that each of the attachment styles has implications for how an individual approaches conflict. For example, securely attached individuals may be more likely to use positive problem solving (Domingue &

Molle, 2009; Pistole, 1989). Anxiously attached individuals may be likely to withdraw in response to conflict with a romantic partner due to their fear of rejection (Ricco & Sierra, 2017; Simpson, Rholes, & Phillips, 1996) these individuals also may be likely to engage conflict but may do so as attempt to gain attention and support from their partner (Bonache et al., 2016; Bonache et al., 2017; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2012). Avoidantly attached individuals, by comparison, also may withdraw from disagreements with their romantic partner and engage their partners in conflict, but often employ such strategies in order to distance themselves from their partner in an effort to rely on the self.

Attachment Style and Personal intelligence. Personal intelligence involves the use of more consciously learned models about the self and others, which we use more mindfully to understand why others behave the way they do and to anticipate others' behaviors. By comparison, attachment patterns are more automatic so, for example, anxiously attached individuals are hypervigilant in their attention to the availability of their partner, and they typically have difficulty "turning that model off"—it is a persistent cognitive-emotional style. By comparison, people higher in personal intelligence may be more likely to promote attitudes that are similar to a secure attachment style in themselves, mitigating such natural tendencies and rendering them slightly more flexible over time in their interactions.

Agreeableness, Neuroticism and Successful Conflict Resolution

A smaller body of literature has explored the relation between conflict resolution and other personality traits such as the Big Five. Of particular focus in research exploring the Big Five and conflict resolution has been agreeableness, which is associated with an individual's ability to maintain more positive social relationships (Asendorpf & Wilpers, 1998). However, given neuroticism's relationship to both the intensity and frequency of conflict (Bolger &

Zuckerman, 1995; McFatter, 1998), it seems important consider how it may also contribute to conflict in relationships.

Measurement of Agreeableness and Neuroticism. Agreeableness and Neuroticism are measured as facets of the Big Five socioemotional traits, which also include Extraversion, Openness, and Conscientiousness (Goldberg, 1993; John & Srivastava, 1999). Individuals who score high on agreeableness tend to be warm, appreciative, trusting, and helpful whereas those low on agreeableness tend to be seen as unfriendly, cold, and argumentative. Individuals scoring high on neuroticism tend to experience emotional instability and responds poorly to stress, whereas those who score low tend be calm, emotionally stable, and less reactive to stress. It therefore, seems likely that individuals' levels of agreeableness and neuroticism will have implications for how conflict is approached.

Relations Among Predictor Variables

Influence of Conflict Style and Attachment. Research suggests that those who score high on measures of agreeableness tend to be more securely attached (Shaver & Brennan, 1992), perceive less conflict in their relationships (Graziano, Jensen-Campbell, & Hair, 1996), and employ more positive conflict resolution strategies in response to conflict (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001; Wood & Bell, 2008). Research also has established relations between neuroticism and the use of more negative conflict resolution strategies (Antonioni, 1998). As a result, levels of agreeableness and neuroticism also have strong implications for whether conflict will be resolved in a relationship.

Personal Intelligence and Agreeableness. Past research demonstrates high personal intelligence is positively related to agreeableness at about an r = .20 level (Mayer et al., 2017; Mayer et al., 2012; Mayer & Skimmyhorn, 2017). The positive relation between personal

intelligence and agreeableness suggests that individuals high in personal intelligence may get along better with others. However, personal intelligence is distinct from agreeableness in that people higher in personal intelligence may more actively choose when it is appropriate to agree (vs. not agree), whereas agreeableness is a characteristic way of responding.

Present Research

People's relationships are important to their well-being and conflict has the potential to destabilize relationships if it is not handled well. The goal of the present research is focused on two propositions: (a) that personal intelligence promotes and predicts successful conflict resolution and (b) that it shows unique predictive characteristics relative to other variables commonly studied in this realm. As theorized above, personal intelligence may lead to a greater propensity to resolve conflict constructively in one's romantic relationship. As previously noted, a variety of methods of assessing conflict resolution are commonly in the romantic relationship conflict. The present research will use lifespace measures, narrative reports, and self-judgment scales of conflict and conflict style.

Hypotheses

My hypotheses divide into three general areas: the first involves tests of the fundamental integrity of this and earlier research work in the area, by checking for replications of findings commonly reported in the literature. The two key hypotheses/purposes here are as follows:

Hypothesis 1: A number of commonly-found relationships previously identified among the variables employed here will be replicated; these include: (a) that personal intelligence will exhibit correlations around $r = .20$ with openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness; that (b) attachment anxiety will be positively correlated with neuroticism at about $r = .40$, and avoidance will be negatively correlated with extraversion and agreeableness at about $r = -.20$; and that (c)

attachment anxiety and avoidance are related to more negative conflict styles from r = -.43 to .33.

One strength of the present research is that it calls upon multiple types of data to assess relationship functioning, including (a) open-ended self-descriptions (e.g., narratives), (b) lifespace and (c) more traditional self-judgment measures. These hypotheses examine the relationships among these measures regarding conflict in relationships.

Hypothesis 2a. The negative dimension of our Lifespace measure, rated negative qualities of the relationship conflict prompts, and self-judgment measures of conflict in relationships will correlate positively with one another.

Hypothesis 2b. The positive dimension of our Lifespace measure, rated positive qualities of the relationship conflict prompts, and self-judgment measures of positive relationship functioning will correlate positively with one another.

Hypothesis 2c. Assuming 2a and 2b are supported, the negative relationship variables will correlate on the whole inversely with the more positive relationship variables.

The present research also examines personal intelligence in relation to a number of indices of relationship functioning. I predict that:

Hypothesis 3a. Personal intelligence will correlate negatively with measures of insecure attachment, including attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance.

Hypothesis 3b. Personal intelligence will correlate negatively with self-judged conflict, negative communication patterns, and negative conflict resolution strategies. Personal intelligence will also demonstrate positive relations with variables indicative of positive relationship functioning, including support, depth, and conflict resolution, as well as the use of more positive conflict resolution strategies.

Hypothesis 3c. Personal intelligence will exhibit incremental validity above-and-beyond attachment style, agreeableness and conflict style in predicting positive relationship outcomes.

METHOD

Participants

The initial sample consisted of 460 participants who were recruited through the psychology subject pool via SONA software and were instructed to complete an online survey using Qualtrics. Participants included individuals who were currently in a romantic relationship (N = 188), and individuals who were not currently in a romantic relationship but had a previous meaningful romantic relationship (N = 189). In order to not exclude anyone and to dissuade individuals from writing about relationships they never had, data was also collected for 80 individuals who reported having never had a meaningful romantic relationship. Due to the small sample size and the differences in the nature of platonic relationships and romantic relationships, and the modified survey items used to assess each, analyses were run only on participants of the first two groups who wrote about a romantic partner (see Appendix A, Table A1 for comparisons between types of participants).

Measures

Demographics. Participants completed a series of demographic questions including age, year in college, race/ethnicity, length in months of their romantic relationship, how far apart they live (d) from their partner in hours travel time, the nature of their relationship with their partner (e.g., dating, engaged, or married) and the first name of their current or previous romantic partner. Participants who indicated they never had a meaningful relationship only answered basic demographic questions about age, year in college, and race/ethnicity and were asked to provide the first name of their best friend as well as the length of their friendship in months.

Test of Personal Intelligence (TOPI 1.4R; Mayer, Panter, & Caruso, 2017). The Test of Personal Intelligence (TOPI 1.4R) is a 115-item measure that assesses ability-based personal intelligence. Participants were instructed to pick the best answer for questions related to personality understanding, for example:

> When younger, Sam remembered being cut from his baseball team and the humiliation he felt, and how he wondered if he had practiced enough. Sam used this memory to help himself...
>
> (a) work harder to achieve a goal
>
> (b) recall that self-doubt just isn't helpful
>
> (c) perform well in a job interview
>
> (d) cope with the challenges of shopping for sports equipment

Individuals who choose the correct alternative "a", must assess how an someone's past experiences can motivate them in the present. The TOPI provides an overall score for personal intelligence and two factor-based scale scores: Consistency-Congruency and Dynamic-Analytic personal intelligence. The TOPI and its subscores demonstrated good reliabilities α = .89, and .81 and .83, respectively. The two factors correlated at r = .71.

Comparison Measures Frequently Related to Conflict Resolution.

The Conflict Resolution Inventory (CRI; Kurdek, 1994). The CRI is a 16-item measure assessing individual's characteristic way of approaching conflict with their romantic partner. Participants were asked to rate how frequently they used conflict styles related to conflict engagement (e.g., throwing insults and digs), withdrawal (e.g., tuning the other person out), positive problem solving (e.g., focusing on the problem at hand), and compliance (e.g., being too

compliant) on a scale of 1 = never, to 5 = always. Reliability for the CRI subscales ranged from .63 to .86 (Kurdek, 1994).

The Experience in Close Relationships Scale (ECR; Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000). The ECR is a 36-item measure of attachment style. Participants were asked to rate the extent to which they agree with statements such as "I am afraid that I will lose my partner's love" (a measure of anxious attachment) on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (disagree strongly) to 7 (agree strongly). Items on the anxious and avoidant subscales were then summed and averaged. Individuals who scored high on anxiety items compared to avoidant items were considered anxiously attached. Conversely, those who scored high on avoidant items are considered avoidantly attached. Low scores on both the attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance dimensions are indicative of attachment security. Reliability for the anxious and avoidant dimensions were $\alpha = .95$ and $\alpha = .93$, respectively.

The Big Five Inventory 2 – Short Form (BFI-2-S; Soto & John, 2017). The BFI-2S is a 30 item, short-form measure of the Big Five. Participants were asked to rate the extent to which they agree with statements related to each of the big five personality traits, for Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, Extraversion, Neuroticism, and Openness. Sample items include "is outgoing, sociable*",* for Extraversion. Responses were made on a 5-point Likert Scale from 1 (disagree strongly) to 5 (agree strongly) Reliabilities for the each of five traits ranged from .73 to .83.

Outcome Measures

Quality of Relationships Inventory (QRI; Pierce, Sarason, & Sarason, 1991). The QRI is a 25-item measure of relationship satisfaction assessing depth, support, and conflict within a specific relationship. Participants were instructed to rate the extent to which statements like "to what extent could you turn to this person for advice about a problem?" characterized their

relationship with the individual they named earlier in the study, using a Likert scale with 1 (not at all) to 4 (very much). Items from each subscale were summed and averaged to create scores of support, conflict, and depth in a relationship. Reliability for the QRI ranged from .83 to .91 for relationships with mothers, fathers, and friends.

Positive and Negative Life Space Items (Brackett & Mayer, 2003). As a supplement to our self-judged questionnaires on relationship quality, we used life space to assess the frequency of behaviors in one's relationship. Participants were asked to answer items related to their positive relations (e.g, how many times in the past week did you explicitly tell your partner you loved them?), and items related to their negative relations (e.g., how many times in the last week have you criticized your partner?) with their romantic partner.

To create scales from our positive and negative lifespace items, an exploratory factor analysis testing up to a four factor solution was run in Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2017), using a weighted least squares mean and variance adjusted (WLSMV) extraction for categorical data and Crawfer-Ferguson rotation. In evaluating factor analytic fit, we set as our standards the convention of seeking an RMSEA less than or equal to .06, and both Comparative and Tucker-Lewis Fit Indices of close to .95 (Boomsma, Hoyle, & Panter, 2012). The three factor solution was both readily interpretable and a good fit for the data (RMSEA = .05, CFI = .99 TLI = .99). The first factor of the three-factor solution, labeled Positive Communication, loaded items such as "said I love you". The second factor, labeled Activities Together, included items such as "went on a date with partner". The third factor, labeled Negative Communication, included behaviors such as "criticized my partner".

To better fit our model, 7 items were removed from further analyses because they loaded above .35 on to more than one factor, and a confirmatory factor analysis was run on the

remaining 23 items testing the three-factor simple structure solution (that is, each item was constrained to load on just one factor). The model met our criteria for a good fit (RMSEA = .06, CFI = .99, TLI = .98). The three scales had reliabilities of, for Positive Communication α = .94, Activities Together, α = .86, and Negative Communication, α = .89. The complete set of items and their factor loadings can be found in Appendix C-Development of Measures, Tables C1 and C2).

Relationship Conflict Narrative Measure. The Relationship Narrative Conflict Resolution Measure (RNC) is an open-ended survey question designed for this study to assess how couples approached and resolved a specific conflict in their current relationship. The RNC was divided into two sections. The first section asked participants to identify and describe their most recent conflict with their romantic partner with several questions in mind:

> *Conflict Description Prompt.* In all relationships, there are times when both partners don't necessarily agree or see eye to eye. In the present study, we are interested in understanding how couples discuss problems and disagreements in their relationship. In the spaces provided, we would like you to recall the three most recent disagreements that you and your romantic partner have had. Please pick the three most recent disagreements the two of you had in which (a) you both felt strongly about the issue that arose and (b) the disagreement interrupted the flow or rhythm of your time together, at least for a few minutes.

Participants were then asked to rank the severity of the three listed disagreements, 1 = most severe to 3 = least severe and the prompt rated as most severe/impactful was chosen as their topic to write about. Participants were then presented with the following questions regarding the conflict they rated as being the most severe:

In the spaces provided, please describe the conflict by answering each of the following in as much space as you need: (a) how did the conflict arise? (b) what was the conflict? (c) was this the first time it arose? (d) what was your perspective on it? (e) what was your partner's perspective on it? (f) how did you react initially when the conflict arose and how did your partner react? (g) to what extent do you feel your partner understood your perspective in the argument? and (h) To what extent do you feel you understood your partner's perspective in the argument?

Following completion of the above questions, participants were asked to report whether the conflict was a one-time only conflict or if it was a recurring conflict for the couple.

Conflict Resolution Prompt. Participants were then asked to respond to the following prompt regarding conflict resolution:

Reflecting on the disagreement with your partner that you just wrote about, was the disagreement resolved? If yes, in the spaces provided, please answer the following questions to describe how the conflict was resolved in as much detail as possible: (a) what you did to resolve the conflict? (b) what your partner did to resolve the conflict? and (c) was how you resolved this conflict similar to how you have resolved conflicts in the past?

If you have not resolved the conflict with your partner, please describe in detail why the conflict was not resolved by answering the following questions using the space provided: (a) how did you attempted to resolve the conflict disagreement? and (b) why do you think the conflict was not resolved?

Participants were then asked a series of questions related to their relationship functioning following the argument. For example, how close did you feel to your partner following conflict

resolution using a scale of 1 (not very close) to 7 (extremely close). They also were asked several questions regarding the extent to which they saw their relationship continuing using a 7-point likert scale (1 = very unlikely; 7 = very likely).

Procedure

After electing to participate on a SONA online management system, participants were referred to an online Qualtrics survey that took approximately two hours to complete. After completing a series of demographic questions, participants were prompted to indicate whether they were currently in a romantic relationship. Participants who indicated they were in a relationship completed the above scales. Participants who indicated that they were not currently in a romantic relationship but had a meaningful romantic relationship in the past were instructed to complete the above assessment of conflict resolution, referencing a past romantic relationship of their choosing. So as not to exclude individuals from participating or accidentally eliciting participants to write about relationships they have never had, participants who were not currently in a romantic relationship and had not had a previously meaningful romantic relationship were asked to answer the above prompts with their best friend in mind. Participants were granted two hours of research credits in exchange for their participation.

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

Screening for Response Quality. The data were screened for non-responders, partial-responders and those who exhibited signs of extreme inattention, employing standard laboratory procedures (see Mayer et al., 2017, for the rationale). Of the 460, who clicked the link to participate in the online survey, there were three non-responders, defined as failing to answer any

questions, and 11 partial responders, who stopped the survey before completing the recall of a conflict with a current/previous romantic partner or friend. This left 446 participants.

The remaining 446 participants' responses were examined next for signs of extreme inattention. Among these 446, five were flagged for answering three or fewer of the eight attention check items correctly on the Test of Personal Intelligence (TOPI), four endorsed a single alternative more than 32 times (i.e., 67%) on the overall Test of Personal Intelligence, and two were flagged for completing the survey in under 11 minutes (The 11-minute cutpoint was established by allocating 2 seconds per each of the 285 closed ended questions (see recommendations in Curran, 2016), and 30 sec for each of the 3 open-ended questions: i.e., 285 x 2 = 570 sec + 90 sec = 660 sec, or 11 min). In all, 10 participants were flagged and removed from the data.

Finally, an additional 77 participants who were not already screened using the above methods and who had never been in a relationship and wrote about a conflict with a friend were set aside for purposes of future research. The final sample consisted of 361 participants (271 female, 84 male; Mean age = 19.60, SD = 1.51).

Inter-judge Agreement Regarding Conflict Resolution. Four independent raters scored the first 175 written responses regarding the extent to which the relationship participants resolved a conflict with either a current or past romantic partner. (The remaining participants will be coded over the summer or fall; other ratings beyond conflict resolution remain to be analyzed; See Appendix B, Table B1 and B2 for coding strategy and examples). For the 175 participants completed to-date, raters scored each written response to our conflict description and resolution description measure (RCN) on "To what extent was the conflict described resolved?" on a scale from 1 (not at all resolved) to 7 (very much resolved). Intraclass correlations were .92 for ratings

of conflict resolution across the four raters for only individuals who wrote about a current or past romantic partner. Given the good agreement, scores for conflict resolution were averaged across raters to create a conflict resolution score for each of the first 175 participants who were in a relationship or had a previously meaningful relationship.

Descriptive Statistics. Table 1 contains the means and standard deviations for the key variables of the study, as well as comparisons of the means between our two types of participants in current vs. past relationship (see Appendix A for additional information about the means and standard deviations for the friendship group). The test scores varied slightly between groups, although participants in each group were comparable in age ($M_{\text{current partner}} = 19.61$, $M_{\text{past partner}} = 19.59$) and relationship length in months ($M_{\text{current partner}} = 18.92$, $M_{\text{past partner}} = 14.64$). T-tests were computed for each variable and appear to the right in the table. Specifically, participants who currently were in a romantic relationship, tended to score higher on the Conflict Resolution Inventory (CRI)-Positive Conflict Style and higher on the Lifespace-Positive Communications Scale, compared to participants who wrote about a previous partner or friend. Individuals who reported on a past relationship described poorer relationship quality, scoring lower on QRI-Depth and Support, and higher on QRI-Conflict, suggesting that they tended to view their previous relationship through a more negative lens. They also scored higher on CRI-Withdrawal, Compliance and Engagement in response to conflict.

Preliminary Check of Correlations Among Variables. Hypothesis 1 stated that variables drawn from the ECR attachment style, Big Five, CRI conflict style and TOPI scales would exhibit key relations similar to those found in prior research. Correlations between the key variables and the Big Five and SEPI can be found in Table 2. Correlations among all variables can be found in Appendix D, Table D1.

As predicted, the TOPI was positively related to openness at $r = .19$, agreeableness at $r = .12$ ($ps < .05$), but not with conscientiousness at $r = .07$. Also as predicted, ECR-Anxious Attachment correlated with both neuroticism at $r = .30$ ($p < .001$), and with conscientiousness at $r = -.20$ ($p < .001$). Contrary to my original hypothesis, ECR-Avoidance was not significantly related to Big Five extraversion or agreeableness ($r = -.05$ and $r = .06$, respectively, all $ps > .10$). However, ECR-Avoidance did correlate negatively with neuroticism ($r = .16$, $p < .01$).

A similar pattern emerged when exploring the relation between ECR-measured attachment and Conflict Resolution Inventory (CRI) conflict styles. ECR-Anxiety was positively related to the use of more negative conflict styles like CRI-Withdrawal ($r = .18$, $p < .01$), Engagement ($r = .12$, $p = .03$), and Compliance ($r = .20$, $p < .001$), and negatively related to CRI-Positive Problem Solving $r = -.17$ ($p < .01$). ECR-Avoidance was only significantly related to CRI-Engagement ($r = -.10$, $p = .05$).

Relations Among Multimethod Measures of Relationship Functioning

Recall that this research draws together diverse measurement approaches to the study of relationship conflict, including assessments based not only on traditional self-judgments (e.g., self-report) measures, but also lifespace data and the participants' narrative descriptions of conflict and conflict resolution to assess how respondents function in their close relationships. The correlations among our conflict variables can be found in Table 3. So as to not capitalize on chance given the number of variables assessed in the present research, only correlations where $p < .01$ level were considered statistically significant.

Negative Lifespace Communications, Self-Judged Conflict and Conflict Style. Hypothesis 2a stated that across methods, negative scales would correlate, and positive scales would correlate.

Scales indicative of negative relationship interactions. Lifespace-Negative Communication would correlate with QRI-Conflict and CRI positive- and negative- conflict styles, and well as participants' Relationship-Conflict Narratives (RCN)—Resolution Scores. Consistent with our hypotheses, the Lifespace-Negative Communication scale correlated with QRI-Conflict at $r = .28$ ($p < .001$). Moreover, it also correlated positively with the CRI-Negative Conflict Styles, including Engagement at $r = .40$ ($p < .001$), Withdrawal at $r = .29$ ($p < .001$), and Compliance at $r = .26$ ($p < .001$).

Our rating of our RCN open-ended conflict resolution responses also demonstrated a significant correlation with CRI-Withdrawal ($r = -.30$, $p < .01$), Compliance ($r = -.23$, $p < .01$), and Engagement ($r = -.21$, $p < .01$.), and marginally with Lifespace-Negative Communication ($r = -.16$ $p = .03$).

Scales indicative of positive relationship interactions. We also anticipated (hypothesis 2b) that the variables included in our multimethod assessment of positive relationship functioning would correlate positively with one another. The Lifespace-Positive Communication scale measure correlated with QRI-Support and Depth in one's relationship at $r = .59$, and $r = .63$, ($ps < .001$). Lifespace-Positive Communication also correlated $r = .48$ ($p < .001$) with CRI-Positive Problem Solving, and with our RCN-Resolution scores ($r = .39$, $p < .001$). Moreover, RCN-Resolution scores also correlated with the QRI factors of Support ($r = .41$, $p < .001$) and Depth ($r = .29$, $p < .001$).

Negative and Positive Relationship Variables. Given the above findings, hypothesis 2c stated that our various positive relationship variables would correlate negatively with our negative relationship variables. Results partially supported this hypothesis. While Lifespace-Negative Communication correlated non-significantly with QRI-Support ($r = -.10$ $p =$ n.s) and

QRI Depth (r = -.03, p = n.s.), the construct did correlate marginally with CRI-Positive Problem solving (r = -.12, p = .02). Lifespace-Positive Communication correlated negatively with QRI-Conflict (r = -.36 p < .001), as well as with the Withdrawal (r = -.21, p < .001), and Compliance (r = -.16, p < .01), but non-significantly with Engagement (r = -.10, p = .05). Interestingly, Lifespace-Negative Communication also correlated positively with the Lifespace-Positive Communication measure (r = .19, p < .001).

Personal Intelligence and Relationship Functioning

The final set of hypotheses explore the relations between personal intelligence and our personality and relationship variables in an attempt to understand how it may in turn also predict relationship functioning. Table 4 provides the correlations between the relationship measures (left-hand side), with the TOPI and SEPI measures (labeled along the top). Once more, only correlations with p < .01 level were considered significant, so as not to capitalize on chance.

Personal Intelligence and Attachment Style. Hypothesis 3a hypothesized that TOPI scores would negatively relate to attachment anxiety and avoidance. Neither ECR-Attachment Anxiety, r = -.05 p = n.s., or Avoidance r = .09, p = n.s., significantly correlated with TOPI scores.

Personal Intelligence and Relationship Variables. Hypothesis 3b stated personal intelligence would be related to certain indicators of relationship quality, including QRI-Conflict, Support, and Depth. The TOPI correlated marginally (r = -.10, p =.07) with QRI-Conflict scores, but correlated positively with QRI-Support and Depth scores (r = .24 and r = .15, respectively; ps < .01), supporting our hypothesis.

Hypothesis 3b further stated that personal intelligence would be related to the use of specific conflict styles as assessed by the Conflict Resolution Inventory (CRI). Given our more

stringent criteria for significance, the TOPI exhibited trending correlations with CRI-Engagement (r = -.12, p = .03), Withdrawal (r = -.10, p = .07) and Compliance (r = -.10, p = .05) scores. However, TOPI scores were significantly related to CRI-Positive Problem Solving scores r = .26, p < .001.

Lastly, hypothesis 3b stated that TOPI scores would be related to the frequency of specific behaviors in one's relationship as assessed by our lifespace data, and conflict resolution assessed by our qualitative responses to the RCN measure. As hypothesized, TOPI scores were significantly related to Lifespace-Negative Communication (r = -.30, p < .001), and Lifepsace-Activities Together (r = -.27, p < .001). However, contrary to our hypothesis, the TOPI did not significantly relate to Lifespace-Positive Communication, r = -.02 p = n.s., or rated RCN-Conflict Resolution r = .06, p = n.s.

Incremental Validity of Personal Intelligence in Predicting Relationship Conflict and Positive Relationship Variables.

My last set of hypotheses (hypothesis 3d) concern whether personal intelligence predicts several dependent measures of relationship conflict—one narrative, one self-judgment, and one lifespace, while controlling for variables that have been previously implicated in relationship functioning. Specifically, I wondered whether TOPI scores would predict the self-judgment CRI-Positive Problem Solving scale and Lifespace-Negative Communication when controlling for these previously implicated variables, as both demonstrated the highest correlations among our measures assessing conflict and conflict resolution in the present research. Moreover, I also aimed to test my a priori predictions that TOPI scores would predict both QRI-Conglict and the RCN-Conflict Resolution scores above and beyond other commonly-used scales in the area. To test hypothesis 3d, I conducted four hierarchical ordinary least squares regressions. Each

regression controlled, in its first step for distance from romantic partner or friend (in hours). At the second step, we introduced our individual difference variables, including ECR-Anxious and Avoidant attachment, Agreeableness and Neuroticism of the Big Five. Finally, at the last step we entered TOPI scores.

Personal Intelligence Predicting Conflict Variables. Results of our hierarchical regressions, including the unstandardized Bs, standardized betas, and t-values can be found in Table 5 for each of the three dependent measures: CRI-Positive Problem Solving, Lifespace-Negative Communication, QRI-Conflict, and RCN-Resolution.

As hypothesized, the regression predicting CRI-Positive Problem Solving was significant at step one, F (1, 327) = 9.13, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .03$, $Adj\ R^2 = .02$, suggesting that distance was a significant predictor of positive conflict style $b = .36$, S.E. = .12, $\beta = .17$, $t(327) = 3.02$, $p < .01$, 95% CI [.13, .59]. Adding in our individual difference variables at step two led to an overall significant regression and accounted for an additional 6% of the variance in predicting CRI-positive conflict style, F (5, 323) = 5.86, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .08$, $Adj\ R^2 = .07$. Finally, adding personal intelligence at step three led to an overall significant regression, F (6, 322) = 7.72, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .08$, $Adj\ R^2 = .07$, revealing that personal intelligence explained an additional 6% of the variance in predicting self-reported positive conflict style. Personal intelligence positively predicted a positive conflict style, $b = .11$, S.E. = .03, $\beta = .21$, $t(322) = 3.96$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.05, .16], suggesting participants high in personal intelligence were more likely to report using a positive conflict style in response to relationship conflict.

Also, as hypothesized, adding personal intelligence at step three in our regression model led to an overall significant regression, F (6, 325) = 6.57, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .11$, $Adj\ R^2 = .09$, predicting Lifespace-Negative Communication. Personal intelligence positively predicted

Lifespace-Negative Communication, b = -.02, S.E. = .01, β = .27, t(325) = -4.96, p < .001, 95% CI [-.03, -.02], suggesting participants high in personal intelligence were more likely to report using a negative communication patterns in their relationship.

Analyses testing whether personal intelligence predicted QRI-Conflict revealed an overall significant regression at step three, F (6, 325) = 3.52, p < .01, R^2 = .06, *Adj* R^2 = .04. However, when controlling for distance from one's partner, attachment style, and agreeableness and neuroticism of the Big Five, personal intelligence was a non-significant predict of QRI-Conflict at step three b = -.01, S.E. = .01, β = -.07, t(325) = -1.29, p = .20, 95% CI [-.02, .003], suggesting participants high in personal intelligence did not report less conflict in their romantic relationships.

Also contrary to our hypothesis, analyses testing whether personal intelligence predicted RCN-Conflict Resolution revealed a non-significant overall regression F (6, 170) = .97, p = .45, R^2 = .03, *Adj* R^2 = -.001. Personal intelligence was not a significant predictor of conflict resolution b = .02, S.E. = .02, β = .09, t(170) = 1.17, p = .25, 95% CI [-.02, .06], suggesting that individuals high in personal intelligence were not better at resolving conflict in their romantic relationships.

Comparing the Two Groups

Given our earlier findings suggesting that participants who completed the study based on a previous relationship tended to be less likely to use a positive conflict resolution style than those writing about a current romantic partner, we aimed to rule out the possibility that our findings were being driven by the type of relationship our participants wrote about. Therefore, we split our data by the type of participant, and repeated the above analyses in each case.

Personal intelligence still significantly predicted CRI-Positive Problem Solving, regardless of whether participants wrote about a current b = .13, S.E. = .04, β = .29, t(154) = 3.66, p < .001, 95% CI [.06, .20], or past romantic relationship b = .12, S.E. = .03, β = .29, t(161) = 3.84 p < .001, 95% CI [.06, .18]. The same held true for Lifespace-Negative Communication, regardless of whether participants were currently in a relationship b = -.03, S.E. = .01, β = -.28, t(155) = 3.63, p < .001, 95% CI [-.04, -.01] or wrote about a previous partner b = -.02, S.E. = .01, β = -.22, t(163) = -2.95, p < .01, 95% CI [-.03, -.01], participants high in personal intelligence tended to report the use of less negative communication strategies in response to relationship conflict. Also consistent with the above results, personal intelligence did not significantly predict RCN-Resolution, regardless of whether participants wrote about a current b = .002, S.E. = .02, β = .01, t(75) = .11, p = .92, 95% CI [-.04, .05], or past b = .04, S.E. = .03, β = .16, t(88) = 1.54, p = .13, 95% CI [-.01, .09] romantic partner. Results also revealed that personal intelligence was a significant predictor of QRI-Conflict for participants who wrote about a current romantic partner b = -.02, S.E. = .004, β = -.25, t(155) = -3.41, p < .01, 95% CI [-.02, -.01], but not for participants who wrote about a previous partner b = .001, S.E. = .01, β = .02, t(163) = .19, p = .85, 95% CI [-.01, .02], suggesting that participants high in personal intelligence experienced less conflict in their current romantic relationship.

Additional predictions. Additional hierarchical regressions following the same model as above also were run exploring CRI-Engagement, QRI-Support, QRI-Depth, and Lifespace-Activities as they demonstrated moderate correlations with the TOPI. Adding the TOPI at step three led to a non-significant effect of personal intelligence predicting conflict engagement (p = .15). In addition, the overall regressions predicting QRI-Support and QRI-Depth from TOPI scores at step three were significant (p <.001 and p = .01, respectively), suggesting individuals

high in personal intelligence reported greater support and depth in their relationships. Finally, TOPI scores entered at step three resulted in an overall significant regression predicting Lifespace-Activites (p <.001). Interestingly, high personal intelligence was a negative predictor of activities engaged in together with one's partner. Unstandardized Bs, standardized betas, and t-values for these analyses can be found in Appendix E.

DISCUSSION

The goal of the present research was to explore the relation between personal intelligence, a person-centered intelligence concerned with reasoning and understanding personality (Mayer et al., 2017; Mayer & Skimmyhorn, 2017), and a number of assessments of relationship conflict and relationship functioning. In addition to completing self-judgement measures of conflict and conflict resolution style, participants reported on the frequency of their weekly relationship behaviors through a lifespace, objective measure of positive and negative relationship functioning developed for the present research. They also completed brief narratives about a recent conflict with a current or past romantic partner and how they resolved this conflict.

In my preliminary analyses, independent raters exhibited good interjudge reliability in evaluating whether the conflict described was resolved, and a factor model of the lifespace relationship data was developed that divided it into scales of positive communication, activities done together, and negative communication.

The current research echoed prior work demonstrating relations between personal intelligence and the Big Five (Mayer et al., 2017), as well as between attachment style, the Big Five and conflict style (Bonache et al., 2017; Ricco & Sierra, 2017: Shaver & Brennan, 1992; Noftle & Shaver, 2006). A key strength of this research was to employ and compare multiple

methods for assessing relationship conflict and functioning. New relations were next established among the self-judgment, lifespace, narrative, and personal intelligence functioning.

Comparison of Multiple Assessments of Relationship Conflict

Unsurprisingly, given what is now known about different kinds of measures, our positive and negative self-judgment, lifespace and narrative assessments related to relationship conflict bore some relationship to one another, while also tapping different elements of the perceptions and evaluations of conflicts. For example, lifespace negative communication demonstrated modest correlations with other assessments of negative relationship conflict, including $r = .28$ with self-judged relationship conflict. Moreover, assessments of more positive relationship functioning, including self-judged positive problem solving and narrative assessments of conflict resolution, also correlated modestly at $r = .34$.

Such findings call upon the importance of how each type of assessment differentially measures conflict in relationships. For example, self-judgment scales allow participants to express the ways they think about themselves along dimensions that have been identified by psychologists as of importance to a specific construct. In the present research, we chose an existing self-judgment scale where perceived support, depth, and conflict in a relationship was deemed important to its overall quality (i.e. The Quality of Relationships Inventory). But people may have more individualized ways of describing themselves, and their report of actual life episodes in narrative form assess a different kind of self-understanding (Ivcevic, Mayer, & Brackett, 2003). To assess that narrative self-monitoring, we employed a narrative measure of relationship conflict. Moreover, people's self-judgements and narrative accounts of individual episodes are again quite different from their actual tallies of interactions—and the qualities of those interactions—with others—a kind of information better collected by lifespace scales.

In the present research, we supplemented our self-report measures with a narrative response and lifespace measure of relationship conflict and functioning. Through our use of a narrative response regarding relationship conflict, we opened the door for individuals to determine what was deemed important (or detrimental) to the flow and quality of their own romantic relationships (Ivcevic et al., 2003). Furthermore, our lifespace measures allowed us to gain access to objective and verifiable information regarding the on-going behaviors that individuals engage in within their relationships, such as whether and how often they go to their partners for support (e.g., *"*how many times have you sought advice from partner in the past week?"), which may not be caught by a traditional self-report measure (Brackett & Mayer, 2003). The use of all three methods of assessing relationship function is a unique feature in the present research and adds to the breadth of our understanding of how individuals navigate their close relationships.

The Influence of Personal Intelligence in Relationships and Relationship Conflicts

Whereas most measures to-date in relationship research measure a person's customary styles of relationship interaction, I further introduced an assessment of the participant's capacities to understand both themselves and their own motivations, on the one hand, and the characteristics of their partners, on the other, in the Test of Personal Intelligence. The capacity to engage in active, flexible problem-solving about personalities permits people to better engage in the caretaking and growth of their specific relationships that customary behavioral styles do not address by themselves.

As hypothesized, personal intelligence correlated negatively with self-judged relationship conflict, conflict engagement, and the lifespace-measured presence of negative communication such as *"yelled profanities at my partner."* Personal intelligence also correlated positively with

indicators of positive relationship functioning, including self-judged positive conflict style (e.g., *example of item here*), relationship support, and depth. The prediction from the Test of Personal Intelligence to consequential outcomes remained even after controlling for known predictors of conflict and relationship functioning. Specifically, personal intelligence negatively predicted self-judged current relationship conflict when controlling for distance from partner or friend, attachment style and certain facets of the Big Five. Such findings strengthen support for the idea that individuals who are high in personal intelligence are better at avoiding conflictual relations with others (Mayer et al., 2018).

In addition to being better at avoiding conflict with others, high personal intelligence individuals also may respond more positively when conflict does arise in their relationships. That is, people who are high in personal intelligence are thought to be better able to anticipate the needs of others and to use this understanding to facilitate how they interact with others (Mayer & Skimmyhorn, 2017). Results of the present research hint at the pathway through which this happens by indicating that high-personal intelligence individuals approach conflict resolution in a more positive manner than individuals who are low in personal intelligence. High personal intelligence appears to promote the choice of more positive conflict resolution strategies—such as constructive communication, in preference to yelling at or throwing insults —that are more in line with their personal needs and the needs of the individual with whom they are in conflict.

Conversely, individuals who are low in personal intelligence are more likely to employ negative communication patterns such as yelling profanities at or criticizing others. Because individuals who score low on personal intelligence struggle to understand the needs of others, they may abandon attempts at understanding other's needs during times of conflict (Mayer et al., 2017; Mayer et al., 2018). As a result, they may become so frequently frustrated as a result of

their inability to understand others that they may lash out in response to conflicts in their relationships.

Although personal intelligence predicts self-judged relationship quality, conflict resolution style and individual's behavior in their relationship, the results failed to find a relationship between high in personal intelligence and narrative measures of the degree of conflict resolution. Several factors may account for these perplexing findings. Perhaps young adults' conflict resolution may focus more on obtaining immediate, but less lasting results compared to older individuals who may focus on resolving conflicts in a way that is beneficial for the long-term. For instance, the bulk of conflicts in young adult relationships may focus more on things such as whether to go out that night or stay in with their partner or where to attend college, whereas conflicts in adult relationships may focus more on finances or issues related to raising children. Resolving more immediate conflicts may not require as much reasoning about the needs of oneself and other others and therefore is unrelated to personal intelligence.

Another potential explanation as to why personal intelligence predicts both self-judgements and behavioral assessments of communication surrounding conflict but not narrative scores for conflict resolution may be related to how conflict resolution was assessed. Participants were asked to write about a conflict that interrupted the flow or rhythm of their relationships. It may be that the conflicts that came to mind were sufficiently recurring in their relationships to obviate the possibility of an easy resolution. Moreover, the recurring nature suggest that the conflict might be something that both partners were willing to accept as part of their interactions. If so, the conflicts may not have been sufficiently detrimental for an effect to be detected.

Future Directions

The present study offers a number of fruitful areas for future research. First, in addition to assessing conflict resolution, our relationship conflict narrative made note of several other areas of relationship functioning in relation to conflict, including conflict themes, perspective taking, and attribution of responsibility. Moving forward, a goal of ours is to analyze the ratings taken from this measure and explore how they may paint a more elaborative picture of how conflict and personal intelligence relate.

Furthermore, it seems important to explore other methods of assessing conflict resolution in relationships. For example, past research has explored conflict in relationships using a daily diary methodology (Peterson & DeHart, 2014; Kennedy, Bolger, & Shrout, 2002; Campbell, Simpson, Boldry, & Kashy, 2005). If individuals are more likely to recount conflicts with friends or romantic partners that are recurring issues to the relationship, it may be interesting to explore conflict on a daily basis and define conflict resolution based on how individuals navigate conflict over a specified period of time. It may be that personal intelligence relates to how individuals navigate collectively over time as opposed to one specific instance as they wrote about in the current study. Furthermore, it would also be interesting to explore how personal intelligence further predicts the daily use of specific conflict resolution styles and communication strategies in response to conflict.

Next, in addition to romantic relationships, individuals maintain a number of different relationships, including those with parents or relatives and friends with which conflicts are also likely to arise. Among these relationships, friends often become increasingly important and influential during adolescence and young adulthood (Cantor, 1979; Carberry & Buhrmester, 1998). While the current research included a group of participants who completed the study with

their best friend in mind, the small sample size made it difficult to draw conclusions about how personal intelligence may differentially impact conflict resolution in romantic relationships and friendships. Future research should examine how personal intelligence relates to conflict, conflict related communication and resolution styles in friendships.

Finally, it would be interesting to explore personal intelligence and its relation to conflict and conflict resolution strategies in dyads. While the present research was exploratory in nature and approached understanding how personal intelligence relates to conflict in relationships through the eyes of one individual, couples bring to their relationships a unique set of backgrounds, personality traits, and of particular interest to us, personal intelligence. With this in mind, future research should explore how couples with differing and similar levels of personal intelligence interact with and approach conflict together. Of particular interest so us if whether both members of a dyad need to be high in personal intelligence to reap the benefits it has on conflict related communications.

CONCLUSION

Drawing upon a variety of assessment methods, the current research aimed to understand how people with different levels of personal intelligence approach and resolve conflict in their close relationships. Personal intelligence significantly predicted the types of conflict resolution styles employed to resolve conflict, as well as the use of negative communication styles when interacting with romantic partners or friends. Furthermore, personal intelligence was related to greater acknowledgement of conflict in one's relationships, but not overall conflict resolution. Findings from the present study support personal intelligences classification as a person-centered intelligence, an ability that individuals use to reason and facilitate their interactions with others.

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Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations

	Relationship Type				
	Overall *N* = 361 (271 female)	**Current Partner** *N* = 181 (144 female)	**Past Partner** *N* = 180 (127 female)		
	M(SD)	**M(SD)**	**M(SD)**	***t*[a]**	***p***
Age (years)	19.60 (1.51)	19.61 (1.37)	19.59 (1.65)	.14	.89
Relationship Length (months)	16.78 (15.97)	18.92 (18.69)	14.64 (13.26)	2.45	.02
Personal Intelligence					
Overall	48.21 (8.60)	48.06 (8.51)	48.36 (8.71)	-.33	.74
Consistency – Congruency	48.83 (9.29)	48.90 (9.24)	48.77 (9.36)	.13	.90
Dynamic- Analytic	47.59 (9.35)	47.23 (8.94)	47.96 (9.75)	-.74	.46
Self-Estimated	3.83 (.57)	3.91 (.52)	3.76 (.60)	2.46	.01
Attachment Style					
Anxiety	4.01(.46)	3.95 (.45)	4.06 (.46)	-2.25	.03
Avoidance	4.00 (.35)	3.97 (.31)	4.04 (.38)	-1.69	.09
The Big Five					
Agreeableness	3.88 (.66)	3.96 (.66)	3.81 (.66)	2.08	.04
Conscientiousness	3.50 (.76)	3.61 (.76)	3.39 (.75)	2.69	< .01
Extraversion	3.43 (.73)	3.46 (.73)	3.40 (.74)	.84	.40
Openness	3.66 (.75)	3.59 (.71)	3.73 (.78)	-1.84	.07
Neuroticism	3.06 (.91)	3.03 (.93)	3.08 (.90)	-.55	.58
Conflict Style					
Positive Problem Solving	12.51 (4.36)	14.86 (3.77)	10.10 (3.54)	12.26	< .001
Withdrawal	7.57 (3.24)	6.92 (3.08)	8.24 (3.28)	-3.91	< .001
Engagement	6.87 (3.12)	6.45 (3.02)	7.29 (3.17)	-2.57	.01
Compliance	7.78 (3.28)	7.41 (3.26)	8.19 (3.27)	-2.24	.03
Quality of Relationships					
Support	3.13 (.87)	3.56 (.56)	2.69 (.90)	11.04	< .001
Depth	3.00 (.77)	3.41 (.52)	2.56 (.75)	12.37	< .001
Conflict	2.00 (.78)	1.65 (.55)	2.34 (.82)	-9.45	< .001
Relationship Life Space					
Positive Communication	3.95 (2.20)	5.55 (1.02)	2.33 (1.86)	20.43	< .001
Activities	1.74 (.94)	2.01 (.91)	1.47 (.90)	5.64	< .001
Negative Communication	1.48 (.81)	1.48 (.80)	1.49 (.82)	-.01	.95
Conflict Resolution[b]	3.79 (2.00)	4.76 (1.62)	2.90 (1.91)	7.20	< .001

[a]Independent samples t-tests comparing current and past romantic relationship groups.
[b]Conflict resolution scores were computed from the first 175 participants. Final paper will include recoded rating of conflict resolution for all 361 participants.

Table 2.

Correlations Among Mutlimethod Assessments of Relationship Quality and Functioning[a]

	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**
1. QRI-Support	1.00												
2. QRI-Conflict	-.39***	1.00											
3. QRI-Depth	.79***	-.23**	1.00										
4. CRI-Engagement	-.20***	.53**	-.12*	1.00									
5. CRI-Withdrawal	-.23***	.56***	-.15**	.69***	1.00								
6. CRI-Positive Problem Solving	.54***	-.31***	.49***	-.02	-.06	1.00							
7. CRI-Compliance	-.22**	.44***	-.17**	.51***	.62***	.01	1.00						
8. ECR - Anxiety	-.12*	.18**	-.08	.12*	.18**	-.17**	.20**	1.00					
9. ECR - Avoidance	-.06	-.10	-.18**	-.10*	-.07	-.04	.003	-.30***	1.00				
10. Lifespace - Positive Comm.	.59*	-.36***	.63**	-.10	-.21***	.48***	-.16**	-.09	-.15**	1.00			
11. Lifespace - Activities Togth.	.12*	-.03	.17**	.09	-.07	.10	.04	.04	-.12*	.52***	1.00		
12. Lifespace - Negative Comm.	-.10*	.28***	-.03	.40***	.29***	-.12*	.26***	.12*	-.14**	.19***	.48***	1.00	
13. RCN- Conflict Resolution	.41***	-.54***	.29***	-.21***	-.30***	.34***	-.23**	-.07	-.03	.39***	.12	-.16*	1.00

Note: *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$

[a]Multimethod assessments include the self-judgment scales Quality of Relationships Inventory (QRI), Conflict Resolution Inventory (CRI), as well as lifespace scales and our open-ended Relationship Conflict Narrative. QRI = support, depth, and conflict; CRI = engagement, withdrawal, positive problem solving, and compliance; lifespace scales = positive communication, activities together, and negative communication; RCN = conflict resolution. s

Table 3.

Correlations of Relationship Measures with the Big Five and SEPI

	Big Five					SEPI
	Agreeableness	**Neuroticism**	**Extraversion**	**Conscientiousness**	**Openness**	
1. QRI-Support	.21***	-.09	.12*	.19***	-.01	.18***
2. QRI-Conflict	-.14**	.002	.03	-.12*	.11*	-.13*
3. QRI-Depth	.20***	.02	.06	.18**	.01	.19***
4. CRI-Engagement	-.26***	.17**	.07	-.16**	-.05	-.11*
5. CRI-Withdrawal	-.15**	.12•	.03	.14**	-.04	-.16**
6. CRI-Positive Problem Solving	.17**	-.02	.03	.14**	.05	.16**
7. CRI-Compliance	-.11*	.12•	-.06	-.20***	-.05	-.24***
8. ECR - Anxiety	-.18	.30***	-.03	-.20***	-.04	-.21***
9. ECR - Avoidance	.06	-.16**	-.05	-.02	-.06	.01
10. Lifespace - Positive Comm.	.15	-.02	.09	.10	-.02	.13*
11. Lifespace - Activities Togth.	-.04	-.04	.02	.02	-.003	.01
12. Lifespace - Negative Comm.	-.19***	.07	.05	-.17**	-.07	-.09
13. RCN- Conflict Resolution	-.01	-.04	.02	.07	-.16*	.04
TOPI 1.4R	.12*	.11	-.04	.07	.19***	.08

Note: *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, $p < .001$***

Table 4.

Correlations Between Personal Intelligence and Key Relationship Variables.

Measure	TOPI Overall	Consistency-Congruency	Dynamic-Analytic
Experience in Close Relationships (ECR)			
Attachment Anxiety	-.05	-.03	-.05
Attachment Avoidance	.09	.05	.12*
Quality of Relationships Inventory (QRI)			
Support	.24***	.21***	.22***
Depth	.15**	.16**	.12*
Conflict	-.10	-.09	–.09
Conflict Resolution Inventory (CRI)			
Engagement	-.12*	-.10	-.11*
Withdrawal	-.10	-.07	–.11*
Positive Problem Solving	.24***	.23***	.23***
Compliance	-.10	-.10	-.09
Lifespace			
Positive Communication	-.02	.01	-.04
Activities	-.27***	-.25***	–.25***
Negative Communication	-.30***	-.26***	-.29***
Relationship Conflict Narrative (RCN)			
Conflict Resolution	.06	.08	.03

Note: *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$

Table 5.

Overall OLS Hierarchical Multiple Regression for Personal Intelligence Predicting Multimethod Assessments of Positive Problem Solving, Negative Communication, Conflict Resolution and Conflict.

CRI Positive Problem Solving (DV)

	Step 1 (Distance)			Step 2 (Ind. Differences)			Step 3 (TOPI)		
	B	*β*	*t*	B	*β*	*t*	B	*β*	*t*
Distance	.36	.17	3.02**	.34	.16	2.94**	.34	.16	2.97**
Attachment Anxiety				-1.71	-.18	-3.07**	-1.65	-.17	-3.01**
Attachment Avoidance				-1.07	-.09	-1.52	-1.32	-.11	-1.92
Agreeableness				1.02	.16	2.90**	.83	.13	2.41*
Neuroticism				.39	.08	1.42	.21	.04	.77
TOPI							.11	.21	3.96***
R^2			.03**			.08			.13
ΔR^2						.06**			.04***

Lifespace Negative Communication (DV)

	Step 1 (Distance)			Step 2 (Ind. Differences)			Step 3 (TOPI)		
	B	*β*	*t*	B	*β*	*t*	B	*β*	*t*
Distance	.003	.01	.15	-.002	-.004	-.08	-.001	-.002	-.04
Attachment Anxiety				-.06	.03	.57	.05	.03	.57
Attachment Avoidance				-.21	-.10	-1.68	-.16	-.07	-1.30
Agreeableness				-.17	-.15	-2.72**	-.14	-.12	-2.17*
Neuroticism				.01	.01	.24	.05	.06	1.04
TOPI							-.02	-.27	-4.96***
R^2			.000			.04			.11
ΔR^2						.04*			.07***

RCN Conflict Resolution Scores (DV)

	Step 1 (Distance)			Step 2 (Ind. Differences)			Step 3 (TOPI)		
	B	*β*	*t*	B	*β*	*t*	B	*β*	*t*
Distance	.10	.11	1.46	.10	.10	1.37	.10	.10	1.36
Attachment Anxiety				-.40	-.10	-1.12	-.41	-.10	-1.14
Attachment Avoidance				-.56	-.10	-1.17	-.59	-.10	-1.22
Agreeableness				-.08	-.03	-.35	-.11	-.04	-.48
Neuroticism				-.06	-.03	-.36	-.11	-.05	.56
TOPI							.02	.09	1.17
R^2			.01			.03			.03
ΔR^2						.01			.01

QRI-Conflict (DV)

	Step 1 (Distance)			Step 2 (Ind. Differences)			Step 3 (TOPI)		
	B	*β*	*t*	B	*β*	*t*	B	*β*	*t*
Distance	-.10	-.03	-.49	-.01	-.04	-.69	-.01	-.04	-.68
Attachment Anxiety				.19	.11	1.94	.19	.11	1.93
Attachment Avoidance				-.05	-.02	-.41	-.04	-.02	-.30
Agreeableness				-.08	-.07	-1.28	-.07	-.06	-1.11
Neuroticism				.11	.13	2.29*	-.01	-.07	-1.29
TOPI									
R^2			.001			.06			.06
ΔR^2						.06**			.01

Note: *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, $p < .001$***

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Table A1.

Comparisons of Means and Standard Deviations among Groups

		Relationship Type			
	Overall	**Current Partner**	**Past Partner**	**Friend**	
	***N* = 438**	***N* = 181**	***N* = 180**	***N* = 77**	
	M(SD)	**M(SD)**	**M(SD)**	**M(SD)**	***F*[a]**
Age (years)	19.53 (1.47)	19.61 (1.37)	19.59 (1.65)	19.19 (1.18)	2.45
Relationship Length (months)	35.23 (28.03)	18.92 (18.69)	14.64 (13.26)	72.13 (52.13)	141.71***
Personal Intelligence					
Overall	48.21 (8.60)	48.06 (8.51)	48.36 (8.71)	46.96 (9.14)	.37
Consistency – Congruency	48.83 (9.29)	48.90 (9.24)	48.77 (9.36)	47.73 (9.21)	.27
Dynamic- Analytic	47.59 (9.35)	47.23 (8.94)	47.96 (9.75)	46.19 (10.63)	.82
Self-Estimated	3.83 (.57)	3.91 (.52)	3.76 (.60)	3.55 (.64)	10.09**
Attachment Style					
Anxiety	4.04 (.47)	3.95 (.45)	4.06 (.46)	4.20 (.52)	7.84***
Avoidance	3.99 (.35)	3.97 (.31)	4.04 (.38)	3.90 (.34)	4.27*
The Big Five					
Agreeableness	3.85 (.67)	3.96 (.66)	3.81 (.66)	3.69 (.69)	4.82**
Conscientiousness	3.47 (.76)	3.61 (.76)	3.39 (.75)	3.36 (.74)	4.75***
Extraversion	3.36 (.76)	3.46 (.73)	3.40 (.74)	3.06 (.82)	8.22***
Openness	3.68 (.75)	3.59 (.71)	3.73 (.78)	3.79 (.74)	2.59
Neuroticism	3.06 (.92)	3.03 (.93)	3.08 (.90)	3.08 (.94)	.18
Conflict Style					
Positive Style	11.96 (4.45)	14.86 (3.77)	10.10 (3.54)	9.23 (3.83)	97.42***
Withdrawal	7.33 (3.21)	6.92 (3.08)	8.24 (3.28)	6.22 (2.78)	13.95***
Engagement	6.69 (3.08)	6.45 (3.02)	7.29 (3.17)	5.84 (2.73)	7.05**
Compliance	7.63 (3.26)	7.41 (3.26)	8.19 (3.27)	6.90 (3.04)	4.98**
Quality of Relationships					
Support	3.15 (.84)	3.56 (.56)	2.69 (.90)	3.24 (.70)	63.16***
Depth	3.03 (.75)	3.41 (.52)	2.56 (.75)	3.20 (.60)	81.69***
Conflict	1.93 (.76)	1.65 (.55)	2.34 (.82)	1.61 (.58)	57.58***
Relationship Life Space					
Positive Communication	3.92 (2.11)	5.55 (1.02)	2.33 (1.86)	3.79 (1.64)	201.89***
Activities	1.74 (.95)	2.01 (.91)	1.47 (.90)	1.74 (1.00)	15.31***
Negative Communication	1.47 (.81)	1.48 (.80)	1.49 (.82)	1.42 (.81)	.20
Conflict Resolution[b]	3.90 (1.99)	4.76 (1.62)	2.90 (1.91)	4.38 (1.89)	27.23***

Note: *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, $p < .001$***

Appendix B

Rating Strategy for Relationship Conflict Narrative Measure

From our sample of 361, the first 250 responses to our Relationship Conflict Narrative prompts were coded. Of those first 250, only the first 175 were considered in the present research, as these participants wrote about either a current or past romantic relationship (vs. friend). Participants were asked to write about in detail a conflict with their current or past romantic partner that they had rated as the most severe out of three conflicts listed, and that had significantly impacted the functioning of their relationship with that individual for a least a few minutes. Participants then related if the conflict was resolved, and if so, how they had gone about resolving the conflict with their current or past partner of friend.

To develop a coding system, the first 30 responses to the conflict description and conflict resolution prompts were reviewed. Prompts to both the conflict description and the conflict resolution were read together, and notes were taken regarding the themes of the argument, the overall level of detail given in the responses, whether they were able to discuss the other individual's perspective in the argument, and how they resolved the conflict, if applicable. Examples from the first 30 were selected for the training of undergraduate coders. For example, below is a conflict recounted by one participant:

> "There was an increasing number of weeks where I was barely getting more than three words in response to messages, and when I would express how I felt I would get about five minutes of attentive response before returning to few word messages every few hours. I am perfectly okay with being independent when I know he has work to do or is occupied, but the lack of communication and lack of interest to create time for the two of us was frustrating. This was the first time that it had really become a conflict. I felt hurt and like I

was being taken for granted and my time and effort that I put into the relationship was being ignored and no longer appreciated. Ryan initially was upset and didn't see where I was coming from".

Following previous research (Tuval-Maschiach & Shulman, 2006; Peterson & DeHart, 2014; Merrill & Afifi, 2017; Shulman et al., 2006; Gordon & Chen, 2016), coding focused on identifying of a number of features within each prompt. First, the theme of the conflict was noted. In the example above, the theme of the conflict was coded as *communication/attention* (other common themes included *alternative partners (cheating)*, *jealousy/trust*, and *distance*), and whether there was a specific conflict response, such as *confrontation* in the example above (other conflict responses included *avoiding/withdrawal*, *engagement*, or *compliance*).

Coding for detail was assessed in two different ways. First, the length of responses was calculated for both the conflict descriptions and resolution prompts, such that larger word counts were indicative of greater detail. This was qualified by ratings of detail provided on a 7-point likert scale from 1 = *not very detailed* to 7 = *extremely detailed*. The word count for the example above was 136, and it received an average rating of 6 for the level of detail among coders.

The prompts were also coded for the extent to which the participants attributed to the conflict to something about their romantic partner (e.g., traits, motives, goals), and the extent to which they attributed it to something about the situation (e.g., work/school commitments, distance) on a 7-point scale (1 = very little, not at all, to 7 = very much). In the example above, we see that although the participant acknowledges that Ryan's lack of communication at times can be a result of the situation (e.g, busy/occupied), they also believe that Ryan may have a lack of interest in creating time for them to talk. Therefore, the prompt was rated as 4 for attributions to their partner, and 5 for attribution to the situation.

Finally, the extent to which the conflict was resolved was coded on a 7-point likert scale (1 = not at all, 7 = very much, resolved). We also noted the presence of specific conflict resolution strategies and holistically reviewed the responses to both prompts to assess the severity of the argument scale (1 = not very severe, to 7 = extremely severe) and the extent to which the participant considered their partner's perspective in the argument. Below is portion of the response to the resolution prompt from the participant described above (see Appendix for full example):

> "To resolve the conflict, I brought it up initially in writing so that I could remain tactful and had time to think over my words. Once it was brought up, I insisted that we talk over the phone so that we could hear each other and communicate more clearly and not accidentally misunderstand each other. Ryan was very agreeable to talking, and we took turns listening to each other and reflecting… Ryan agreed that he was distracted and not necessarily being fair to me. I agreed that he was busy and under a fair amount of stress, and we concluded that we would choose one night a week to dedicate to video chatting and spending time with each other (he's at UMaine), so that way we could have a more defined time that was planned out and there was no longer the previous pressure and feelings of being ignored…".

In the above example, the conflict was coded as a 6 for resolved, as the participant and their partner were able to come up with a solution that fit both of their needs. This further led to the conflict resolution strategy that was prominent in the response was *compromise* (other possible conflict resolution strategies (include *positive communication*, *compliance/giving in*, and *avoiding*). In terms of severity, while the reoccurring nature of the argument described in the example with Ryan suggests that it may be a more severe argument in their relationship, the participants approach to her partner reading the conflict was calculated with an emphasis on

communicating clearly so as to remain “tactful” and to not “misunderstand each other”. Therefore, the severity of the argument was rated as 5.

Perspective-taking was comprised of three different ratings, all falling on the same 7-point likert scale (1 = very little, not at all, to 7 = very much). First, the extent to which the participant considered their partner’s perspective in the conflict was rated. Responses were further rated as to the extent to which the participant was understanding or able to view the reasoning behind their partners perspective. Finally, prompts were rated as to the extent to which the participant was understanding of how their response to the conflict could have in turn influenced how their partner responded. In the example above, we can see that the participant does briefly acknowledges that at times their partner can be busy/occupied and that their partner was upset when they confronted them about their lack of communication. However, while acknowledging a potential reasoning as to why their partner may not be communicating as much, the response demonstrates a lack of understanding of this reasoning. Furthermore, while the participant doesn’t explicitly state how they approached their partner, they do acknowledge that their partner was upset when they were approached. Therefore, the participant received a rating of 5 for overall extent to which they considered their partner’s perspective, a rating of 4 for understanding, and a rating of 5.5 for reasoning about how their approach may have influenced their partner’s reaction.

All remaining 220 responses to the conflict description and conflict resolution prompts were then assessed using the coding system described above. The wording of the questions pertaining to the ratings of detail, perspective taking, attribution, severity, and resolution were monitored and adjusted to ensure that each conflict and subsequent resolution described by the participants was accurately captured by the coding system. Furthermore, additional categories for

the theme of the conflict, as well as conflict response and conflict resolution style were also created as I went through each response.

Coders includes myself, as well as 4 undergraduate research assistants who completed the coding and attended weekly lab meetings for two independent study course credits. All coders read and coded all responses to both the conflict descriptions and conflict resolution prompts. During the initial training period, raters were asked to review the coding sheet to ensure they understood the rating system. They then spent 1-hour coding five responses selected from the first 30 participants that were used to develop the coding system described above. Coders then completed coding the rest of the conflict description and conflict resolution responses independently until all 250 were completed.

Table B1.

Rating Scales for Responses to Relationship Conflict Narrative

Question		Scoring						
1. What was the theme of the conflict discussed (e.g., jealous, trust, alternative partners)		Open-response						
2. Did the participant's discussion of the conflict include a specific conflict response (confrontation, avoiding, compliance etc.)?		Open-response						
3. How detailed as the description of the conflict described?		1 = Not very detailed	2	3	4 = Somewhat	5	6	7= Very detailed
4. To what extent did this participant consider their partner/friend's perspective in the conflict discussed?		1 = Very little	2	3	4 = Somewhat	5	6	7= Very much
5. To what extent was the person understanding of their partner/friend's perspective? That is, were they able to see the reasoning behind this person's view?		1 = Very little	2	3	4 = Somewhat	5	6	7 =Very much
6. To what extent did this person understand how their response to the conflict could have influenced their partner/friend's reaction/response?		1 = Very little	2	3	4 = Somewhat	5	6	7 =Very much
7. To what extent did this person attribute the conflict to something about their partner/friend (e.g., traits, motives, goals)?		1 = Very little	2	3	4 = Somewhat	5	6	7 = Very much
8. To what extent did this person attribute the conflict to something about the situation (e.g., work/school commitments)?		1 = Very little	2	3	4 = Somewhat	5	6	7 = Very much
9. How severe was the argument described?		1 = Very little	2	3	4 = Somewhat	5	6	7 = Very much
10. To what extent was the conflict resolved?		1 = Very little	2	3	4 = Somewhat	5	6	7 = Very much
11. Did this person's discussion of how the conflict was resolved include specific conflict resolution strategies (e.g., positive communication, withdrawal, engagement/yelling, etc.)?		Open-response						

Table B2.

Coding Rules for Extent to Which Conflict Described in Relationship Conflict Narrative was Resolved

Rating	Theme[a]	Example
1 = Not at all	Avoiding the issue at hand No attempt to resolve the issue described Dismissal of issue Finger-pointing/blame Inability to resolve the issue Recurring	"We broke up" "The communication issue was never resolved because he never admitted it was an issue." "We had a conflict about what he was going to do after he graduates and where that would lead us… none of us have a legitimate solution to this issue"
2	Inability to resolve the issue No attempt to resolve the issue described or attempt unsuccessful Finger-pointing/blame Recurring	"No, [he] is very set in his ways. No matter how hard I try to convince him, I feel like I can't get through". "[She] probably didn't understand what I was feeling because I never said anything, so I can't completely blame her for her actions or lack of understanding, but I know if I did say anything that she would get mad at me so I felt suppressed."
3	Attempt to resolve unsuccessful or successful in short-term Conflict likely to be recurring	"The conflict of communication got better and then worse." "It was resolved in the moment but ended up being a large reason of why the relationship ended."
4 = Somewhat	Attempt to resolve successful in short term Recurring Attempt at understanding the influence of the situation Emotion vs. problem focused	"We both want to do well and have the same goals to get there however, it is hard for him to be as motivated as I am." "Agreement was kind of resolved. I told her you get mad when I even say hi to a girl. I said how do you think it makes me feel that you hangout with this guy so much."
5	Attempt to communicate openly Compromise Understanding influence of situation Attempt to focus on problem rather than emotion	"We got tired of fighting about it and set up a schedule… and split up the driving times so one person wasn't the only person visiting the other person's school. We worked on it together cause if we wanted the relationship to work we need to work on things together."
6	Mutual understanding Compromising Attempt at taking other's perspective Understanding influence of situation Problem vs. emotion focused	"I brought it up initially in writing so that I could remain tactful and had time to think over my words. Once it was brought up, I insisted that we talk over the phone so that we could hear each other and communicate more clearly and not accidentally misunderstand each other. He was very agreeable to talking, and we took turns listening to each other and reflecting." "He agreed that he was distracted and not necessarily being fair to me. I agreed that he was busy and under a fair amount of stress and we concluded that we would choose one night a week to dedicate to video chatting and spending time with each other"
7 = Very much	Compromising Open-communication of views/opinions Mutual understanding Understanding of the influence of the situation Mutual perspective-taking Problem vs. emotion focused	"Once we both said what we wanted to do… he sat outside with me and gave me medicine until my head felt better, and then we went back and had fun with his friends for another hour or so." "This isn't the first time we disagreed on whether or not to go somewhere. I initially said I didn't want to go at all she said we should go from like 5-10 pm. We ended up compromising and going from like 8-10."

Appendix C
Development of Relationship Lifespace Measure

Table C1.

Fit Indices for the 1-, 2-, 3-, and 4-Factor Exploratory and the 3-Factor Confirmatory Solutions of Lifespace Items (*N* = 321)

	Fit Indices				
	Chi-2	**df**	**RMSEA**	**CFI**	**TLI**
Relationship Exploratory Factor Analysis (*N* = 321)					
One factor model	2685.90	377	.13	.91	.91
Two factor model	917.83	349	.07	.98	.98
Three factor model	563.48	322	.05	.99	.99
Four factor model	385.47	296	.03	1.00	1.00
Relationship Confirmatory Factor Analysis (*N* = 321)					
Removing cross-loading items (> .35 on all three factors)					
Remaining number of items = 22					
Three factor model	505.83	206	.06	.99	.98

Table C2.

Factor Loadings for the 1-, 2-, and 3-Factor Exploratory Solutions of Lifespace Items (N = 321)

Item	**One-Factor Solution**	**Two-Factor Solution**		**Three-Factor Solution**		
	I	I	II	I	II	III
…laughed with your partner?	**.95**	**.99**	-.11	**.88**	.23	-.05
…talked on phone with your partner?	**.67**	**.70**	.08	**.73**	-.01	.26
…gone shopping with your partner?	**.77**	**.58**	**.47**	.20	**.72**	.10
…explicitly said "I love you" to your partner?	**.78**	**.88**	-.16	**.86**	.03	.02
…had a 30min or longer conversation with your partner?	**.92**	**.94**	-.03	**.84**	.21	.05
…sought advice from your partner?	**.79**	**.82**	.05	**.72**	.22	.11
…displayed affection towards your partner?	**.94**	**.98**	-.10	**.87**	.22	-.04
…tried something new with your partner?	**.81**	**.72**	.30	.35	**.72**	-.09
…asked partner how their day went?	**.92**	**.97**	-.13	**.91**	.10	.04
…discussed politics/news with partner?	**.64**	**.55**	.31	.30	**.50**	.10
…surprised partner with gifts or flowers?	**.71**	**.55**	**.42**	.15	**.75**	.02
… watched tv with your partner?	**.83**	**.78**	.24	**.47**	**.64**	-.07
…gone a date with partner?	**.79**	**.66**	**.39**	.29	**.71**	.03
…made love to your partner?	**.82**	**.74**	.30	**.48**	**.56**	.06
…discussed an interest in book with partner?	**.70**	**.49**	**.47**	.13	**.67**	.14
…played a physical sport with partner?	**.75**	**.46**	**.56**	.01	**.79**	.15
…screamed profanities at your partner?	**.71**	.05	**.80**	.13	.09	**.78**
…criticized partner?	**.67**	.16	**.72**	.30	-.02	**.79**
…didn't speak to partner after argument?	**.78**	-.10	**.91**	.10	-.08	**.95**
…partner didn't speak to you after argument?	**.79**	-.08	**.90**	.05	.04	**.88**
…didn't speak to partner for a day or more?	**.79**	-.14	**.92**	-.17	.23	**.80**
…taken illicit drugs with partner?	**.69**	.12	**.72**	-.07	**.43**	**.52**
…borrowed money from partner?	**.75**	.17	**.76**	-.02	**.44**	**.54**
…smoked cigarettes with partner?	**.75**	.09	**.79**	-.23	**.57**	**.48**
…drank alcohol with partner?	**.64**	**.40**	**.49**	.22	**.41**	.33
…sought advice and partner was unable/willing to help?	**.65**	.20	**.65**	.08	.32	**.53**
…ignored partner?	**.57**	-.16	**.79**	-.14	.13	**.72**
…looked through partner's phone, social media, etc.?	**.57**	.04	**.67**	-.06	.29	**.53**
…has an argument escalated to the point of being physical?	**.97**	.07	**.96**	-.36	**.71**	**.60**
Factor Intercorrelations						
Factor I	1.00	1.00		1.00		
Factor II	--	.23	1.00	.34	1.00	
Factor III	--	--	--	.05	.38	1.00

Appendix D

Correlations Among Key Relationship and Personality Variables and Personal Intelligence

Table D1.

Correlations Among Key Variables and Personal Intelligence

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
1. Personal Intelligence (PI)	1.00																					
2. Consistency-Congruency	.92***	1.00																				
3. Dynamic Analytic	.92***	.70***	1.00																			
4. Self-Estimated PI	.08	.07	.08	1.00																		
5. Anxiety	-.05	-.03	-.05	-.21***	1.00																	
6. Avoidance	.09	-.05	.12*	.01	-.30***	1.00																
7. Agreeableness	.12*	.11*	.12*	.42***	-.18**	.06	1.00															
8. Extraversion	-.04	-.002	-.07	.45***	-.03	-.05	.14**	1.00														
9. Neuroticism	.11*	.09	.11*	-.47***	.30**	-.16**	-.22***	-.40***	1.00													
10. Openness	.19***	.10	.26***	.12*	-.04	.06	.26***	.11*	.06	1.00												
11. Conscientiousness	.07	.08	.05	.46***	-.20***	-.02	.36***	.21***	-.23***	.07	1.00											
12. Support	.23***	.21***	.22***	.18***	-.12*	-.06	.21***	.12*	-.09	-.01	.19***	1.00										
13. Depth	.15**	.16**	.12*	.19***	-.08	-.18**	.20***	.06	.02	.01	.18**	.79***	1.00									
14. Conflict	-.10	-.09	-.09	-.13*	.18**	-.10	-.14**	.03	.16**	.11*	-.12*	-.39***	-.23***	1.00								
15. Engagement	-.12*	-.10	-.11*	-.11*	.12*	-.10*	-.26***	.07	.17**	-.05	-.17**	-.20***	-.12*	.53***	1.00							
16. Withdrawal	-.10	-.07	-.11*	-.16**	.18**	-.07	-.15**	.03	.12*	-.04	-.14**	-.23***	-.15**	.56***	.69***	1.00						
17. Positive Problem Solving	.24***	.23***	.23***	.16**	-.17**	-.04	.17**	.03	-.02	.05	.14**	.54***	.49***	-.31***	-.02	-.06	1.00					
18. Compliance	-.10	-.10	-.09	-.24***	.20***	.003	-.11*	-.06	.12*	-.05	-.20***	-.22***	-.17**	.44***	.51***	.62***	.01	1.00				
19. Positive Communication	-.02	.01	-.04	.13*	-.09	-.15**	.15**	.10	-.02	-.02	.10	.59***	.63***	-.36***	-.10*	-.21***	.48***	-.16**	1.00			
20. Activities	-.27***	-.25***	-.25***	.01	.04	-.12*	-.04	.02	-.04	-.003	.02	.12*	.17**	-.03	.09	-.07	.10	.04	.52***	1.00		
21. Negative Communication	-.30***	-.26***	-.29***	-.09	.12*	-.14**	-.19***	.05	.07	-.07	-.17**	-.10	-.03	.28***	.40***	.29***	-.12*	.26***	.19***	.48***	1.00	
22. Conflict Resolution	.06	.08	.03	.04	-.07*	-.03	-.01	.02	-.04	-.16*	-.07	.41***	.29***	-.54***	-.21***	-.30***	.34***	-.23**	.39***	.12	-.16*	1.00

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Appendix E

Additional Analyses Predicting Relationship Outcomes from Personal Intelligence

Table E1.

Overall OLS Hierarchical Multiple Regression for Personal Intelligence Predicting Multimethod Assessments of Conflict Engagement, Relationship Depth, Relationship Support, and Activities Engaged in Together.

CRI – Engagement (DV)

	Step 1 (Distance)			Step 2 (Ind. Differences)			Step 3 (TOPI)		
	B	*β*	*t*	B	*β*	*t*	B	*β*	*t*
Distance	-.02	-.01	-.20	-.03	-.02	-.39	-.03	-.02	-.38
Attachment Anxiety				.19	.03	.47	.18	.03	.44
Attachment Avoidance				-.67	-.07	1.32	-.60	-.07	-1.18
Agreeableness				-.95	-.20	-3.72***	-.90	-.19	-3.50**
Neuroticism				.38	.11	1.91	.43	.12	2.13*
TOPI							.-.03	-.08	-1.44
R^2			.03**			.08			.13
ΔR^2						.06**			.04***

QRI – Depth (DV)

	Step 1 (Distance)			Step 2 (Ind. Differences)			Step 3 (TOPI)		
	B	*β*	*t*	B	*β*	*t*	B	*β*	*t*
Distance	.07	.17	3.19**	.06	.15	2.82**	.06	.15	2.82**
Attachment Anxiety				-.20	-.13	-2.12*	.-.20	-.12	-2.13*
Attachment Avoidance				-.51	-.23	-4.09***	-.53	-.24	-4.33***
Agreeableness				.24	.20	3.80***	.22	.19	3.49**
Neuroticism				.04	.05	.88	.02	.03	.48
TOPI							.01	.13	2.50*
R^2			.03			.12			.14
ΔR^2						.09***			.02*

QRI – Support

	Step 1 (Distance)			Step 2 (Ind. Differences)			Step 3 (TOPI)		
	B	*β*	*t*	B	*β*	*t*	B	*β*	*t*
Distance	.08	.18	3.24**	.07	.17	3.13**	.07	.16	2.18**
Attachment Anxiety				-.19	-.10	-1.76	-.19	-.10	-1.79
Attachment Avoidance				-.30	-.12	-2.12*	-.36	-.14	-2.57*
Agreeableness				.24	.19	3.45**	.21	.16	2.95**
Neuroticism				-.07	-.07	-1.23	-.11	-.11	-1.98*
TOPI							.02	.24	4.52***
R^2			.03			.10			.15
ΔR^2						.07***			.05**

Lifespace – Activities Together

	Step 1 (Distance)			Step 2 (Ind. Differences)			Step 3 (TOPI)		
	B	*β*	*t*	B	*β*	*t*	B	*β*	*t*
Distance	.00	.001	.01	-.01	-.01	-.21	-.00	-.01	-.18
Attachment Anxiety				.06	.03	.52	.06	.03	.51
Attachment Avoidance				-.28	-.11	-1.86	-.22	-.08	-1.46
Agreeableness				-.06	-.04	-.72	-.01	-.01	-.09
Neuroticism				-.08	-.08	-1.36	-.03	-.28	-5.19***
TOPI									
R^2			.000			.02			.09
ΔR^2						.02			.08***

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$