EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, TOLERANCE FOR DISAGREEMENT, AND THE MOTIVATION TO SUSTAIN SERIAL ARGUMENTS: IMPLICATIONS FOR RELATIONAL SATISFACTION AND CLOSENESS

by

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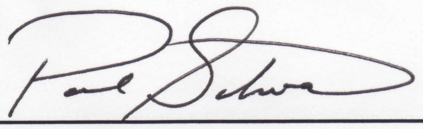

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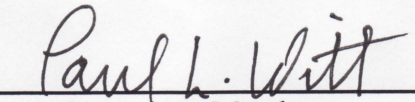

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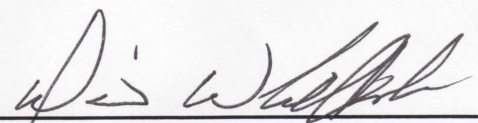

For the College of Communication

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, TOLERANCE FOR DISAGREEMENT, AND THE MOTIVATION TO SUSTAIN SERIAL ARGUMENTS: IMPLICATIONS FOR RELATIONAL SATISFACTION AND CLOSENESS

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This study examined individual differences in emotional thresholds for ongoing, repetitive conflicts known as serial arguments. Specifically, this study proposed that individuals' motivation for, and likelihood of, continuing a serial argument varies as a function of their personalities (i.e., emotional intelligence and tolerance for disagreement) and contextual elements unique to each serial argument (i.e., perceived resolvability of the argument), ultimately influencing relational satisfaction and closeness. Participants included 476 young adults who reported on ongoing serial arguments in either family or romantic relationships. After describing features of the serial argument (i.e., duration, initiator, and perceived resolvability), participants completed measures of emotional intelligence, tolerance for disagreement, relational satisfaction, and closeness.

Preliminary analyses revealed significant differences in argumentative features based on relationship type (family vs. romantic), duration, and typical initiator (self vs. partner), and thus, hypotheses were tested separately for each relationship type while controlling for these differences. In family relationships, hierarchical regression analyses suggest that individuals who believe their argument will be resolved and those who are more tolerant of disagreement in general are more motivated to sustain their serial argument. Additionally, emotional intelligence

and perceived resolvability were unique predictors of relational satisfaction in both romantic and family relationships. Intriguingly, closeness in romantic relationships was associated with both situational factors (i.e., perceived resolvability, initiator, and likelihood of continuing the argument) and individual factors (i.e., emotional intelligence). Collectively, these results extend previous research by identifying factors that contribute meaningful variance to previously understudied aspects of serial arguments.

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Emotional Intelligence, Tolerance for Disagreement, and the Motivation to Sustain Serial Arguments: Implications for Relational Satisfaction and Closeness

Historically, researchers investigating interpersonal conflict have examined face-to-face arguments as single conversational events with discernable origins and resolutions (Jackson & Jacobs, 1980; Jacobs & Jackson, 1981; Millar, Rogers, & Bevelas, 1984). More recently, scholars have demonstrated that unresolved relational conflict is often perpetuated as episodes within a series of interpersonal disagreements occurring with the same partner (Bevan, Hale, & Williams, 2004; Bevan et al., 2007; Johnson & Roloff, 1998, 2000a, 2000b; Malis & Roloff, 2006a, 2006b; Trapp & Hoff, 1985). Consequently, a new type of argument began to emerge that, when left unresolved, has the potential to reoccur, leading to the concept of a *serial argument*. Defined as "a set of argumentative episodes that focus on a particular issue" (Johnson & Roloff, 1998, p. 329), serial arguments occur over time without complete resolution (Bevan et al., 2007) and emerge in a variety of relational contexts: 32% of couples in romantic relationships ended their arguments with mutual agreement to stop the discussion prior to resolution (Lloyd, 1987), 40% of everyday disagreements between college students reoccurred (Benoit & Benoit, 1987), and 66% of family dinner table arguments resulted in agreeing to disagree without true resolution (Vuchinich, 1990). More recently, when relational partners have been asked to recall the number of episodes in a specific serial argument, researchers have reported mean numbers of episodes ranging from 11 (Malis & Roloff, 2006a) to 25 (Bevan, Finan, & Kaminsky, 2008). Clearly, the prevalence of serial arguments in interpersonal relationships reflects its merit for further study.

Previous research on serial arguments has highlighted the relationship between individuals' perceptions of resolvability and a multitude of relational constructs, including argumentative goal importance (Bevan et al., 2007), relational quality, argument predictability,

violated expectations, mulling (Johnson & Roloff, 1998), stress and well-being (Malis & Roloff, 2006a), and demand/withdraw patterns of conflict (Malis & Roloff, 2006b). The bulk of this research has focused primarily on serial arguments as isolated episodes or as a series of arguments tied together by shared conflict goals and tactics. By doing so, previous scholars have furthered our understanding of what occurs *within* each serial argument episode, yet what occurs *between* episodes that prolongs the cycle of serial arguments remains unclear. That is, researchers have yet to consider the factors that influence the repetitive nature of serial arguments, and a key component that could potentially inform our understanding of the *process* of serial arguments is largely absent from the research: the role of emotion.

In a preliminary attempt to describe the cyclical nature of serial arguments, Trapp and Hoff (1985) proposed an exploratory model that described the repeated process of "heating up" and "simmering down" as relational partners attempt to resolve salient issues in relationships. However, these continued attempts at resolution are conceptualized as part of the physical act of arguing, not as emotional components (Trapp & Hoff, 1985). Although the perception of incompatibility is a necessary emotional antecedent to interpersonal conflict, Trapp and Hoff (1985) posited tremendous variability in the elapsed time between the perception of incompatibility and the physical act of arguing, ranging from an almost immediate reaction to responses delayed by several years.

Although salience of the issue likely plays a role in individuals' reactions, it is not clear why some arguers engage in conflict immediately after their perception of incompatibility, while others are able to tolerate such incompatibilities for months or even years. The process of heating up and simmering down are likely to vary as functions of individual differences in emotion regulation and management, and thus, individuals may have an emotional threshold for the

amount and degree of incompatibility they can withstand before they are motivated to engage in interpersonal conflict. Researchers have yet to consider the emotional elements that potentially influence this personal threshold in serial arguments, and such thresholds may provide an additional explanatory mechanism for elucidating the cyclical nature of serial argumentation.

Given the highly emotional nature of interpersonal conflict in general, and serial arguments in particular, there is a multitude of constructs that could potentially influence serial argumentation. Perhaps the most effective way to extend our knowledge of the *process* of serial argumentation, then, is to examine factors that contribute to an individuals' motivation to continue, and likelihood to sustain, serial arguments. Due to tremendous variability in the enactment of conflict in personal relationships, investigating specific individual differences in the management of serial arguments may further our understanding of the serial argument process. Although it is useful to identify the factors that prompt an individual to engage in interpersonal disagreement, research is needed to further understand the emotional elements that increase or reduce individuals' motivation to *continue* a serial argument. Two such constructs that could potentially inform our understanding of individual differences in serial argumentation are emotional intelligence and tolerance for disagreement.

Emotional intelligence (EI) describes individuals' adaptive abilities in terms of the expression, regulation, and utilization of emotion both in themselves and in others (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Higher EI is associated with more positive mood and higher self esteem, even after negative experiences (Schutte, Malouff, Simunek, McKenley, & Hollander, 2002). Given the affective nature of interpersonal conflict, individuals high in EI may be more likely to temper their emotional reactions to specific serial argument episodes, resulting in decreased motivation to sustain serial arguments over the course of the target relationship. In contrast, individuals with

high tolerance for disagreement (TfD) are relatively conflict resistant and consequently do not perceive lower degrees of incompatibility as actual conflict (McCroskey & Wheeless, 1976). Thus, it seems likely that high TfD individuals will be more likely to sustain serial arguments in that they are able to tolerate greater levels of disagreement without the perception of actual conflict.

To date, serial argument research has been almost exclusively episodic in approach. However, the cyclical nature of the serial argument process is likely to weave recurring episodes into the larger fabric of the personal relationship in which they occur. Taking a more global approach to serial arguments, then, might inform our understanding of how individual differences in emotional thresholds for argumentation (e.g., EI and TfD) predict the motivation to sustain, and the likelihood of, continuing serial arguments. Given evidence to suggest that the experience of serial arguments has implications for relational and personal well-being (e.g., Johnson & Roloff, 1998; Malis & Roloff, 2006a, 2006b), individual thresholds for serial arguments and intentions to sustain serial arguments, in turn, are likely to predict variance in relational satisfaction and closeness.

Thus, the primary purpose of this investigation was to examine the motivation and likelihood of sustaining a serial argument in a personal relationship as functions of an individual's emotional intelligence and tolerance for disagreement. Given that researchers have pointed to the importance of the perceived resolvability of the issue at stake (Bevan et al, 2007; Johnson & Roloff, 1998, 2000a, 2000b), this study also tested the extent to which EI and TfD interact with perceived resolvability to influence the motivation and likelihood of sustaining serial arguments. Finally, previous researchers have highlighted the negative impact that serial arguments often have on personal and relational well-being (e.g. Malis & Roloff, 2006a; Johnson

& Roloff, 1998), and thus, this study investigated the impact that individual thresholds and motivations for serial arguments have on relational satisfaction and closeness.

Theoretical Perspective

Three relatively distinct bodies of research informed this investigation. First, the serial argument process model (Trapp & Hoff, 1985; Bevan, et al., 2008) provided a framework for understanding influential factors that predict variance in serial arguments and outcomes. Although this model is useful in understanding some of the antecedent conditions involved in serial arguments, it is somewhat limited in explicating the role of emotion and the extent to which emotional constructs may contribute to their cyclical nature. Thus, two approaches to understanding individual differences in emotional thresholds for argumentation, namely emotional intelligence and tolerance for disagreement, also informed the present investigation.

Serial Argument Process Model

Trapp and Hoff's (1985) discovery of the prevalence of serial arguments in interpersonal conflict was fortuitous in that they originally sought to understand the relational aspects of arguing. In their analysis of transcribed interviews, Trapp and Hoff found that participants tended to discuss interpersonal conflict as ongoing or part of a series, despite initial instruction to focus on one particular argument. Thus, Trapp and Hoff (1985) defined a serial argument as occurring when individuals engage in two or more conflict episodes about the same or a related issue without resolution. Whether transpiring over a few hours or throughout an entire relationship, in their own research, Trapp and Hoff found that serial arguments occurred with surprising frequency in interpersonal interactions. Therefore, in an initial attempt to describe the progression of serial arguments found in their research, Trapp and Hoff (1985) explicated (a) the

antecedent conditions necessary for arguing, (b) the primary and secondary processes involved in the actual argument, and (c) the consequent conditions of the argumentative process.

First, the antecedent condition of incompatibility includes disagreement about the nature of the relationship, about a specific issue, or both (Trapp & Hoff, 1985). The term *incompatibility* describes any situation where individuals have conflicting views of reality, and although discordant goals are often influential in producing interpersonal conflict, the existence of incompatibility alone does not necessarily result in a serial argument. Thus, Trapp and Hoff (1985) proposed that two primary processes are necessary for the enactment of serial arguing: the decision to confront the other and the physical act of argumentation. As previously discussed, confrontation may seem automatic and occur immediately after the perceived incompatibility. In other cases, days, weeks, months, or even years may pass before one person decides to confront the other (Trapp & Hoff, 1985).

During the enactment of a serial argument, the second primary process (i.e., the physical act of argumentation) involves disagreeing and reason-giving. Disagreeing transpires when one person communicates the perception of incompatibility to the other. In many cases, disagreeing involves the placement of blame by one person on the other (Trapp & Hoff, 1985). A second aspect of disagreeing involves reason-giving, which includes the discovery and comparison of shared views to incompatible beliefs in an attempt to find commonalities. If individuals are able to discover and fully unite shared views to their incompatible positions, reason-giving is successful and the argument is often resolved. If reason-giving strategies are unsuccessful, Trapp and Hoff (1985) suggested that the argument moves into the secondary processes of heating up and simmering down.

Secondary processes are not required for the enactment of an argument, but they are integral to our understanding of *serial* arguments. *Heating up* occurs when individuals argue, but find they are unable to convince the other to change views. Often, feelings of frustration result from the inability to minimize incompatible views (Trapp & Hoff, 1985). Frustration then builds until it becomes intolerable, at which point arguers must decide to either change the subject or physically leave the situation and the serial argument enters the *simmering down* phase (Trapp & Hoff, 1985).

Trapp and Hoff's (1985) exploratory model was an early foray into the arena of serial arguments and has served as a useful framework for later research. However, the primary focus of their model was to describe the sequence of events occurring *within* each episode in a serial argument. In an attempt to clarify and extend Trapp and Hoff's original model to include the processes occurring immediately prior to and following a serial argument episode, Bevan et al. (2008) tested a revised serial argument process model, thereby expanding Trapp and Hoff's preliminary model in a variety of ways. For example, previous researchers have pointed to the importance of serial argument goals in predicting conflict behaviors (Bevan et al., 2004; 2007), and thus, Bevan and her colleagues (2007, 2008) have focused their most recent efforts on examining the influence of both positive and negative goals on the experience of a single serial argument episode. Positively valenced goals included such goals as expressing positive sentiments, mutual understanding, and relational continuation, while negatively valenced goals included trying to change the target person or behavior, expressing dominance and/or control, and hurting one's partner while benefiting self (Bevan et al., 2004).

In an attempt to translate goal importance into a theoretically structured model describing what occurs before, during, and after a serial argument, Bevan et al. (2008) proposed two related

but distinct models for positive and negative argument goals. In the positive goals model, achieving a mutual understanding or expressing positive sentiments in a serial argument context predicted the use of integrative conflict tactics, resulting in either greater perceived resolvability or rumination, ultimately leading to increased motivation to achieve the goal. On the other hand, negative goals, such as hurting or changing one's partner, resulted in increased use of distributive conflict tactics, again leading to rumination and the motivation to achieve argumentative goals. In both models, perceived resolvability was not significantly related to conflict tactics as hypothesized, although the use of integrative tactics was positively associated with perceived resolvability (Bevan et al., 2008). Consequently, because perceived resolvability was not related to either rumination or the motivation to achieve goals, its role in the process of continuing a serial argument remains unclear (Bevan et al., 2008).

In general, then, both Trapp and Hoff's (1985) and Bevan and her colleagues (2008) serial argument process models provide preliminary frameworks for understanding the processes involved in specific episodes of serial argumentation. Despite the heuristic value of these models, however, researchers have yet to consider potential factors that may drive the cycle of argumentation and sustain relational partners' motivation to continue the argument in question. In some cases, arguments may heat up and simmer down multiple times before reaching a resolution, though resolved arguments reflect significantly lower use of distributive conflict tactics (Bevan et al., 2008). Individuals have also reported tremendous variability in terms of the amount of time that elapsed between the perception of incompatibility and the actual argument (Trapp & Hoff, 1985). It may be that some people are capable of allowing incompatibility to exist in their relationships for months or even years without it escalating into an argument, whereas others may have a very low threshold for opposing viewpoints and thus, perceive any

form of incompatibility as conflict. Because the antecedent condition of incompatibility potentially serves as a catalyst for the process of serial arguing, it may be useful to understand individual variations in the perception of, and adaptation to, relational incompatibility. Moreover, it seems likely that individuals have varying emotional thresholds for serial arguments, which may in part be comprised of their emotional intelligence (Salovey & Mayer, 1990) and tolerance for disagreement (McCroskey & Wheeless, 1976).

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence represents the synthesis of intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence in that it encompasses the ability to appraise one's own emotions as well as the emotions of others (Gardner, 1983; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). In its original form, emotional intelligence consisted of three categories of adaptive abilities related to emotion: appraisal and expression, regulation, and utilization (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Although emotions are clearly at the heart of this form of intelligence, the adaptive abilities also encompass social and cognitive elements integral to the expression, regulation, and utilization of emotions (Schutte et al., 1998). First, the ability to *appraise and express emotion* encompasses the appraisal and expression of emotion within the individual, as well as the appraisal of emotion in others. Self-appraisal and expression includes both verbal and nonverbal cues, while other-appraisal is comprised of nonverbal perception and feelings of empathy resulting from others' expressions of emotion (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). A second category of adaptive ability in emotional intelligence is that of *emotion regulation*, both in the self and others (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Effective regulation of emotion is a secondary process contingent upon the initial appraisal and expression of emotion. Finally, the adaptive ability of *utilizing emotion* in solving problems includes flexible planning,

creative thinking, redirected attention, and motivation in a variety of intra- and interpersonal contexts.

Researchers have demonstrated a variety of personal benefits that emerge as a function of having emotional intelligence. Individuals high in EI experienced less depression, higher levels of optimism (Schutte et al., 1998), and were able to maintain a positive mood and self-esteem even after exposure to negative circumstances (Schutte et al., 2002). In situations with competing priorities, such as those between work and family obligations, EI was also shown to moderate negative effects on well-being (Lenaghan, Buda, & Eisner, 2007). Additionally, EI mediated the relationship between family conversation orientations and reticence young adult children (Keaton & Kelly, 2008).

In contrast, researchers have found that lower EI is associated with increased interpersonal conflict and maladjustment. In two studies, for example, adolescents lower in EI were more aggressive and engaged in conflict behavior more often than adolescents who reported higher EI scores (Mayer, Perkins, Caruso, & Salovey, 2001; Rubin, 1999). In an effort to extend previous research on serial argumentation, then, this study sought to investigate the relationship between EI and the motivation and likelihood to sustain serial arguments. Due to the frustration experienced in serial arguments, as well as the demonstrated detrimental effects that sustained arguments often have on interpersonal relationships, one might reason that individuals high in EI will be less motivated to sustain serial arguments because they recognize the potential harm caused by unresolved, repetitive conflict. Thus, the following hypothesis was advanced for consideration:

> H1: Emotional intelligence is negatively associated with the motivation for (H1a), and the likelihood of (H1b), sustaining serial arguments in personal relationships.

Tolerance for Disagreement

A second construct that may further our understanding of an individual's emotional threshold for serial argumentation is tolerance for disagreement. In earlier efforts to extend our understanding of interpersonal relationships, the construct of tolerance for disagreement emerged from scholars' desires to differentiate between *good conflict* and *bad conflict* (Burgoon, Heston, & McCroskey, 1974). Given the negative connotations generally associated with the term *conflict*, McCroskey and Wheeless (1976) sought to reframe the notion of bad conflict as necessarily involving competition, hostility, suspicion, and distrust. Instead, they referred to interactions with these characteristics simply as *conflict*. In contrast, the term *disagreement* was reconceptualized as the differences of opinion between individuals that lack the negative sentiments often present in conflict (McCroskey & Wheeless, 1976).

Perhaps the most important consequence of this distinction is that individuals vary in their perceptions of when a disagreement becomes a conflict. Knutson, McCroskey, Knutson, and Hurt (1979) proposed *tolerance for disagreement* (TfD) as an explanation for this variation in individual differences, and more recently, McCroskey (as cited in Rancer & Avtgis, 2006) proposed that individuals have thresholds for moving from disagreement to conflict. It is important to note that not all disagreements necessarily become conflict. Disagreement simply refers to individual differences of opinion on any substantive matter (McCroskey & Wheeless, 1976), and thus, an individual with high TfD is better able to manage situations with varied opinions without experiencing perceptions of having conflict. In contrast, low TfD individuals cognitively interpret minor disagreements as conflict and likely experience greater emotional distress as a result. Given that high TfD individuals have a higher individual threshold for conflict, it seems likely that they will be more inclined to engage and re-engage in serial

arguments. Similarly, individuals with a low TfD will be less motivated to sustain future episodes of serial arguments, regardless of the issue at stake. Thus, a second hypothesis was advanced to test this line of reasoning:

> H2: Tolerance for disagreement is positively associated with the motivation for (H2a), and the likelihood of (H2b), sustaining serial arguments in personal relationships.

Perceived Resolvability of the Argument

One factor that could potentially moderate the influence of an individual's emotional threshold for argumentation on their proclivity to engage in yet another serial argument episode is the perceived resolvability of the argument. Indeed, perhaps the most striking aspect of previous serial argument research is the frequency with which participants report the occurrence of repetitive conflict in their close relationships. Given the prevalence of serial arguments, Johnson and Roloff (1998, 2000a, 2000b) examined the relational consequences of repetitive conflict in interpersonal relationships and demonstrated that the perception of resolvability in a serial argument was a better predictor of relational quality than the frequency with which the argument occurred. *Perceived resolvability* (PR) involves relational partners' beliefs that an argument is likely to be resolved, regardless of whether partners are actually proceeding in that direction (Johnson & Roloff, 1998; Malis & Roloff, 2006a). Because the concept of PR is a unique feature of ongoing disagreements, it is integral to the study of serial arguments and has been investigated in a variety of contexts including the relationship to argumentative goals (Bevan et al., 2007), use of coping strategies (Johnson & Roloff, 2000a), and influence on relational quality (Johnson & Roloff, 1998; 2000b).

Previous researchers examining PR in serial arguments have focused primarily on the content and relational dimensions of conflict. For example, individuals' perception of resolvability was negatively associated with counter-complaining in initial interactions, but

positively related to constructive communication, relational satisfaction, commitment (Johnson & Roloff, 1998), relationally confirming behaviors, and making optimistic comparisons in both initial and subsequent argumentative episodes (Johnson & Roloff, 2000a). Interestingly, the overall quantity of constructive communication behavior was a better predictor of PR than the degree of destructive communication present in an argumentative episode, though the amount of predictability in subsequent arguments decreased PR regardless of the nature of the communication (Johnson & Roloff, 1998). Similarly, mulling about a specific issue or withdrawing from one's partner after a serial argument episode negatively predicted PR. Not surprisingly, a greater degree of PR is negatively related to stress levels (Malis & Roloff, 2006a), thought avoidance, intrusiveness, and hyperarousal (Malis & Roloff, 2006b).

In a related but distinct investigation of PR, constructive conflict goals such as the desire to gain insight into a partner's perspective were associated with an integrative conflict style (Bevan et al., 2007) and generally resulted in greater perceived resolvability of the serial argument (Bevan et al., 2008). In contrast, individuals who express destructive sentiments during an initial confrontation tend to do so through the use of distributive conflict tactics such as personal attacks or criticism, which are negatively associated with PR (Bevan et al., 2007).

Although Johnson and Roloff's (1998, 2000a, 2000b) research pointed to the influence of PR on the serial argumentation process, there is some evidence to suggest PR may be less relevant in predicting an individual's motivation to sustain a serial argument. For example, Bevan et al.'s (2008) process model failed to uncover a significant relationship between PR and motivation to achieve goals in a serial argument. It is important to note, however, that Bevan et al. (2008) operationalized motivation in their report by employing Scott and McIntosh's (1999) motivation to achieve goals scale, which is a subset of their larger established measure of trait

rumination. Given that Bevan et al. (2008) were focused on motivation to achieve goals in a specific episode of serial argumentation, the use of a modified trait measure may partially explain why PR was unrelated to motivation in their report. Additionally, requiring participants to reflect on their own motivation to achieve serial argument goals after they have been unsuccessful in achieving them may not be the most effective way of understanding the cyclical nature of serial arguments. For example, the initial goal of changing a partner's behavior (i.e., change target) may persist throughout several serial argument episodes until it is ultimately decided to be unsuccessful, at which point it could evolve into a related goal (e.g., hurt partner/benefit self). Thus, individuals may not be motivated to achieve their *original* serial argument goal, but may be highly motivated to continue the argument in an attempt to achieve their subsequent goals.

At a minimum, then, researchers have demonstrated that PR plays a key role in the cognitive and emotional processing of serial arguments, though the precise nature of that role remains in question. Nevertheless, it is often the unresolved nature of the interaction that provokes future argumentative episodes (Bevan et al., 2004). When individuals *perceive* an argument to be resolvable, but it has yet to be resolved, it seems likely they will be more motivated to continue a serial argument in hopes of reaching a resolution in a subsequent episode. Therefore, a third hypothesis was advanced to test this line of reasoning:

> H3: Perceived resolvability is positively associated with the motivation for (H3a), and the likelihood of (H3b), sustaining serial arguments in personal relationships.

Despite its demonstrated importance in serial arguments, however, the exact role of perceived resolvability remains unclear. PR has been examined in previous research as both an antecedent condition and as an outcome of serial arguments. When positioned as a predictor of relational outcomes, PR significantly predicted relational quality, satisfaction (Johnson & Roloff,

1998) and stress (Malis & Roloff, 2006a). Conversely, when positioned as an outcome of argumentative behavior, PR varied as a function of relationally confirming behavior and optimistic comparisons (Johnson & Roloff, 2000a), constructive communication (Johnson & Roloff, 1998), and specific negative serial argument goals (Bevan et al., 2007). Since its precise role is unclear, it could be that PR moderates several of the other factors thought to influence the experience and expression of a serial argument, including an individual's threshold for sustaining the argument. That is, individuals who seem less likely to be motivated to sustain a serial argument (i.e., those high in emotional intelligence or less tolerant of disagreement) could potentially become more motivated if they believe the argument is resolvable. Conversely, individuals lacking emotional intelligence or those who are highly tolerant of disagreements might be less likely to sustain a serial argument if they feel it will never be resolved. Therefore, in an effort to extend our understanding of the serial argument process, the following research question was advanced:

> RQ1: How, if at all, does the perceived resolvability of a serial argument interact with an individual's emotional intelligence and tolerance for disagreement in predicting the motivation for, and the likelihood of, sustaining the argument?

Relational Satisfaction and Closeness

The final purpose of this investigation was to examine the extent to which PR and the motivation to sustain a serial argument mediates the influence of an individual's EI and TfD on their own satisfaction and closeness in the target relationship. Most of the research on relational satisfaction in personal relationships has focused on romantic partnerships and married couples (e.g., Caughlin, 2002; Caughlin & Huston, 2002; Caughlin, Huston, & Houts, 2000; Schneewind & Gerhard, 2002). As one might expect, previous research involving conflict and satisfaction has generally demonstrated that destructive conflict is negatively related to relational satisfaction

(Metts & Cupach, 1990; Schneewind & Gerhard, 2002), and positively related to relational termination (McGonagle, Kessler, & Gotlib, 1993) and stress, especially when a relational partner demands change (Malis & Roloff, 2006b). Conversely, in a previous investigation involving married couples, constructive conflict resolution was significantly related to long term relational satisfaction (Schneewind & Gerhard, 2002). In fact, in conflicts that recur over time, the perceived resolvability of the argument influences relational quality to a greater extent than does the frequency of the argument episodes themselves (Johnson & Roloff, 1998).

There are a multitude of possible interactions between individuals' thresholds for argumentation (e.g., EI and TfD) and the factors that influence their motivation to sustain serial arguments, all of which theoretically could impact relational satisfaction and closeness. As hypothesized above, individuals with a high TfD who believe a particular argument can be resolved will be more motivated to sustain, and more likely to continue, a serial argument. Because these individuals have an increased threshold for argumentation, it seems likely that they will experience more relational satisfaction and closeness as a function of sustaining the serial argument, especially in light of the perception of argument resolvability. On the other hand, individuals with a low TfD are likely to experience a decline in satisfaction and closeness as a result of continued arguments, especially when the issue at stake is perceived to be irresolvable. Similarly, arguers with high EI are hypothesized to be less motivated to sustain serial arguments, though it is possible that they will be protected against decreases in relational satisfaction and closeness as a result of their emotional intelligence. Thus, in an effort to clarify the nature of the relationships among individual thresholds for serial argumentation and relational satisfaction and closeness, a final research question was advanced for consideration:

RQ2: To what extent does an individual's threshold for argumentation (i.e., emotional intelligence and tolerance for disagreement) and their motivation to sustain a serial argument (i.e., resolvability, motivation, and likelihood) predict their relational satisfaction and closeness?

Method

Participants

Participants included 479 undergraduate students enrolled in a basic communication course at a medium-sized private university, ranging in age from 18 to 28 (M = 19.07, SD = 1.89). More than half of the participants were female (59.50 %) and a majority were Caucasian (80.00%). Participants reported on an ongoing serial argument existing either in a family relationship (n = 287) or a romantic relationship (n = 189), though three participants did not indicate their relationship type and were therefore excluded from further analysis.

Procedures

Upon human subjects' approval, the researcher solicited direct participation from undergraduate students currently enrolled in a 10-week basic communication course. Two versions of the survey were distributed to control for ordering effects. Participants completed the questionnaire on a volunteer basis and were awarded minimal class credit (less than 2%) for participation in the research (see Appendix). An alternative assignment worth equal course credit was available for students unwilling to participate, although all students opted to participate in this study. All participation took place during regular class time, and students completed the questionnaires anonymously. After completing the survey, students were thanked for their participation and debriefed.

Measures

Serial arguments. Participants were provided with Johnson and Roloff's (1998) definition of a serial argument: "When individuals argue or engage in conflict about the same topic over

time, during which they participate in several (at least two) arguments about the same topic." Participants were then asked to recall and provide a full written description of a single unresolved serial argument they were currently participating in, be it either in a current romantic relationship or with a family member. In addition to demographic questions and questions related to structural features of the argument (e.g., number of episodes, length of each episode, length of the relationship), and given evidence to suggest that argumentative role (i.e., initiator vs. resistor) influences serial argument outcomes, respondents reported who typically initiated serial arguments in the target relationship: 30.6% reported "I do," 40.9% reported "My partner typically initiates it," 25.5% reported that "We both initiate it equally," and 3.0% were unsure.

Perceived resolvability. The perceived resolvability of the argument was operationalized using Johnson and Roloff's (1998) four-item, Likert-type scale. Participants were asked to respond to a series of statements following the question "To what extent do you believe the following about your serial argument?" The scale included items such as "I believe that it will be resolved in the future" and "I don't think my partner will ever agree on this issue," and responses were solicited using a 7-point scale that ranged from (1) *To a great extent* to (7) *Not at all*. Items were recoded and averaged so that higher scores represented greater perceived resolvability of the argument. In this study, the perceived resolvability scale produced a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .85 (M = 4.19, SD =1.71).

Motivation and likelihood of sustaining the argument. Given no a priori measures for assessing the motivation to sustain the argument and the likelihood of sustaining it, two separate measures were created for this investigation. First, eight semantic differential items were created to assess the motivation to sustain the argument (e.g., "motivated-unmotivated," "interested-uninterested," "challenged-unchallenged"). Respondents were asked to indicate their feelings

toward the serial argument using a 7-point response scale. Four items were reverse coded and items were averaged so that higher scores indicated a greater motivation to sustain the argument. Analyses of internal consistency revealed that the internal reliability of the motivation scale couple be improved by dropping one item (i.e., "Looking forward to it-Not looking forward to it"). The final, seven-item motivation scale produced an alpha coefficient of .81 (M = 4.22, SD = 1.08). Second, participants indicated their *likelihood of actually continuing* the series of arguments using a semantic differential scale that included four items (e.g., "Likely-Unlikely," "Possible-Impossible," "Improbable-Probable," and "Will not continue-Will continue") and a 7-point response format. Two items were reverse coded and items were averaged so that higher scores represented a greater likelihood of sustaining the argument. The four-item likelihood scale produced strong internal reliability (α = .93, M = 5.18, SD = 1.64).

Emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence was operationalized using Schutte et al.'s (1998) Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS). The EIS is comprised of 33 Likert items assessing participants' perceptions of their abilities to appraise and express emotion (e.g., "I know when to speak about my personal problems to others", regulate emotions (e.g., "I easily recognize my emotions as I experience them"), and use emotions to accomplish tasks (e.g., "I use good moods to help myself keep trying in the face of obstacles"). Responses were solicited using a five-point scale that ranged from (1) *Strongly disagree* to (5) *Strongly agree*. Consistent with previous research (e.g., Keaten & Kelly, 2008; Schutte et al., 1998, 2002) the EI scale produced strong internal reliability with an alpha coefficient of .89 in the present study (M = 3.81, SD = .42).

Tolerance for disagreement. Participants' tolerance for disagreement was operationalized using Tevan, McCroskey, and Richmond's (1998) 15-item Tolerance for Disagreement (TfD) scale. Responses were solicited using a five-point Likert scale that ranged from (1) *Strongly*

disagree to (5) *Strongly agree*. Participants were asked to respond to items such as "I enjoy talking to people with points of view different than mine," and "I prefer to change the topic of discussion when disagreement occurs." Items designed to measure an individuals' preference to avoid disagreement were reverse coded, after which items were averaged so that higher scores represented individuals who were more tolerant of disagreement. In this study, the TfD scale yielded an alpha reliability of .88 (M = 3.00, SD = .66).

Relational satisfaction. An adapted version of Huston, McHale, and Crouter's (1986) Marital Opinion Questionnaire was used to access participants' relational satisfaction in the target relationship over the past two months. The original scale was modified to reflect the romantic partner or family member with whom the participant was having the serial argument, rather than a marital partner. Ten of the items used seven-point semantic differential scales (e.g., "Miserable-Enjoyable," "Rewarding-Disappointing") and an additional item assessed global satisfaction in the relationship using responses that ranged from (1) *Completely dissatisfied* to (7) *Completely satisfied*. Consistent with previous research (e.g., Schrodt & Afifi, 2007), these 11 items were averaged to create an overall composite of relational satisfaction. The alpha coefficient for this scale was .96 (M = 5.18, SD = 1.64).

Relational closeness. Buchanan, Maccoby, and Dornbush's (1991) relational closeness measure was used to assess participants' perceived closeness in the target relationship. The scale consisted of 10 items (e.g., "How openly do you talk with your relational partner (or family member)?" and "How interested is your partner (or family member) when you talk to each other?"), and responses were solicited using a seven-point Likert-type scale that ranged from (1) *Not at all* to (7) = *Very much*. Previous researchers have demonstrated the reliability and validity of the relational closeness measure (e.g., Buchanan et al., 1991; Schrodt & Afifi, 2007), and in

this study, the scale produced acceptable reliability with an alpha coefficient of .89 (M = 5.65, SD = 1.07).

Data Analysis

Given evidence to suggest that argumentative role (i.e., initiator vs. resistor) may influence how serial arguments are perceived and responded to (e.g., Johnson & Roloff, 2000b), as well as the possibility that serial arguments in familial relationships are qualitatively distinct from serial arguments in romantic relationships, the hypotheses and research questions were tested using a series of hierarchical regression analyses. All hypotheses and research questions were examined separately for romantic and familial relationships. For the first two hypotheses, separate regression analyses were conducted to assess the relationships among the two predictor variables (i.e., EI and TfD) and the two criterion variables (i.e., motivation and likelihood of sustaining serial arguments), after controlling for argumentative role and structural features of the argument. Specifically, argumentative role was entered at step one, structural features of the argument were entered at step two (i.e., length of relationship, number of times argument occurred, length of each serial argument episode), and the main effects of EI and TfD were entered at step three.

In order to address the first research question, four additional hierarchical regression analyses (two for romantic and family relationships, respectively) were conducted to test whether the interaction effects of EI and perceived resolvability, and TfD and perceived resolvability, explained any additional variance in the two criterion variables (i.e., motivation and likelihood of sustaining the argument) after controlling for the structural features of the argument noted above. Finally, in order to address the final research question, four hierarchical regression analyses (two for romantic and family relationships, respectively) were conducted to test the unique and

combined associations among the predictor variables (i.e., EI, TfD, motivation, likelihood of continuing, and perceived resolvability) and the two criterion variables of relational satisfaction and closeness. All tests of statistical significance were set a $p < .05$.

Results

Preliminary Analysis

Descriptive statistics and Pearson's product-moment correlations for all of the variables in this study are provided in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Pearson's Product-Moment Correlations for All Variables in the Study (N = 476)

Variables	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Length of relationship[a]	23.16 (222.52)	22.14 (35.67)	--	-.03	-.01	.04	-.06	.06	-.14*	.02	-.11	-.05	-.03
2. Number of episodes	22.40 (69.80)	30.44 (293.84)	.23**	--	-.03	.27**	-.15*	.06	.03	.00	-.18**	-.08	-.08
3. Length of episode[b]	103.40 (36.36)	290.26 (90.66)	.01	-.02	--	.22**	.00	.10	.16**	-.02	-.07	.00	.03
4. Length of argument[a]	11.77 (39.23)	12.27 (39.68)	.69**	.39**	.02	--	-.11	.24**	.01	-.13*	-.35**	-.06	-.02
5. Motivation to sustain	4.26 (4.19)	1.01 (1.13)	-.02	-.17*	-.19*	-.19**	--	.08	.10	.18**	-.03	.04	.07
6. Likelihood of continuing	5.28 (5.11)	1.49 (1.74)	.13	.13	-.09	.17**	.19*	--	.01	.00	-.52**	-.16**	-.15**
7. EI	3.84 (3.80)	.41 (.42)	.06	.06	.00	.01	.02	.01	--	.00	.06	.19**	.33**
8. TfD	2.97 (3.02)	.67 (.65)	.12	.08	.08	.17*	-.04	.06	.20**	--	.01	-.03	.01
9. PR	4.19 (4.20)	1.74 (1.71)	-.07	-.18*	-.05	-.30**	.14*	-.15*	.01	.01	--	.22**	.23**
10. Satisfaction	5.32 (5.50)	1.47 (1.21)	-.04	-.07	-.07	-.07	.11	.08	.22**	.12	.25**	--	.75**
11. Closeness	5.77 (5.59)	.98 (1.11)	.13	.07	-.08	.07	.02	.23**	.16*	.08	.20**	.67**	--

Notes. EI = Emotional intelligence. TfD = Tolerance for disagreement. PR = Perceived resolvability. Descriptive statistics for family relationships are in parentheses. Correlations for romantic relationships (n = 189) are in the lower diagonal and correlations for family relationships (n = 287) are in the upper diagonal.

[a]Reported in months. [b]Reported in minutes.

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

An inspection of Table 1 revealed several notable differences in the structural features of serial arguments across romantic and family relationships. For example, in romantic relationships, length of the relationship was positively correlated with the average number of episodes ($r = .23$, $p < .01$) and the average length of the ongoing series of arguments ($r = .69$, $p < .01$). The average number of episodes was also positively associated with the average length of the serial argument cycle ($r = .39$, $p < .01$). In family relationships, however, the length of the relationship was unassociated with the average number of serial argument episodes. Nevertheless, the average number of episodes ($r = .27$, $p < .01$) and the average length of each episode ($r = .22$, $p < .01$) were both positively associated with the average length of the serial argument cycle, though both associations were smaller in magnitude than those reported for romantic relationships.

In addition to these correlational differences, a series of independent sample *t*-tests revealed significant differences in argumentative features across family and romantic relationships. In terms of relationship length, members of romantic relationships reported having shorter relationships than those reporting on family relationships, $t(459) = -67.87$, $p < .01$ (see Table 1).

Participants reported significantly more serial argument episodes in family relationships than in romantic relationships, $t(447) = -2.16$, $p < .01$, though serial argument episodes were longer, on average, in romantic relationships than in family relationships , $t(462) = 3.60$, $p < .01$. In addition, the number of months over which the argument occurred was greater in family relationships than in romantic relationships $t(462) = -27.46$, $p < .01$ (see Table 1), perhaps as a function of the overall length of the relationship.

Finally, researchers have suggested that perceptions of serial arguments may vary as a function of who initiates the argument (i.e., argumentative role) (e.g., Johnson & Roloff, 2000b). Thus, a series of one-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted to determine whether or not the motivation and likelihood of continuing the argument, the perceived resolvability of the argument, and relational satisfaction and closeness varied as a function of who typically initiated the serial argument. Significant differences in motivation for the argument emerged in both romantic relationships, $F(2, 178) = 5.23$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .06$, and family relationships, $F(2, 273) = 19.51$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .13$. In romantic relationships, respondents were less motivated about the argument when their partner initiated the argument ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 1.16$) than when either they themselves initiated the argument ($M = 4.44$, $SD = .85$) or both partners initiated the argument ($M = 4.47$, $SD = .85$). A similar pattern emerged in family relationships where respondents were less motivated about arguments that were initiated by their family members ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 1.08$) than those they initiated themselves ($M = 4.67$, $SD = 1.11$) or those that both family members initiated simultaneously ($M = 4.37$, $SD = 1.04$). Finally, significant differences in relational closeness emerged for respondents in romantic relationships based on who typically initiated the serial argument, $F(2, 178) = 4.18$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .04$. Based on the results of these preliminary analyses, then, the hypotheses and research questions were analyzed separately for romantic and family relationships while controlling for who initiated the argument when appropriate (i.e., for motivation about the argument, as well as for closeness in romantic relationships).

Primary Analyses for Romantic Relationships

The first hypothesis predicted that individuals' emotional intelligence (EI) would be inversely associated with their motivation for (H1a), and the likelihood of (H1b), sustaining a

serial argument. To test this hypothesis, a hierarchical regression analysis was conducted using EI as the predictor variable and motivation as the criterion variable, controlling for who initiated the argument (dummy-coded) at step one and structural features of the serial argument at step two (i.e., the number of times the argument had occurred, the average length of each episode, and the average length of the serial argument). This analysis produced a multiple correlation coefficient that was significant, $R = .39$, $F(6, 162) = 4.91$, $p < .001$, accounting for 15.4% of the variance in motivation about the serial argument. At step one, arguments initiated by romantic partners ($\beta = -.25$, $t = -2.66$, $p < .01$) accounted for 6% of the total variance in motivation. At step two, both the average length of each episode in minutes ($\beta = -.16$, $t = -2.20$, $p < .05$) and the length of the ongoing argument in months ($\beta = -.19$, $t = -2.38$, $p < .05$) emerged as significant predictors in the model, accounting for a total of 15% of the variance in motivation about the argument, F-change (3, 163) = 5.88, $p < .01$, $\Delta R^2 = .09$. After controlling for these features, at step three, EI did not emerge as a significant predictor in the model, ($\beta = .07$, $t = .96$, $p > .05$). Therefore, H1a was not supported in romantic relationships.

To test H1b, a second hierarchical regression analysis was computed to assess the relationship between EI and the likelihood of continuing the serial argument. The final model produced a multiple correlation coefficient that approached statistical significance, $R = .23$, $F(4, 164) = 2.33$, $p = .058$, accounting for 5.4% of the variance in the likelihood of continuing the argument. After controlling for structural features of the argument, EI did not emerge as a significant predictor in the model, ($\beta = .04$, $t = .46$, $p > .05$). Thus, H1b was not supported for romantic relationships.

The second hypothesis predicted that individuals' tolerance for disagreement (TfD) would be positively associated with their motivation for (H2a), and the likelihood of (H2b),

sustaining a serial argument. Again, a hierarchical regression analysis was computed with TfD as the predictor and motivation as the criterion variable, controlling for who initiated the argument at step one and structural features of the argument at step two. The final model produced a multiple correlation coefficient that was significant, $R = .39$, $F(6, 162) = 4.73$, $p < .001$, accounting for 14.9% of the variance in motivation for the argument. After controlling for arguments initiated by a relational partner at step one, as well as the average length of each episode and the average length of the ongoing argument at step two, TfD did not emerge as a significant predictor of motivation for the argument in the final model, ($\beta = -.01$, $t = -.13$, $p > .05$). Thus, H2a was not supported in romantic relationships.

To test H2b, a second hierarchical regression was computed using the likelihood of continuing the serial argument as the criterion variable. Similar to the results for EI noted above, the final model approached statistical significance, $R = .24$, $F(4, 164) = 2.39$, $R^2 = .06$, $p = .053$. After controlling for structural features of the argument, TfD did not emerge as a significant predictor in the final model, ($\beta = .05$, $t = .65$, $p > .05$). Therefore, H2b was not supported in romantic relationships.

The third hypothesis predicted that perceived resolvability (PR) would be positively associated with the motivation for (H3a), and the likelihood of (H3b), continuing a serial argument. An inspection of the bivariate correlations (see Table 1) revealed that PR was positively associated with motivation for the argument ($r = .14$, $p < .05$), but inversely associated with the likelihood of continuing the argument ($r = -.15$, $p < .05$). At the multivariate level of analysis, hierarchical regression produced a multiple correlation coefficient that was significant, $R = .40$, $F(6, 162) = 5.01$, $p < .001$, accounting for 15.6% of the variance in motivation about the serial argument. After controlling for arguments initiated by a romantic partner at step one ($\beta =$ -

.25, t = -2.77, p < .01), as well as the average length of each episode (β = -.16, t = -2.14, p < .05), and the overall length of the ongoing argument (β = -.16, t = -2.02, p < .05) at step two, PR did not emerge as a statistically significant predictor in the final model, (β = .09, t = 1.20, p > .05). Thus, H3a received partial support at the bivariate level of analysis, though after controlling for other features of the argument, this hypothesis was not supported for romantic relationships.

To test H3b, a second regression analysis was performed using the likelihood of continuing the serial argument as the criterion variable. The final model produced a multiple correlation coefficient that was significant, R = .24, F(3, 165) = 3.24, p < .05, accounting for 5.6% of the variance in the likelihood of continuing the serial argument. However, an examination of the beta weights revealed no significant predictors in the model, due in part to a moderate degree of multicollinearity among the predictors in the model (see Table 1). Thus, despite the small, inverse association that emerged at the bivariate level of analysis, H3b generally was not supported for romantic relationships.

The first research question explored whether or not PR would moderate the associations between an individual's EI and TfD, and their motivation for, and likelihood of, sustaining a serial argument. Consistent with the recommendations of Aiken and West (1991), a series of hierarchical regression analyses were performed to test for possible interaction effects. Main effect terms were centered prior to calculating the interaction terms, and the interaction terms were entered at step three of each analysis after controlling for who initiated the argument, structural features of the argument, and the main effects. No significant interaction effects were found for romantic relationships.

The second research question explored the unique and combined effects of an individual's EI, TfD, their motivation for the argument, their likelihood of continuing it, and PR

on their relational satisfaction and closeness. Consistent with the analyses reported above, two separate hierarchical regression analyses were computed entering EI and TfD at step one and features of the argument at step two, using satisfaction and closeness as separate criterion variables. For relational satisfaction, the initial model produced a multiple correlation coefficient that was significant, $R = .25$, $F(2, 178) = 5.69$,, $p < .01$, accounting for 6.0% of the variance in relational satisfaction. At step one, EI emerged as the only significant predictor in the model ($\beta = .21$, $t = 2.86$, $p < .01$). At step two, features of the argument produced a statistically significant increase in the variance accounted for in satisfaction, F-change $(3, 175) = 4.80$, $p < .01$, $\Delta R^2 = .07$. An examination of the beta weights revealed that EI ($\beta = .20$, $t = 2.83$, $p < .01$) and PR ($\beta = .25$, $t = 3.50$, $p < .01$) were the only significant predictors of relational satisfaction in romantic relationships, bringing the total variance accounted for to 13.2%.

For closeness, the initial model produced a multiple correlation coefficient that was significant, $R = .21$, $R^2 = .05$, $F(2, 178) = 4.18$, $p < .05$, as respondents whose partners initiated the argument reported less closeness in their romantic relationships ($\beta = -.26$, $t = -2.89$, $p < .01$). At step two, an individual's EI ($\beta = .18$, $t = 2.63$, $p < .01$) produced a statistically significant increase in the variance accounted for in the model, F-change $(2, 176) = 4.16$, $p < .05$, $\Delta R^2 = .04$. An examination of the beta weights at step two also revealed that arguments initiated by romantic partners ($\beta = -.28$, $t = -3.14$, $p < .01$) or those initiated equally by both partners ($\beta = -.18$, $t = -2.00$, $p < .05$) were inversely associated with relational closeness. Finally, at step three, features of the argument produced a statistically significant increase in the variance accounted for in the model, F-change $(3, 173) = 7.70$, $p < .001$, $\Delta R^2 = .11$. In the final model, $R = .44$, $R^2 = .20$, $F(7, 173) = 6.00$, $p < .001$, the likelihood of continuing the argument ($\beta = .27$, $t = 3.77$, $p < .001$) and PR ($\beta = .25$, $t = 3.59$, $p < .001$) were positive predictors of closeness in romantic

relationships, even after controlling for the positive effect of EI (β = .18, t = 2.63, p < .01) and the negative effects of arguments initiated either equally by both partners (β = -.19, t = -2.23, p < .05) or solely by one's romantic partner (β = -.32, t = -3.69, p < .001).

Primary Analysis for Family Relationships

The same sets of analyses reported for romantic relationships above were then conducted for respondents who reported on family relationships. To test H1a, a hierarchical regression analysis produced a multiple correlation coefficient that was significant, R = .40, $F(5, 250)$ = 4.91, p < .001, accounting for 16.1% of the variance in motivation for the serial argument. At step one, arguments initiated by family members (β = -.28, t = -3.83, p < .01) accounted for 12.2% of the total variance in motivation. At step two, the number of argument episodes that had occurred (β = -.14, t = -2.26, p < .05) emerged as a significant predictor in the model, accounting for a total of 15.3% of the variance in motivation for the argument, F-change (2, 251) = 4.69, p = .01, ΔR^2 = .03. After controlling for these features, at step three, EI did not emerge as a significant predictor in the model, (β = .09, t = 1.56, p > .05). Therefore, H1a was not supported in family relationships.

To test H1b, a second hierarchical regression analysis was computed to assess the relationship between EI and the likelihood of continuing a serial argument. The final model produced a multiple correlation coefficient that was statistically significant, R = .24, $F(2, 266)$ = 8.30, p < .001, accounting for 5.9% of the variance in the likelihood of continuing the serial argument. After controlling for the length of the ongoing argument in months (β = .24, t = 4.07, p < .001), EI did not emerge as a significant predictor in the model, (β = .01, t = .10, p > .05). Thus, H1b was not supported for romantic relationships.

To test H2a, a hierarchical regression analysis was computed with TfD as the predictor and motivation as the criterion variable, controlling for who initiated the argument at step one and structural features of the argument at step two. The final model produced a multiple correlation coefficient that was significant, $R = .43$, $F(5, 250) = 11.15$, $p < .001$, accounting for 18.2% of the variance in motivation for the serial argument. After controlling for arguments initiated by a family member ($\beta = -.27$, $t = -3.68$, $p < .001$) and the number of times the argument had occurred ($\beta = -.14$, $t = -2.41$, $p < .05$), TfD emerged as a significant predictor of motivation to sustain the serial argument in family relationships ($\beta = .17$, $t = 2.98$, $p < .01$). Thus, H2a was supported for family relationships.

To test H2b, a second hierarchical regression was computed using the likelihood of continuing the serial argument as the criterion variable. Similar to the results for EI noted above, the final model was statistically significant, $R = .25$, $F\ (2, 266) = 8.47$, $R^2 = .06$, $p < .001$. After controlling for the length of the serial argument cycle ($\beta = .25$, $t = 4.12$, $p < .001$), however, TfD did not emerge as a significant predictor in the final model, ($\beta = .04$, $t = .58$, $p > .05$). Therefore, H2b was not supported for family relationships.

The third hypothesis predicted that PR would be positively associated with the motivation for (H3a), and the likelihood of (H3b), continuing a serial argument. Contrary to what was hypothesized, however, in family relationships, PR was unrelated with motivation for the argument at the bivariate level of analysis ($r = -.03$, $p > .05$) and *inversely* associated with the likelihood of continuing the argument ($r = -.52$, $p < .05$). At the multivariate level of analysis, hierarchical regression produced a multiple correlation coefficient that was significant, $R = .41$, $F(5, 250) = 9.96$, $p < .001$, accounting for 16.6% of the variance in motivation for the serial argument. After controlling for arguments initiated by a family member ($\beta = -.28$, $t = -3.85$, p

< .001), the number of times the argument has occurred (β = -.15, t = -2.44, p < .05), and the length of the ongoing argument in months (β = -.12, t = -1.90, p = .058), PR emerged as a statistically significant predictor in the final model, (β = -.12, t = -1.97, p = .05), F-change (1, 250) = 3.87, p = .05, ΔR^2 = .01. Thus, H3a was supported for family relationships. In fact, the bivariate association between PR and motivation for the serial argument is not statistically significant (see Table 1), yet an inverse effect emerges between these two variables once structural features of the argument are entered into the model. This suggests the presence of a suppressor effect (Tabachnik & Fidell, 2007). According to Tabachnik and Fidell (2007), classical (or traditional) suppression occurs when a variable or set of variables improves the predictive ability of an independent variable (e.g., PR) on the dependent variable (e.g., motivation). Thus, PR is relatively unrelated to an individual's motivation about the serial argument in family relationships, unless one takes into account who typically initiates the argument cycle and how long the argument cycle has occurred, at which point family members who perceive that the issue is resolvable are less motivated about the serial argument.

To test H3b, a second regression analysis was performed using the likelihood of continuing the serial argument as the criterion variable. The final model produced a multiple correlation coefficient that was significant, R = .53, F(2, 266) = 51.23, p < .001, accounting for 27.8% of the variance in the likelihood of continuing the serial argument. Although the length of the argument (β = .24, t = 4.08, p < .001) emerged as a statistically significant predictor of continuing the argument at step one, F-change (1, 267) = 16.65, p < .001, ΔR^2 = .06 , at step two, PR emerged as the only significant predictor in the model, (β = -.50, t = -8.99, p < .001), F-change (1, 266) = 80.82, p < .001, ΔR^2 = .22. Although PR emerged as a rather robust predictor of the likelihood of continuing a serial argument with a family member, the direction of this

effect was opposite of what was hypothesized, and thus, H3b was not supported for family relationships.

In terms of RQ1, which explored the extent to which PR moderated the effects of an individual's EI and TfD on their motivation for, and likelihood of, sustaining the serial argument, a series of hierarchical regression analyses were performed to test for possible interaction effects. Main effect terms were centered prior to calculating the interaction terms, and the interaction terms were entered at step three of each analysis after controlling for who initiated the argument, structural features of the argument, and the main effects. Similar to the results for romantic relationships, no significant interaction effects were found for family relationships.

For RQ2, again, two separate hierarchical regression analyses were computed entering EI and TfD at step one and features of the argument (i.e., motivation, likelihood of continuing, and perceived resolvability) at step two, using satisfaction and closeness as separate criterion variables. For relational satisfaction, the initial model produced a multiple correlation coefficient that was significant, $R = .18$, $F(2, 273) = 4.74$, $p < .01$, accounting for 3.4% of the variance in relational satisfaction. At step one, EI emerged as the only significant predictor in the model ($\beta = .18$, $t = 3.04$, $p < .01$). At step two, features of the argument produced a statistically significant increase in variance accounted for, F-change $(3, 270) = 5.02$, $p < .01$, $\Delta R^2 = .05$. The final model was statistically significant, $R = .29$, $F(5, 270) = 4.99$, $p < .001$, and an examination of the beta weights revealed that EI ($\beta = .17$, $t = 2.84$, $p < .01$) and PR ($\beta = .19$, $t = 2.75$, $p < .01$) were the only significant predictors of relational satisfaction in family relationships, bringing the total variance accounted for to 8.5%.

For closeness, the initial model produced a multiple correlation coefficient that was significant, $R = .32$, $R^2 = .10$, $F(2, 273) = 15.22$, $p < .001$, though EI emerged as the only

significant predictor in the model (β = .32, t = 5.52, p < .001). At step two, features of the serial argument produced a statistically significant increase in the variance accounted for in the model, F-change (3, 270) = 5.52, p < .01, ΔR^2 = .05, bringing the total variance accounted for to 15.2%, R = .39, F(5, 270) = 9.70, p < .001. An examination of the beta weights at step two revealed that respondents who were more emotionally intelligent (β = .30, t = 5.35, p < .001) and who perceived that the issue behind the serial argument was resolvable (β = .18, t = 2.76, p < .01) reported higher levels of relational closeness with their family member.

In sum, the results of both sets of analyses for romantic and family relationships revealed similar patterns for EI and TfD, though some notable differences emerged as well, particularly for PR. Table 2 presents a summary of the results across both relationship types.

Table 2

Summary of Results for Romantic and Family Relationships

Analysis	IVs[a]	Romantic Relationships[b]		Family Relationships[c]	
		Motivation	Continue Argument	Motivation	Continue Argument
H1	EI	*ns*	*ns*	*ns*	*ns*
H2	TfD	*ns*	*ns*	supported	*ns*
H3	PR	partially supported	*ns*	*ns*: suppressor effect	*ns*: opposite sign
RQ1	EI, EI x PR	*ns*	*ns*	*ns*	*ns*
	TfD, TfD x PR	*ns*	*ns*	*ns*	*ns*
		Satisfaction	Closeness	Satisfaction	Closeness
RQ2	EI, TfD, PR, motivation, continue	EI, PR	Initiate, EI, PR, Continue	EI, PR	EI, PR

Notes. EI = emotional intelligence. TfD = tolerance for disagreement. PR = perceived resolvability.

[a]For clarity, structural features of the arguments (i.e., control variables) were excluded from this column. [b]n = 189. [c]n = 287.

Discussion

Over the last decade, scholars have investigated repetitive conflict in close relationships as part of a larger cycle of argumentation. To date, the bulk of previous research has focused primarily on what occurs within each serial argument episode (e.g., Bevan et al., 2007, 2008; Johnson & Roloff, 1998), yet much less is known about what occurs between episodes that facilitates the cyclical nature of these types of arguments. Given the relative infancy of this line of research, the principal goal of this study was to investigate variations in individuals' motivations for, and likelihood of, sustaining a serial argument, both as a function of their thresholds for argumentation (i.e., emotional intelligence and tolerance for disagreement) and as a function of contextual elements unique to each serial argument (e.g., frequency and length of the episodes, perceived resolvability). Additionally, this study examined the ways in which individual characteristics and features of serial arguments were associated with satisfaction and closeness in both romantic and family relationships. In general, motivation about the argument and the likelihood of it continuing were unrelated to characteristics of the individual (i.e., EI and TfD), though TfD did emerge as a significant predictor of motivation about the argument in family relationships. The role of perceived resolvability appears to vary as a function of relationship type, given that PR is positively related to motivation at the bivariate level in romantic relationships, but *inversely* related to both motivation and likelihood of continuing the argument in family relationships. Additionally, across both relationship types, PR did not emerge as a moderator of EI and TfD on motivation and likelihood of continuing a serial argument. However, both EI and PR emerged as significant predictors of relational satisfaction and closeness in both romantic and family relationships.

In addition, the results revealed a number of qualitative distinctions that exist in the experience of serial arguments based on relationship type. Consequently, these results not only extend our understanding of personality traits and internal motivations that contribute (or fail to contribute) to the cyclical nature of serial arguments, but they simultaneously provide empirical evidence to suggest that serial arguments may vary as a function of whether or not one is arguing in the context of a voluntary or involuntary relationship. Each of these more general findings is discussed below.

Emotional Intelligence and Tolerance for Disagreement

The first two hypotheses predicted that an individual's emotional intelligence would be inversely associated, and that their tolerance for disagreement would be positively associated, with their motivation for, and likelihood of, sustaining a serial argument. Across both romantic and family relationships, the results largely provided very little support for these hypotheses. In fact, the only significant result to emerge was that TfD positively predicted the motivation for a serial argument in family relationships. One explanation for the lack of support for these two hypotheses may stem from the nature of the research design and/or the variables employed in this report. For example, EI and TfD are trait-like variables, whereas the motivation and likelihood of sustaining a specific serial argument within a specific romantic or family relationship are much more context-specific. Given the relatively narrow focus of these dependent variables, then, it comes as less of surprise that EI and TfD predicted very little of the variance in serial argumentation.

Despite the results, however, several notable findings did emerge that were unique to serial arguments in family relationships. As hypothesized (H2b), TfD emerged as a significant predictor of the motivation to sustain a serial argument in family relationships. Thus, family

members who have a higher threshold for disagreements and conflict tend to be more motivated to sustain serial arguments with other family members, even after controlling for who typically initiates the argument. Interestingly, this was not the case in romantic relationships, perhaps suggesting that individuals who are more comfortable with conflict believe the enduring nature of family relationships can better withstand disagreement than more voluntary romantic partnerships. Given that nearly all of the romantic relationships included this study were between dating partners and were less established in duration than family relationships, it is possible that the overall length of the relationship provides a degree of comfort, which allows personality traits (e.g., TfD) to have a slightly greater influence on these types of interactions. Nevertheless, the results call into question the need for future investigations of individual trait orientations to serial arguments, when in fact, such arguments are perhaps more likely to vary as a function of structural and psychological features of the argument, including perceived resolvability.

Perceived Resolvability of the Serial Argument

Consistent with extant research (e.g., Johnson & Roloff, 1998, 2000a, 2000b; Malis & Roloff, 2006a, 2006b), some of the more notable findings to emerge from the present study dealt with the perceived resolvability of the arguments (H3). At the bivariate level of analysis, PR was positively associated with motivation for the serial argument in romantic relationships, yet it was *inversely* associated with the likelihood of continuing the argument. Although both correlations were relatively small in magnitude, this seemingly contradictory finding illustrates the complexity of PR. Because PR is defined as the perception that an argument will be resolved in the future *regardless* of whether argumentative episodes appear to be moving in that direction, it is possible that arguments thought to be resolvable *and* that are progressing toward resolution result in increased motivation about the argument. Conversely, arguments that are conceptually

resolvable but do *not* appear to be moving toward resolution may be less likely to continue. More importantly, in family relationships, a suppressor effect emerged for PR whereby the resolvability of the argument is inversely associated with family members' motivation about the argument only after accounting for who typically initiates the argument and how long the argument has been going on. Perhaps the repetitive nature of a seemingly resolvable but lengthy serial argument initiated by one's family member creates feelings of frustration as evidenced by the reported decrease in motivation about the argument. In other words, young adults who are (un)willing participants in the serial arguments initiated by their family members are likely to be less motivated about issues they perceive to be resolvable due, in part, to the amount of time that has transpired since the argument began.

At the same time, PR emerged as a rather robust, *inverse* predictor of family members' likelihood of continuing their respective arguments. Again, one explanation for this finding may be that the involuntary, established nature of the family relationships reported in this study provided a relational context unthreatened by the existence of serial arguments. Given that the majority of family serial arguments in this study occurred between young adults and one or both of their parents, it seems likely that certain arguments may be related to different developmental stages of the parent-child relationship (e.g., newfound independence in college life). Thus, young adult children may be more comfortable allowing the issue to remain unresolved with their parents because the issue at stake includes some change in their own behavior, whereas in voluntary dating relationships, any issue at stake in a serial argument has greater potential to threaten the future of the relationship. Further, previous researchers have found that the longer the argument persists, in general, the less resolvable the issue becomes for relational partners (Johnson & Roloff, 2000b). As an extension of this research, the present study also demonstrates

that in family relationships, it may be those issues that are perceived as being *less resolvable* that receive the most attention and energy from family members as they attempt to reconcile their differences. However, despite the meaningful role that PR plays in the larger cycle of serial arguments, in the present study, PR did not moderate the relationships between EI, TfD, and the motivation for and likelihood of sustaining the argument.

Relational Satisfaction and Closeness in Romantic and Family Relationships

The third and final goal of the present study was to examine the unique and combined contributions of both an individual's threshold for argumentation (i.e., EI and TfD) and situational features of serial arguments (i.e., motivation, likelihood of continuing, PR) to the relational satisfaction and closeness of relational partners. In fact, perhaps the most notable implications of this study exist in the differences between romantic and family relationships. Although prior researchers have, more generally, included both relationship types in their samples (e.g., Bevan et al., 2008), researchers have yet to empirically test any differences in serial arguments that may exist between romantic partners and family members. However, in the present study, there were significant sources of variability in the experience of serial arguments as a function of relationship type.

In family relationships, for example, the results suggest that there is an inverse relationship between PR and the likelihood of continuing the argument. As noted earlier, there are at least two possible explanations for this finding. First, it is possible that, in families, arguments tend to be related to a specific developmental stage, especially between parents and their children. Therefore, even when one feels strongly that an argument will be resolved in the future; it may be that they are not particularly likely to continue it because the involuntary nature of the family relationship will allow the issue to pass in time. Conversely, the more likely the

argument is to continue, the less resolvable it is perceived to be, perhaps as a function of having little to no progress toward resolution in previous argumentative episodes. The inverse relationship between the number of argumentative episodes and the perception of resolvability lends support to this argument. Individuals may initially engage in an argument with a high perception of resolvability, but that perception may be lessened as each subsequent argumentative episode fails to reach a resolution.

The ongoing nature of serial arguments is also associated with distinct relational outcomes in family and romantic relationships. In families, the more likely an argument is to continue, the less satisfaction and closeness individuals reported in that relationship. In contrast, romantic partners report an *increase* in closeness resulting from arguments likely to continue, although they are not necessarily more satisfied as a result. Thus, given the association between the likelihood of continuing the argument and relational closeness, it may be that serial arguments increase feelings of closeness because the repetition of conflict somehow reaffirms that the relational partners are committed to the relationship itself. Nevertheless, this correlation should not be interpreted as causality, as there is likely a reciprocal relationship between the desire to continue the relationship and feelings of closeness. That is, in some romantic relationships, serial arguments may continue because the relationship is considered to be close and worth "fighting for," and in others, closeness might be obtained through a renewed dedication to the relationship reflected by the serial argument.

Despite differences in the way serial arguments function in family and romantic relationships, several relational outcomes of ongoing conflict are quite similar. In both family and romantic relationships, for example, EI and PR both emerge as significant predictors of relational satisfaction and closeness, extending Johnson and Roloff's (1998) finding that PR is a

better predictor of relational quality than argument frequency. Generally, individuals with higher EI reported greater relational satisfaction and closeness in their relationships, even after controlling for specific features of repetitive conflict. The results of this study extend previous research indicating that EI is not only positively related to emotional well-being, but also acts as a buffer against decreases in positive feelings during relational turbulence (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Schutte et al., 2002). Additionally, after controlling for the unique contributions of EI on relational outcomes, PR contributed unique variance to satisfaction and closeness as well, suggesting that the mere perception of resolution may have a positive influence on the partners' relationship as a whole. Thus, it seems the perception that a serial argument has the potential to be resolved, coupled with an individual's EI, helps to lessen the potentially negative effects that ongoing conflict might otherwise inflict on relational quality.

However, the larger question regarding relational outcomes brought forth by this study involves the unique contributions of argument initiator and likelihood of continuing the argument on closeness in romantic relationships. Arguments either initiated by a relationship partner or equally by both partners contributed unique variance to closeness, though argument initiator emerged as an inverse predictor. As indicated by earlier research (e.g., Johnson & Roloff, 2000b), the role of argument initiator is often characterized by the act of making demands, which is often met by responses of resistance and withdrawal from one's partner. Partners who primarily take the role of argument resistor (i.e., they do not typically initiate the argument) tend to see the argument as more harmful to the relationship (Johnson & Roloff, 2000b), and perhaps feel less close to their partner as a result. Intriguingly, then, the desire to continue a serial argument may communicate commitment and a desire to see the relationship continue, though it simultaneously reduces satisfaction with the romantic relationship.

Theoretical Implications

Although the results of this study provided only minimal support for the role that personality characteristics may play in the experience of serial arguments, the fact that TfD did predict for serial arguments in family relationships and that EI contributed to satisfaction and closeness in both relationship types is noteworthy. With regards to TfD, the positive relationship with motivation also indicates that individuals who view disagreement as having a negative connotation (i.e., individuals who are low in TfD) are less motivated about serial arguments, and perhaps less likely to initiate them within a family relationship. Additionally, the unique contribution of EI in predicting relational satisfaction and closeness despite the existence of a serial argument extends previous research (e.g.., Schutte et al., 2002) which indicates that the ability to express, regulate, and utilize emotions is particularly useful for relational well-being.

These results also extend our understanding of the cyclical nature of serial arguments, given the differences that emerged in motivation and the likelihood of continuing as a function of who initiates the argument, structural features, and PR. Specifically, individuals who typically initiate serial arguments they perceive as resolvable are more motivated to sustain them, perhaps resulting from frustration with their inability to change their partner's views. Thus, these results extend Trapp and Hoff's (1985) secondary process of heating up by underscoring the role that unresolved incompatibilities serve as precursors to engaging in future argumentative episodes. Interestingly, in the present study, arguments that had been ongoing for some time resulted in reduced PR and motivation about the argument, suggesting that although the argument issue remains the same, emotions about the issue do not.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the results provide further understanding of how serial arguments are experienced in both voluntary, romantic relationships and involuntary,

familial relationships. Given the disparity in relational closeness related to the likelihood of continuing an argument, as well as variations in argumentative features between family and romantic relationships, it seems that serial arguments serve a different purpose in each of these relationship types. In family relationships, serial arguments may simply constitute one thread within the larger fabric of relational life, and thus, are generally less consequential than in romantic relationships, where the ongoing act of arguing can serve to enhance and reinforce feelings of closeness between relational partners. Although each argumentative episode was longer in romantic relationships than in family relationships, repetitive conflict in families tended to span a significantly longer period of time. These results should be interpreted with caution, however, as romantic relationships in this study consisted almost exclusively of short-term dating relationships.

Limitations and conclusions

In general, then, the results of this study offer meaningful contributions to existing knowledge about the complexity of serial arguments in both romantic and family relationships. Clearly, there are a number of avenues for future serial argument research, including additional investigations into the emotional process that drives the cyclical nature of repetitive conflict, and perhaps more importantly, variations in serial arguments resulting from voluntary or involuntary relationships. Consequently, a key limitation to the present study is the use of cross-sectional data to examine a cyclical process of argumentation that occurs over time. To effectively analyze and understand the ways in which serial arguments function within the confines of a relationship, longitudinal studies involving both argumentative partners that track the evolution of repetitive conflict is required. Future researchers might consider using diaries to track the experience and expression of serial arguments in both relationship types, followed by in-depth

interviews to explore the meanings that relational partners assign to the content and resolvability of their conflicts.

Indeed, conclusions drawn from the present study are bound by the inherent limitations of the research design. Because each participant was asked to reflect and respond to questions regarding a specific serial argument via self-report, the present study was unable to validate argumentative features (e.g., number or frequency of argumentative episodes) or even the likelihood of the argument continuing from the other partner's perspective. Additionally, the majority of respondents were young adults, and thus, most conflicts within family relationships occurred with one or both parents, and reported conflict between romantic partners generally occurred between dating partners. Thus, given the differences between voluntary and involuntary relationships, future research should investigate how, if at all, these findings change in long-term relationships between committed partners (e.g., married couples).

Despite these limitations, however, the results extend extant theory and research by identifying factors that contribute meaningful variance to previously understudied aspects of serial arguments. Future researchers should continue to investigate the role of personality traits that would likely emerge in the initiator (e.g., verbal argumentativeness or rumination) causing the argument to heat up, rather than focusing on variables that likely suppress serial arguments and allow them to simmer down (e.g., EI). Given the relationship between likelihood of continuing the argument and relational closeness in romantic relationships, it may also be useful to investigate the attachment styles of romantic partners to determine if particular styles are more closely associated with the tendency to sustain repetitive conflict in personal relationships (i.e., in order to promote connections or control one's partner). Finally, it may prove beneficial to study features of resolved serial arguments to gain a deeper understanding of how the course of

repetitive conflict changed. Indeed, we know relatively little about the factors that influence the cyclical nature of serial argumentation, despite its demonstrated prevalence in close relationships. Through these types of investigations, future researchers can expand extant theories of how serial arguments cycle in and out of interpersonal relationships.

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Appendix: SERIAL ARGUMENTS QUESTIONNAIRE

DIRECTIONS: In the following spaces, please circle or write the most appropriate response to each question. If there is a separate set of directions, please read those directions carefully and answer each question according to the directions for that section of the questionnaire.

1. What is your age? _____

2. What is your biological sex (please circle one)?
   1 Male
   2 Female

3. What is your ethnicity or race?
   1 White
   2 African American
   3 Hispanic American
   4 Native American
   5 Asian American
   6 Other (please specify): _____

Instructions:
A serial argument exists when individuals argue or engage in conflict about the same topic over time, during which they participate in several (at least two) arguments about the same topic. Think of a serial argument that you have participated in (either in a current romantic relationship or with a family member) and provide a FULL description of this argument below.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

(Please continue on the back of this page if needed)

_____

4. Who typically initiates further discussion of this issue (i.e., new episodes of the argument)?
   _____ I do
   _____ My partner typically initiates it.
   _____ We both initiate it equally.
   _____ I am unsure who initiates it.

Instructions:
Please answer the following questions regarding the serial argument that you described on the first page.

1. What is your relationship to this person (e.g. boyfriend, girlfriend, parent, sibling, etc.)?
   _____

2. How long have you been involved in a relationship with this person (provide a specific number next to each indicator of time and be specific)?
   _____ years _____ months _____ days

3. How many times have you had this argument (or an argument about this same issue) with this person? _____

4. On average, how long does each episode in your serial argument last (provide a specific number next to each indicator of time and be specific)?
   _____ hours _____ minutes

5. Beginning with the very first episode, how long have you and your relational partner (i.e., your romantic partner or family member) been having ongoing arguments about this issue?
   _____ years _____ months _____ days

6. Please indicate your *likelihood of actually continuing* this series of arguments with this person (i.e., be it your romantic partner or family member):

Unlikely	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Likely
Possible	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Impossible
Improbable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Probable
Will continue	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Will not continue

7. Please circle the number toward either word which best represents your feelings about this series of arguments:

Motivated	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unmotivated
Interested	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Uninterested
Uninvolved	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Involved
Not stimulated	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Stimulated
Challenged	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unchallenged
Enthused	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unenthused
Not excited	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Excited
Not looking forward to it	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Looking forward to it

8. To what extent do you believe the following about your serial argument (circle your responses)?

I believe that it will never be resolved.

To a great extent 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Not at all

I believe that it will be resolved in the future.

To a great extent 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Not at all

I don't think that my partner will ever agree on this issue.

To a great extent 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Not at all

I anticipate that it will always be a problem.

To a great extent 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Not at all

Instructions: For this next section, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. Please circle only one response for each item using the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

		SD		N		SA
1.	I know when to speak about my personal problems to others.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	When I am faced with obstacles, I remember times I faced similar obstacles and overcame them.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	I expect that I will do well on most things I try.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Other people find it easy to confide in me.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	I find it hard to understand the nonverbal messages of other people.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Some of the major events of my life have led me to re-evaluate what is important and not important.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	When my mood changes, I see new possibilities.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Emotions are one of the things that make my life worth living.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	I am aware of my emotions as I experience them.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	I expect good things to happen.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	I like to share my emotions with others.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	When I experience a positive emotion, I know how to make it last.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	I arrange events others enjoy.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	I seek out activities that make me happy.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	I am aware of the nonverbal messages I send to others.	1	2	3	4	5
16.	I present myself in a way that makes a good impression on others.	1	2	3	4	5
17.	When I am in a positive mood, solving problems is easy for me.	1	2	3	4	5
18.	By looking at their facial expressions, I recognize the emotions people are experiencing.	1	2	3	4	5
19.	I know why my emotions changes.	1	2	3	4	5
20.	When I am in a positive mood, I am able to come up with new ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
21.	I have control over my emotions.	1	2	3	4	5
22.	I easily recognize my emotions as I experience them.	1	2	3	4	5
23.	I motivate myself by imagining a good outcome to tasks I take on.	1	2	3	4	5

		SD		N		SA
24.	I compliment others when they have done something well.	1	2	3	4	5
25.	I am aware of the nonverbal messages other people send.	1	2	3	4	5
26.	When another person tells me about an important even in his or her life, I almost feel as though I have experienced this even myself.	1	2	3	4	5
27.	When I feel a change in emotions, I tend to come up with new ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
28.	When I am faced with a challenge, I give up because I believe I will fail.	1	2	3	4	5
29.	I know what other people are feeling just by looking at them.	1	2	3	4	5
30.	I help other people feel better when they are down.	1	2	3	4	5
31.	I use good moods to help myself keep trying in the face of obstacles.	1	2	3	4	5
32.	I can tell how people are feeling by listening to the tone of their voice.	1	2	3	4	5
33.	It is difficult for me to understand why people feel the way they do.	1	2	3	4	5

Instructions: We would like to know about your satisfaction with the relational partner (or family member) with whom you have been having this series of arguments. Please think of how satisfied you have been in this relationship over the last two months. Circle the number that most closely describes your feeling toward your relationship. A "**4**" represents a "**neutral**" feeling.

1.	Miserable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Enjoyable
2.	Discouraging	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Hopeful
3.	Tied down	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Free
4.	Empty	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Full
5.	Boring	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Interesting
6.	Disappointing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Rewarding
7.	Doesn't give me much	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Brings out the best in me
8.	Lonely	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Friendly
9.	Hard	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Easy
10.	Useless	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Worthwhile

11. All things considered, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your relationship over the past two months?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Completely dissatisfied			Neutral			Completely satisfied

Instructions*:* We would like to know about how close you feel with your relational partner (or family member) you reported on above. Circle the number that best indicates how close you feel: **1 = "NOT AT ALL", 4 = "Moderately"** and **7 = "VERY MUCH".**

	Not at all			**Moderately**			**Very much**
1. How openly do you talk with your relational partner (or family member)?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. How careful do you feel you have to be about what you say to your relational partner (or family member)?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. How comfortable do you feel admitting doubts and fears to your relational partner (or family member)?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. How interested is your partner (or family member) when you talk to each other?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. How often does your partner (or family member) express affection or liking for you?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. How well does your partner (or family member) know what you are really like?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. How close do you feel to your partner (or family member)?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. How confident are you that your partner (or family member) would help you if you had a problem?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. If you need money, how comfortable are you asking your partner (or family member) for it?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. How interested is your partner (or family member) in the things you do?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Instructions: This questionnaire involves people's feelings and orientations. Hence, there are no right or wrong answers. We just want you to indicate your reaction to each item. All responses are to reflect the degree to which you believe the item applies to you. Please use the following system to indicate the degree to which the item describes you:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

	SD		N		SA
1. It is more fun to be involved in a discussion when there is a lot of disagreement.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I enjoy talking to people with points of view different than mine.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I don't like to be in situations where people are in disagreement.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I prefer being in groups where everyone's beliefs are the same as mine.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Disagreements are generally helpful.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I prefer to change the topic of discussion when disagreement occurs.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I tend to create disagreements in conversation because it serves a useful purpose.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I enjoy arguing with other people about things on which we disagree.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I would prefer to work independently rather than to work with other people and have disagreements.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I would prefer joining a group where no disagreements occur.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I don't like to disagree with other people.	1	2	3	4	5

		SD		N		SA
12.	Given a choice, I would leave a conversation rather than continue a disagreement.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	I avoid talking with people who I think will disagree with me.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	I enjoy disagreeing with others.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	Disagreement stimulates a conversation and causes me to communicate more.	1	2	3	4	5

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EDUCATION

Master of Science, Communication Studies, Texas Christian University - May 2009

Thesis: *Emotional Intelligence, Tolerance for Disagreement, and the Motivation to Sustain Serial Arguments: Implications for Relational Satisfaction and Well-Being*

Advisor: Paul Schrodt

Bachelor of Arts, with Honors in Communication, Stonehill College - May 2001

Thesis: *Variations in Interpersonal Disclosure as a function of Media Selection*

Advisor: Ronald Leone

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Texas Christian University, Lab Instructor, 2007 - present
Course Taught: Basic Speech Communication
Course Developed: Communication and Character

Stonehill College, Teaching Assistant, 2000 - 2001
Course Taught: Communication Theory

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

Carr, K. & Schrodt, P. Emotional intelligence, tolerance for disagreement, and the motivation to sustain serial arguments: Implications for relational satisfaction and well-being

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

National Communication Association, current member

Lambda Pi Eta, Communication Honors Society, 2000-2001

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Service to the University

- Texas Christian University Library Strategic Planning Committee, 2008
- Texas Christian University Leaders Educating and Assisting Potential Frogs, Graduate Supervisor, 2007 - present
- Stonehill College, Academic Advisory Committee, 1998-2000

Service to the Department

- Texas Christian University, Department of Communication Studies - Graduate Research Panel Chairperson, 2008
- Stonehill College, Department of Communication Studies - Administrative Coordinator, 1997-2001

RELATED WORK EXPERIENCE

Management

- Operations Analyst for national multi-family housing investment trust
- Coordinated annual preparation, review, and approval of operating budgets for all Eastern Division properties

Training

- Contract Administrator for residential property management firm
- Developed and implemented nation-wide training program for property managers to ensure consistent compliance with investor insurance requirements