Post-conflict situations, conciliatory acts and relationship satisfaction in intimate relationships

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POST-CONFLICT SITUATIONS, CONCILIATORY ACTS AND RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS.

BY MARIA KONTOGIANNI

A DOCTORAL THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
LOUGHBOROUGH UNIVERSITY

DECEMBER 2006
This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my uncle,

Dimitrios Tsitos

For he knew more than anyone how to relate to people.
For he knew how to touch another human soul.
For he knew how to love.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor Dr Duncan Cramer for his continuous and invaluable support throughout my studies. I have gained knowledge and widened my academic horizon through hours of inspirational discussion and debate. His enthusiasm for research kept me motivated during my investigations and committed to achieve my goals.

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ABSTRACT

The results of three studies are discussed in this thesis. In the first study, possible relationships between jealousy, aggression, sexual desire and post-conflict sex were investigated in a sample of 128 students and professionals from the East Midlands area. A model was proposed which predicted that jealousy will affect aggression; aggression will affect sexual desire and sexual desire will affect the possibility of post-conflict sex. Correlational analysis revealed that jealousy was significantly correlated to aggression and sexual desire; also, a strong significant relationship was found between aggression and post-conflict sex. Correlations were also discovered between aggression and sexual desire and between sexual desire and post-conflict sex. Further analysis using Structural Equation Modelling tested and supported a model which showed that jealousy influenced aggression and sexual desire, which in turn may influence post-conflict sex.

The second study explored partners' possible conciliatory acts in post-conflict situations. The aim was to gain insight in the peace-making process and identify the ways in which partners attempt to reach closure over an argument and return to how they were before the argument occurred. Interviews with 13 males and females were conducted. The interviews were transcribed and analysed using Thematic Networks Analysis. The results revealed that participants reached 'Perceived Closure' through four possible pathways a) Avoiding further conflict, b) Gaining control of the situation, c) Providing/receiving assurances, and d) Achieving normality. The exact processes involved in these pathways were found to be defined by clusters of basic themes. The themes that emerged showed that participants used affection, sex, distancing, apology and humour in order to return to normality and reach closure. This process was shown to be gradual as participants reported adopting a step-by-step approach that involves trying to gain control of their feelings and the situation, avoiding further arguments, reinstating feelings of security and safety and attempting to reinstate a sense of normality.

The third study was designed to explore post-conflict conciliatory acts and investigate possible correlations with relationship satisfaction and positive and negative conflict outcomes patterns. The sample consisted of 139 participants from the East Midlands area. The main findings were that participants who adopt constructive conflict styles (as shown from positive conflict outcomes) tend experience higher relationship satisfaction. Use of post-conflict conciliatory strategies was also predictive of higher relationship satisfaction.

Keywords: intimate relationships; conflict; jealousy; sexual desire; affection; humour; apology reconciliation; post-conflict situations.
THESIS OUTLINE

The author was really interested in factors that may affect the conflict process. Initial explorations concentrated around questions regarding core issues in intimate relationships. Literature research pointed the author to the direction of jealousy and aggression. Questions relating to the links between these two variables arose.

Everyday life observations indicated that people often refer to and talk about problems within their relationships. More often than not, these problems revolve around worries regarding infidelity, arguments that went wrong and moderate forms of verbal aggression. Simple observations also indicated that individuals are sometimes worried about the meaning of these problems. For example, what happens when a partner is verbally aggressive during a heated argument, would that partner be 'justified' if the aggression was the result of jealousy, or what is the meaning of a certain argument, would it mean that intimacy is lost, that feelings have changed, or maybe that the situation is beyond repair? In addition, it was noted that partners often talk about the 'making up period'. Literature searches revealed that this making up period was not examined thoroughly in the past.

Questions like these were the driving force behind the three studies in this thesis. It seemed that initial explorations should focus on the links between jealousy and aggression. Everyday life observations and discussions soon indicated that an exploration of the making up process was also needed. Widespread notions in the popular media pointed to the direction of sexual intimacy as a way of making up. Media representations of passionate post-conflict making up lead to the creation of the post-conflict sex variable. The inclusion of sexual desire as a factor also seemed to be quite important as it was felt that links may exist between sexual desire and post-conflict sex as well as sexual desire and aggression (the latter connection was literature based). A quantitative study was designed to address these issues and predictions were
made regarding the exact nature of the relationships between four variables (Jealousy, aggression, sexual desire and post-conflict sex).

The inspiration for the second study in this thesis came from the findings that the quantitative investigation produced. The links between jealousy, aggression, sexual desire and post-conflict sex were fascinating as they helped the author to shed light on important issues within intimate relationships. However, it was felt that a more in depth look was needed in terms of the making up process. Post-conflict sex appeared to be a likely response after an argument but the author was convinced that other tactics may be employed by partners in order to reconcile and repair the damage done during the argument. This was the main reasoning behind the second study. Post-conflict conciliatory tactics were explored in a qualitative manner. The results indicated the existence of a number of conciliation methods used by partners in order to reach closure over the argument and return 'back to normal'. The use of sexual intimacy as a conciliation tactic was confirmed in this study. However, affection, humour, apology and distancing were found to serve certain functions too. Partners were found to use these tactics in order to avoid further conflict (distancing, affection, apology), reinstate a sense of security and safety in the relationship (affection, sex), gain control of the situation (sex, distancing), and achieve normality (affection, humour, sex). These results were fascinating as they explored the post-conflict process in detail and shed light its components. Nevertheless, other questions arose regarding the pros and cons of these processes and whether they would have an effect on relationship satisfaction. The third study was designed to address this issue.

The third study (referred to study 2b in the text) aimed to explore the links between relationship satisfaction and the use of conciliatory acts in a quantitative manner. It was soon realised though that another variable was needed to complete the picture. The third variable was based on Bach and Wyden's notion of a 'fair fight' and their contention that conflict can have positive or negative outcomes depending on how it is managed. This variable was termed Conflict Outcomes. Statistical analysis in the form of correlations
confirmed initial hypothesising as it showed that levels of relationship satisfaction may increase if partners have positive conflict outcomes and if they use the five conciliatory acts mentioned earlier.

The issues outlined above are examined in three studies. The results are discussed in the light of past and recent theory and research and conclusions are drawn. Conducting research in this area of intimate relationships was a fascinating and fulfilling experience. The results from all three studies attempt to shed light on important and key aspects of relating to a significant other.
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CHAPTER 1
INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

Historical background
The study of human relationships is a relatively new field (Brehm et al., 2002). The field of relationships is argued to have a 'long past' but a 'brief history' (Goodwin, 1999). The systematic study of this field started approximately 40 years ago when psychologists, sociologists and communication theorists began making systematic and thorough attempts to unravel the mystery of human relations. It is important to note however, that human relationships fascinated people very early on in history. Philosophers such as Aristotle, Cicero and Sappho considered various aspects of human relationships and among other things they wrote about friendship, love, jealousy and marital satisfaction (Goodwin, 1999; Brehm et al., 2002). Thousands of years later the birth of psychology and sociology enabled theorists to investigate such issues in a more systematic way. During the late 1800's and early 1900's theorists such as Freud, Durkheim and Simmel "sought support for their beliefs, for instance Freud had his patients and Durkheim examined social statistics, but their primary contributions were conceptual" (Brehm et al., 2002; p. 37). A study by Monroe (1898, cited in Brehm et al, 2002) was arguably one of the first to use empirical evidence in investigating how people relate to each other. In his study Monroe tried to identify the traits and characteristics that children find most desirable in a friend. Although this study was one of the first to use a systematic method in an investigation in relationships and despite the fact that it had the advantage of a large sample (2,336 children), it was criticised in later years for being oversimplified and for overlooking obvious methodological problems (Ickes and Duck, 1999). However, Monroe's work "marked a significant shift in the study of relationships—a change from analyses that were primarily philosophical to those that were grounded in data and empirical evidence (Brehm et al., 2002; p. 37). Monroe's example was followed by others in the years that followed. The 1930's saw a series of
fascinating investigations on topics such as marriage, friendship and courtship (Moreno, 1934; Waller, 1937; cited in Ickes and Duck, 1999). Yet again, these studies suffered from methodological and theoretical shortfalls; problems with validity and lack of theoretical support being the most apparent. It is important to note however, that once more studies in the field of relationships generated great interest and fascination amongst research circles. This fascination however, did not materialise as it was hindered by the launch of World War II. Post war research was marked by a number of key relationship studies with Festinger, Schachter, and Back (1950) investigating friendship patterns and social pressures in a student population and Whyte (1955) looking at the social structure of the Italian community in Chicago. These studies received considerable attention and admiration but their narrow focus and once more the lack of variety in theoretical perspective, kept the field of relationships from becoming a broad research area. In the years that followed researchers were determined to yield validated, empirical data so efforts were focused on investigations that allowed the systematic and accurate manipulation of data. During the 1960's and 1970's relationship research flourished with experimental studies being published on topics such as attitude similarity (Byrne and Nelson, 1965, cited in Brehm et al, 2002), marital distress (Vincent et al., 1975), family decision-making (O'Rourke, 1963), and attraction (Clore and Byrne, 1974, cited in Brehm et al, 2002). In fact, investigations on attraction during the 60's and the 70's played a crucial role in widening the range of relationship research, increasing acceptance and making the topic an essential element of social psychology. The use of experiments in relationship research brought integrity and clarity which in turn generated recognition and respect. The contribution of these early studies is obvious, however, in hindsight they were criticised for being artificial and therefore not representative of real-life relationships (Ickes and Duck, 1999; Brehm et al., 2002). Therefore, the initial need to gather unambiguous results lead researchers to use clear, systematic and controlled studies which in turn created results that have little or no ecological validity. As Moghaddam (1998) recently put it, "In designing the laboratory situation, researchers create settings that are removed from and unlike those found in the world outside
(p.46). For example, early experiments on attraction involved participants' ratings of how attracted they were towards a stranger. The 'stranger' was usually a non-person, a hypothetical entity that participants never actually met or interacted with (i.e. Byrne and Blaylock, 1963; Byrne, Clore and Smeaton, 1986). Therefore, it can be argued that a realistic measurement of attraction was not possible as participants were merely expressing their preference for a set of words and not a real, prospective partner. Nevertheless, studies like the one critiqued above have made an invaluable contribution to knowledge and inspired researchers in the field of relationships. In the years that followed relationship research has evolved and has started to use a variety of methods. Recent evaluations of relationship research and its connection to social psychology indicates that relationship researchers now use wide-ranging, multifaceted and sophisticated methods in their investigations (Felmlee and Sprecher, 2000; Perlman, 1999). Current trends in the study of relationships are being examined and methodological limitations are being addressed (Perlman, 1999). On the one hand, this level of scrutiny and a strong determination to provide accurate, reliable and valid evidence, has obvious benefits. Research is now more diverse, more inclusive and more realistic (Hoobler, 1999, cited in Brehm et al). Contributions to relationship research come from scholars with various theoretical backgrounds who provide a plethora of explanations for behaviour (Brehm et al., 2002). On the other hand, although it is clear that the field is moving forward and that progress is being made, the apparent diversity in methodology and perspective has created a new, more complicated problem. High levels of diversity made studies very difficult to compare and contrast so it is often impossible to examine one specific topic within relationships research and conclude with certainty. In addition, the wide-range of theoretical perspectives used to support and explain findings can complicate the research process. Having too many theories to explain one specific aspect of behaviour is not a rare phenomenon in relationship research (Moghaddam, 1998). Clearly this problem has no simple solution. If one decides to extract the diversity from theory and methodology, then there is the danger of reverting back to the flawed and often colourless designs of the 50's and 60's; and if one attempts
to create an all inclusive, culturally minded, realistic study that studies relationships over a long period of time then there is the danger of losing track of the main objectives and of being unable to provide clear and accurate conclusions.

Research Issues
A discussion of the advantages and pitfalls of research in relationships can not be complete without examining the role of the most popular method used in the field. For the last 50 years or so relationship researchers have predominantly relied on self-report methods to investigate the various aspects of human interaction (Ickes and Duck, 1999; Brehm et al., 2002). Self-report methods involve asking participants about their thoughts, feelings, beliefs and experiences and data is normally obtained by using questionnaires, interviews and diaries. The advantages of self-reports are many. They are direct representations of people's experience, as they give participants the chance to provide a personal and individual account of various aspects of their lives. Moreover, self-reports are inexpensive and can be obtained with relative ease. Lastly, they help shed light into the meaning of each experience as participants are offered the chance to explain, for example, whether a particular situation, experience or thought is important to them (Erber and Erber, 2001). These advantages are part of the reason why self-report methods have been so popular in the past and why they will continue to feature strongly in relationships' investigations. One could argue that when you want to find out what people think, feel or do, all you have to do is ask them. Unfortunately though the sheer complexity of human relationships, and the fact that humans are prone to error, make self-report methods less straightforward. Self-reports are heavily dependant on how accurately one can recall information that relates to a specific topic. Researchers have long debated whether self-report data are accurate and whether recalled information is reliable (Davis, 1999; Loftus, 2001). For example, work outside the field of relationships (Loftus, 1993, 1996, 2001) has shown that memories can be distorted. Thus, since self-reports rely almost entirely on people's recollections and perceptions of events, experiences and feelings, one could
argue against the reliability of information obtained via this method. Another potential problem with self-reports is participant misinterpretation of questions or guidelines. For example, the meaning and perception of the question "how often are you affectionate towards your partner?" can vary from person to person. Situational, cultural and contextual cues can affect how one perceives this question and inevitably how they are going to answer it. Lastly, the accuracy and value of self-report data depends upon how honestly people tend to answer questions about themselves. Two kinds of bias may exist here. Even if one assumes that a participant will want to be helpful and attempt to answer in full honesty that does not necessarily guarantee that the information they are providing will be accurate. Social psychological research has shown that a number of biases can limit one's account of a specific behaviour, belief or event (Whitley and Frieze, 1985; Schlenker and Weigold, 1992). The self-serving bias states that "people have the tendency to attribute successful outcomes of one's own behaviour to internal causes and unsuccessful outcomes to external or situational causes" (Hockenbury and Hockenbury, 2005; p.529). An example of the self-serving bias can be seen in an early study done by Ross and Sicoly (1979), where partners were found to overestimate the amount of housework they actually do. The study also revealed that participants were not consciously trying to deceive others but that they genuinely perceived their participation in household chores to be bigger than it actually was. This study raised awareness amongst researchers and emphasized the importance of being critical of information obtained through self-report methods. Another identified bias in self-reports is the social desirability effect where participants appear to be unwilling to disclose accurate personal information or state their opinion in an attempt to 'save face' and protect their self-esteem and public image (Dunning et al, 1995; Banaji and Prentice, 1994). Studies dealing with sensitive topics such as, infidelity, homophobia, and racism suffer from this bias the most. At the end of the day, in an increasingly politically correct society nobody would like to be perceived as a racist, homophobe or as an unfaithful partner. The social desirability effect has had a serious impact on research as seen by the prolonged and still ongoing debate about the rate of homosexuality in the general population.
Participant reluctance to honestly report their sexuality has created problems not only with the prevalence of homosexuality but also with the accuracy with which researchers can assess intimate relationships. Studies on homophobia report a decrease of homophobic affect in the general population (Span and Vidal, 2003); at the same time homosexuals are increasingly reporting homophobic attitudes directed towards them (Harper and Schneider, 2003); low social acceptance can in turn lead to a higher number of people that are reluctant to report their sexual preferences (Cameron and Cameron, 1998). There are obvious contradictions within self-report data and one could argue that these contradictions are the result of preconceptions and bias that exist in society.

However, efforts have been made to reduce the effects of these two types of bias in relationship research. One way to tackle the problem of social desirability is to ensure participant anonymity and emphasise the confidential nature of data. Some researchers argue that if investigators cannot prevent people from responding in a socially desirable way then they should at least monitor the extent of the phenomenon. For instance, by simply administering a social desirability scale a researcher could calculate and consider the effects of the bias and therefore make more cautious interpretations (Hockenbury and Hockenbury, 2005). The problems that the self-serving bias creates are of a more complex nature. Researchers cannot always judge whether data are accurate reflections of what is really happening, as they can only analyse whatever information participants provide. The solution to this problem may be that researchers use another method of obtaining their data. Perhaps the only way to tackle the self-serving bias is to move away from self-report data and closer to observational data. This is exactly what Gottman (1999) did in study on conflict between intimate partners. He invited married couples to stay at a pleasant and cosy flat in an effort to simulate their usual environment. He then asked participants to take as much time as needed in order to acclimatise to the new environment. Cameras were concealed in various places within the flat, and although participants knew they were being filmed, the relaxed nature of the environment made it easy for them to forget they were being monitored.
The main task given to participants involved revisiting the topic of their last argument and discussing the matter as they would do at home. Gottman argued that by using this method he was able to observe a couple's behaviour as it happened. He also asserted that the naturalistic setting enabled the collection of objective and reliable data. This recent study has demonstrated that the disadvantages of self-report methods can be avoided by creating alternative methods of obtaining data on relationships issues. Furthermore, it achieved another objective that relates to two longstanding problems in relationship research; the overuse of single-participant data and the lack of consideration for cultural diversity.

Researchers have recently argued that relationship research has predominantly relied on self-report data from a single-participant perspective (Brehm et al., 2002; Ickes and Duck, 1999); furthermore, recent reviews of relationship research revealed that most studies base their conclusions on white, middle class participants from Western countries (Moghaddam, 1998). The problem of the single-participant perspective in relationship research has received considerable attention in recent years. Duck argued that researchers have mistakenly focused on single-participant data when in fact their main objective was to study relationships between people. By isolating individuals, researchers have extracted the rich, colourful and semantically important impact of actual interaction. As Ickes and Duck (1999) stated, "It is therefore ironic, and perhaps paradoxical, that the social psychology of the past 50 years has relied primarily on single-participant research paradigms in which individuals are asked to report their own subjective reactions to nominally 'social' stimuli or 'social' situations. It is also ironic that isolation from those shadowy others-real or imagined-who presumably bestow upon the situation its 'social' character... In effect, the research participants in the traditional single-subject paradigms...must convey their social experience more through reminiscence or anticipated action than through their actual interactions with others" (p.2). It is apparent therefore, that there is a need for new approaches in relationship research as researchers in this field have started recognising that a dyadic or holistic approach is both necessary and desirable.
The last issue to be addressed is cultural variation in relationship research, as a comprehensive understanding of relationship behaviour cannot be reached without considering the role of cultural influences on behaviour. Relationship research has been criticised for not seriously considering and addressing cultural diversity (Moghaddam, 1998;). The examination of cultural values and beliefs and their influence on relationship behaviour is seen as essential by cross-cultural psychologists. Goodwin (1999) proposed that cultural background and cross-cultural demographic variables (i.e. age, gender etc), should be taken into account in relationships investigations, as they influence an individuals values which in turn can influence his/her relationship behaviour. As he argued, “future researchers should explore the impact of values on a range of demographic factors, while at the same time recognising the complex relationship between values and behaviours in many societies. Such an integrative, inter-disciplinary approach offers the possibility of a far more sophisticated understanding of relationships, and the way they interact with culture, demographic factors and values and beliefs” (Goodwin, 1999; p.176). There is growing agreement amongst researchers that the study of relationships should move away from investigations that are based on white, middle class, western, university samples and closer to investigations that are culturally diverse and wide-ranging.

Research in relationships, and indeed in social psychology as a whole, has come a long way and is still progressing. Some recent studies are showing signs of considering the wide range of problems in research of this kind and they are making an attempt to deal with them. However, creating the ‘perfect’ study is easier said than done. Research in the field has several restricting factors that affect how it progresses and develops. The financial constraints and the time pressures that a researcher has to face, have a profound effect on both the quantity and the quality of research that is being generated. Nevertheless, relationship research, regardless of imperfections and flaws, is a fascinating field and is contributing to our knowledge and understanding of human relationships. After all the purpose of research is not the search for
absolute truth but the advancement of knowledge. It is this purpose that makes the process of research an invaluable and fascinating experience. Although one must be cautious in examining any of the studies presented in this thesis, he/she should still appreciate and value the contributions that they make in the ever increasing field of relationships. Finally, it is the research journey not the research result that enables the field to evolve and develop. As Kavafis, a Greek poet put it, “When you set out on your journey to Ithaka, pray that the road is long, full of adventure, full of knowledge” (Kavafis, 1911, cited in Barbanis, 2005).

Following the brief review of the history of research in relationships the focus now is placed on defining intimate relationships and intimacy and exploring the reasons why research in these areas is of major importance.

Throughout this thesis the term 'intimate relationships' is used to refer to the romantic, sexual and emotional bonds between two adults that are members of a dyadic relationship. Before embarking into the difficult task of defining intimacy it is important to note that references to other types of intimate associations, such as close friendships, will be made throughout as intimacy is a broad concept that is part of many aspects of people’s lives (Prager, 1995).

**Intimacy**

Intimacy is a complicated concept that has been at the centre of debate between scholars for many years (Brehm, et al 2002). The multifaceted nature of this concept has made it difficult to define as there is a wide range of components that make it up (Prager, 1995; Perlman and Fehr, 1987). One of the first attempts to define intimacy was made in the early 50's by Sullivan (1953). He defined intimacy as “clearly formulated adjustments of one’s behaviour to the expressed needs of the other person” (p.246). Although this definition made an important initial contribution it failed to encapsulate the multifaceted nature of the term and thus, was criticized for being oversimplified. In specific, Sullivan's definition did include any information about the individual experience of intimacy, (i.e. what are the emotions involved in
an intimate interaction?). Other attempts to define intimacy addressed this issue and involved accentuating the importance of the emotions experienced through intimate interaction, for example, closeness, affection, love (Sexton and Sexton, 1982; L’Abate and L’Abate, 1979). However, these definitions failed to consider how intimacy is experienced within a relationship (i.e., what are the components of relational intimacy?). Sternberg (1986) and Perlman and Fehr (1987) outlined the components that were missing from previous definitions. In Sternberg’s definition, happiness, mutual understanding, emotional support and communication feature as the main components. Perlman and Fehr’s version emphasise the significance of self-disclosure and closeness. Disagreement on exactly what constitutes intimacy does not only exist between academics but lay people as well (Prager, 1995). In a thorough review of intimacy as a concept Prager (1995) stressed the importance of considering lay perceptions and ensuring that a definition of the term can reflect how it is experienced by people. Research has shown that lay perceptions of intimacy revolve around the notions of self-disclosure and trust (Jourard, 1968; Gilbert, 1976; Monsour, 1992). A good working definition of intimacy should therefore include all of the components identified in earlier years. An attempt will be made to unravel intimacy as a concept and examine the various components that constitute it.

Prager (1995) argued that as an abstract and multifaceted concept, intimacy cannot be defined with precision without considering the various parts that constitute it. She suggested a model that has three levels; at the superordinate level intimacy exists as super-ordinate concept; at the basic level there are intimate interactions and intimate relationships and at the subordinate level, intimate experiences and intimate behaviour. Intimate interactions are seen as “dialogues between people that have certain specific characteristics”, and intimate relationships as a chain of interactions that “involve multiple dialogue over time” (p. 19). Intimate behaviour is defined as any behaviour that involves sharing and/or disclosing personal information. Intimate experiences describe what is felt by an individual that engages in intimate behaviour (i.e. positive feelings). Both intimate behaviour and intimate
experiences are essential components of intimate interactions. Prager then used her intimacy model to explain and define what constitutes intimate relationships. Her definition of intimate relationships involves the presence of relational intimacy in the form of "ongoing, frequently occurring intimate interactions between partners" (Prager, 1995; p.26). In addition, she argued that a partner's lasting thoughts and feelings experienced through intimate interaction should also be part of the definition. Finally, Prager claimed that there are three main relationship characteristics that "both emerge from and sustain relational intimacy" (p.27). These characteristics are affection, trust and cohesiveness. This definition is the most complete and appropriate definition that has been put forward in recent years. Prager's comprehensive account of intimacy as a concept, and her definition of intimate relationships have made an enormous contribution to the field of relationships.

The remainder of this chapter explores research on intimate relationships in an attempt to highlight the importance they have on people's lives. It also aims to discuss the reasons why people tend to form close relationships with others.

Intimate relationships are an essential part of many people's lives (Cramer, 1998). Individuals spend their lives relating to other people, as they have to study, work, relax and socialise with others. Researchers in the area of relationships have long asserted that humans have a need for affiliation and intimacy and they have an innate need to belong in close relationships, irrespective of what their cultural, ethnic, or societal background is. Erber and Erber (2001) stressed that humans are 'social creatures' and noted, "the idea that humans, by nature, are social creatures is as old as or older than civilisation itself and it permeates the social sciences to this very day" (Erber and Erber, 2001; p.2). Intimate relationships in specific are often at the centre of people's everyday conversations and the central theme to numerous songs and movies (Goodwin, 1999). People seem to be a constantly trying to understand their relationships and have an interest on how and why these relationships form, how and why they develop and ultimately how and why
they end. A large-scale British study has shown that over 67% of adults in Britain are either married or in long-term relationships (Jowell, Witherspoon and Brook 1987 cited in Cramer 1998). It has been argued that the majority of the adult population are or have a desire to be in intimate relationships because of the central role that partners play in people's lives (Erber and Erber 2001). The desire to form intimate relationships stems from people's need to affiliate, belong and experience intimacy.

People's need for affiliation can be explained and perhaps justified by examining their everyday interactions. It has been argued that this inherent need to form associations with others is based upon the need to compare ourselves with others (Murray, 1938 cited in Erber and Erber, 2001). One's sense of self-concept and identity is partly influenced by evaluations of their own abilities, opinions and thoughts in comparison to others (Marsh, Kong and Hau, 2000). In a longitudinal study Marsh et al (2000) found that students from schools that have fewer high-achieving pupils tend to have a higher academic self-concept. Similar studies have confirmed that social comparisons are an integral part one's life as individuals tend to compare themselves to others in much of life (Gilbert et al, 1995; Shepperd and Taylor, 1999). This inherent need for affiliation may in turn explain why people strive to initiate and maintain rewarding relationships through life. It motivates people to form numerous friendships during their lifetime. However, this need alone cannot explain why people are eager in sharing their innermost thoughts and feelings with only one significant other and why there is an almost global tendency to form very close and deep dyadic relationships (Buss, 1994; Prager and Buhrmester, 1998). This can be explained better by examining people's need for intimacy. It is this need that motivates individuals in seeking warm, close and meaningful relationships.

The need to form close, intimate relationships with specific individuals can vary from person to person. These variations and differences can be predictive of one's behaviour in intimate situations and individual experience of intimacy. McAdams and his colleagues studied intimacy motivation during
the 1980's and argued that the amount of desired and experienced intimacy in one's life can determine the frequency, likelihood and type of intimate interaction (McAdams 1984, 1988; McAdams and Powers, 1981). Prager reviewed McAdams work and noted: "Intimacy motivation is defined by McAdams (1984, 1988) as a persistent desire for experiences of self-merging with others. By definition, people who are high in intimacy motivation (1) view relationships as sources of positive affect and (2) value talk for its own sake, particularly reciprocal and non-instrumental talk" (Prager, 1995; p.201). To put it simply, intimacy motivation represents how much or how little an individual needs to be intimate with others. Research confirms this claim; the probability and rate of occurrence of intimate behaviour can be predicted by the strength of an individual's intimacy motivation (McAdams, 1984). In one study with university students researchers found that those with a high intimacy motivation score are more likely to partake in intimate interactions than those with a low intimacy motivation score (McAdams and Constantian, 1983). Although the study had obvious limitations (sample type and size), these findings laid the foundations of research on intimacy motivation and created space for further investigation. Similar results were later produced by other McAdams studies and more recently by Craig, Koestner and Zurroff (1994). High intimacy motivation was found to be predictive of particular intimacy behaviours (McAdams and Powers, 1981; McAdams, Jackson and Kirsgnit, 1984). For example, individuals that score highly in intimacy motivation are more likely to be verbally and non-verbally expressive, engage in mutual dialogue and laugh more than their low-scoring counterparts (McAdams, Jackson and Kirsgnit, 1984). Furthermore, highly motivated people have a preference for dyadic interactions that are characterised by high levels of self-disclosure and active listening and non-verbal forms of communication such as smiling, positive affective gestures and tender touching (Craig, Koestner and Zurroff, 1994). These preferences prescribe the type and sometimes the outcome of interactions sought by high intimacy motivated people. Their attention is focused on the depth, strength and quality of the interaction and as research suggests they benefit from a greater level of trust and sense of well being compared to their low-scoring counterparts (McAdams and Bryant,
This increased sense of well being is not exclusively the privilege of those who have a high need for intimacy; rather it is experienced by those who have a high need for affiliation; as Erber and Erber put it: “it is important to note that although the need for affiliation and need for intimacy are not mutually exclusive, they preclude each other to some extent. Someone whose need for affiliation leads him or her to be a social butterfly will likely experience some difficulty initiating and maintaining a single, close relationship. By the same token, someone who is high in need for intimacy may be unsatisfied with a social life that primarily revolves around friends and acquaintances” (Erber and Erber, 2001; p.5). The authors argue that it is difficult to determine who, out of two is to experience the most benefits. In other words, is it the person that has a high need for intimacy that will be more psychosocially adjusted or the one that has a high need for affiliation? One study shed light on this issue. McAdams and Vailliant (1982) tested a group of men when they were 30 years old and again 17 years later. The authors hypothesised that compared with the need for affiliation, need for intimacy was going to be more predictive of overall life satisfaction and happiness. Their results confirmed the hypothesis as it was found that participants who scored high on need for intimacy at the age of 30 were more satisfied with their lives overall (job, relationships and social support) than those who scored low. Although this research has its merits it fails to explain why people often refer to these two needs as equally important (Baumeister and Leary, 1995). The question arises as to whether these two needs can be separated or whether they are in fact, interrelated. Researchers argue that “our tendency to seek and maintain relationships of breadth as well as depth are caused by an underlying need to belong” (Erber and Erber, 2001; p.6).

The belongingness hypothesis has been supported by a wealth of evidence. Humans appear to be able to form bonds and attachments to other humans from an early age, admittedly, even before they can understand or figure out the benefits involved (Bowlby, 1969 cited in Erber and Erber). In adulthood the ease with which people can establish relationships intrigued theorists and inspired investigations. The underlying human need to belong has been at the
centre of discussions in early studies (Brewer, 1979; Sherif et al, 1961; Tajfel, 1970). In an experiment on in-group behaviour Tajfel (1970) randomly assigned participants to different groups. He found that people developed feelings of loyalty and a sense of duty towards the group they were assigned to even though the time spent with the group was limited and consequently the group members were unfamiliar with each other. Although, the study was criticised for being artificial it generated great interest and its results were confirmed in subsequent research (Brewer, 1979; Tajfel, 2001). The sense of loyalty and identification with members of a group appears to be related to the human need for belonginess. People strive to ‘belong’ and be members of broad and specific categories as such memberships often provide safety, security, support and ultimately contribute to the fulfilment of individual needs (Erber and Erber, 2001). The human need to belong can also be explained by adopting an evolutionary point of view. As Erber and Erber (2001) argue, “although the need to belong is to some extent innate, our evolutionary history may have done its part to make it a dominant form of human motivation. Forming social bonds may have important survival and reproductive benefits. Evolution has provided humans with a set of internal mechanisms that predispose them toward seeking relationships with others (p.6). Further support for the belongingness hypothesis can be found in recent evidence that indicates that the need to belong is associated with health benefits. Dovidio et al, (2005) found that an increased sense of belongingness can positively influence an individual’s well being both in mental and physical terms. Evidence from studies with cancer and heart disease patients has shown that close relationships and a high sense of belongingness are predictive of higher chances of survival (Goodwin et al 1987; Lynch, 1977).

The need to belong can explain why both the quantity (affiliation) and the quality (intimacy) of relationships is such an essential ingredient in life. People’s thoughts and feelings are strongly related to their fundamental need to belong. Erber and Fiske (1984) provided evidence to support this link. In their study, participants reported more frequent and persistent thoughts about people with whom they were expected to form a working relationship.
Similarly, emotions and feelings are seen as being at the core of any meaningful attachment. The formation of relationships, whether these are intimate attachments, friendships, or just acquaintances, is infused by emotions such as happiness, love, excitement and joy. In the same way, the end of a relationship is usually followed by negative feelings. To summarize, the need for affiliation, belongingness intimacy underline the human tendency “to feel gratified by intimate experiences and to feel deprived in their absence” (Prager, 1995; p.257). As seen the desire to form relationships is fuelled by the need to belong. However, lay justifications for seeking relationships have shown that people are attracted to relationships in order to satisfy several other psychological needs. Weiss (1969 cited in Erber and Erber) compiled a list of psychological needs that can only be satisfied by close association and bonding with others. The first such need is the need for intimacy which requires people to communicate their thoughts and feelings with others. This need is based on the premise that it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to spend a lifetime without ever wanting or feeling compelled to disclose personal information to others. The second need according to Weiss, is the need for ‘social integration’. This requires sharing one’s fears, anxieties and concerns with others. Even if one accepts the fact that some people do not like discussing such matters, it would be practically impossible for an individual to completely avoid ever engaging in some form of conversation regarding their concerns and worries. After all, from an early stage in life, humans tend to seek answers to issues that concern them. Accordingly, the next item on the list regards people’s need for assistance and support. The benefits of emotional, psychological and physical support are well documented, as many people depend on their loved ones to help them along with serious problems and issues or simply with daily life. On the other hand, people also need to be able to be helpful to others. The need to be nurturant is on one level supporting the necessity to be given a helping hand, and on another the need to take care of someone. Lastly, Weiss argued that people’s self-esteem and their sense of self-worth largely depends on reassurances received by others. Therefore the need for reassurance requires people to have someone that can encourage them and promote feelings of self-worth.
People's need to affiliate, experience intimacy and belong, as seen, are believed to have great importance in one's life. To a certain extent these needs predict behaviour that is characteristic or corresponds to a certain need. For example, the need to affiliate requires people to seek the company of others and motivates them to make new acquaintances. The explanation offered for such behaviour is based on the premise that behaviour is the result of a certain need. Therefore, if we accept this premise then, in theory, we can explain why people strive to initiate, establish and maintain relationships. However, some researchers have argued that need-based theories are narrow in their perspective and that they fail to account for the inevitability of human relationships (Erber and Erber, 2001). As these authors argue, "interactions with others, and perhaps relationships as well, are an almost inevitable outcome not so much of human nature but human existence. Planet earth is, after all, a heavily populated place, which makes a life of complete solitude almost impossible" (Erber and Erber, 2001; p.8). So, in reality one could argue that it is not just the needs that drive people to seek out relationships with others but the fact that there is no other alternative. So do people initiate and maintain relationships with others just because they are there? Can this criticism of need-based theories fully explain and justify human behaviour in regards to relationships? The answer to these questions can be provided by examining human motivation. The premise that people establish relationships with others just because it would be practically impossible to live in complete solitude does not explain why people invest time and effort to better their relationships nor does it explain the complexity and richness that are often characteristic of human bonds. Consequently, in order to understand why people initiate and maintain social relationships one must consider both the underlying human needs and the inevitability of social interaction.
STUDY 1

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW:
JEALOUSY, AGGRESSION, SEXUAL DESIRE

This chapter will focus on four main variables, jealousy, aggression, sexual desire and post-conflict sex. First, each variable will be examined individually in the light of psychological theory and second, possible inter-correlations between the variables will be examined which will lead to the study’s hypotheses.

Jealousy
Jealousy is an emotion that is felt by most people at some point in their lives. It is a pervasive and intense feeling that “stems from fidelity and is an affective reaction to perceived threats to a monogamous relationship. It is the desire to possess a cherished other and the angst we experience when we perceive a threat, real or imagined, to that relationship” (Erber and Erber, 2001; p.187). Jealousy emerges as an emotion when at least one member of a dyad fears losing his/her partner to third person. In Western and individualistic societies it has negative connotations because it is perceived as a sinister emotion that is unpleasant, upsetting and disturbing (Mullen, 1991). The negative properties of this emotion may explain why jealousy is often frowned upon and why people find it difficult to tolerate and accept it. Anyone who has experienced jealousy in a relationship either on the initiating or the receiving end would probably agree that it is a very unpleasant and distressing experience that is best avoided. The person who is feeling jealous in a relationship goes through an emotional roller-coaster that is dominated by preoccupation of negative thoughts, fear, anxiety, insecurity, anger and sadness (Parrot, 1991; cited in Salovey, 1991). Reactions
to possible romantic and sexual rivals are not universal though. People in non-western cultures have been found to be less possessive and exclusive in their relationships (Hupka, 1991; cited in Salovey, 1991). Certain cultures and groups like the Tahiti swingers report lower levels of jealousy because the relationship between love and sex is weaker. Buunk (1991; cited in Salovey, 1991) argued that groups like this have developed specific strategies in an effort to disassociate sex and love and thus create a more permissive environment. Cross-cultural comparisons have therefore underlined the influence of culture in jealousy and highlighted the significance it has on how jealousy is defined and even experienced. Jealousy appears to be an emotion that is heavily influenced by cultural norms and one that has evolved through different times. For example, in the early 1300’s jealousy was seen as an acceptable, if not necessary, reaction to infidelity in order to preserve and defend one’s honour (Mullen, 1991). In this light, jealousy appeared to have positive connotations as it served the purpose of protecting one’s reputation. Moreover, historical accounts have revealed that the expression of jealous feeling was seen as a declaration of devotion and stood as proof of one’s love for another (Mullen, 1991). The approval of jealousy as a positive feeling stemmed from the belief at the time, that jealous behaviour is guided by passion and thus, is uncontrollable, unpredictable and impulsive. Seen like this, reactions to jealousy were justified and responsibility did not lie with the individual (Erber and Erber, 2001). During the 19th and the 20th century, perceptions of jealousy changed because of changes in practices within the constitution of marriage. As Erber and Erber argue, “in previous centuries, love was often sought in relationships outside of the marriage union, and marriage was viewed more as an economic undertaking, with wives contributing value as possessions. Recent history saw this part of our social order overturned as love prior rather than following marriage was the norm” (p.183). Romantic love became the focus of marriage unions and people started changing their views of infidelity and jealousy. The positive undertones of jealousy were fading away because of the belief that humans should be able to address problems logically and in a controlled manner instead of surrendering to passion. Consequently, in
the 21st century, jealousy “is no longer considered a valid, socially sanctioned way to defend one’s honour or to protest a partner’s infidelity; jealousy has become a uniquely individual expression of rage” (Erber and Erber, 2001). Nowadays, both academics and lay people perceive jealousy as a negative emotional experience that is often characterized by a lack of the ability to respond in a rational and controlled manner.

Jealousy appears to be a multifaceted emotion, and its definition, expression and how it is being experienced depends on many factors. Scholars have long attempted to identify these factors in an effort to find the causes of jealousy. As a result four theories were developed. First, the transactional theory of jealousy highlighted the importance of considering, the individual, the relationship and the situation (Bringle, 1991; cited in Salovey, 1991). Bringle argued that jealousy can only be understood when one considers these three factors and how they interact. He identified three components that can help arbitrate the jealous experience. The first component of the transactional model relates to the individual and is called arousability. According to Bringle the individual plays a significant role on how jealousy is experienced because different people have different levels of arousal. For example one person’s level of arousal when experiencing an intense emotion such as jealousy, is different to another person’s. People with high levels of arousability were found to have more extreme jealous reactions (Bringle et al., 1979). Therefore, the natural predisposition to arousal can affect how intensively one experiences jealousy. However, one’s physiological predisposition alone cannot fully explain exactly how he/she will experience jealousy. It can be argued that the transactional model has failed to account for emotional and cognitive cues that may affect how this emotion is expressed and experienced.

The second component of the model is commitment and describes the level of involvement a partner has in the relationship. The more committed and dedicated he/she is, the more the perceived loss when they are faced with the possibility of
a romantic rival, and therefore, the more intense the jealous reaction (Bringle, 1991). Lastly, Bringle and his colleagues argued that an individual's sense of security within a relationship can influence the intensity of the jealous experience. As the last part of the transactional model, insecurity is interconnected to the commitment component. Higher levels of insecurity stem from the perception of how committed a partner is. If one perceives their partner to be less committed and dedicated to them then they will have higher levels of insecurity, which in turn can increase the intensity of the jealousy experienced. In summary, the transactional model places the focus on individual characteristics as these can arguably, provide more accurate and consistent predictions of someone's behaviour across various situations. Nevertheless, situational cues are very important and in Bringle's model they are seen as secondary to dispositional cues. As seen earlier, the transactional model of jealousy does not take under consideration emotional and cognitive factors such as a person's thoughts, perceptions and interpretations of a certain event. Other theories have attempted to include these factors into their explanations. As we will see in the next few paragraphs, situational influences are seen as having a more direct and influential role in jealousy. These explanations adopt an interactionist approach and highlight the role that individual perceptions and interpretations can play in jealousy.

The cognitive motivational approach to jealousy, like Bringle's model, focuses on the individual but with an important addition; it considers the impact of an individual's thoughts, feelings, perceptions and beliefs, on how he/she experiences jealousy. According to White (1981) a reaction to a jealousy-provoking situation is not just influenced by a person's disposition but also by the way they perceive and attempt to analyse the situation. For example, faced with a romantic rival a person may try to explain or justify their partner's behaviour by attributing it to various factors. Attributions are linked to that person's thoughts, feelings and cognitions, and it is the combination of all these factors that can predict what type of reaction (if any) they are going to have. Sharpsteen (1995)
argues that the intensity of the jealous reactions also depends on how motivated one is to maintain the relationship. High levels of motivation would suggest a more intense reaction. In Sharpsteen's study participants were asked to respond to jealousy-provoking scenarios that had two dimensions; the scenarios either posed a threat to participant self-esteem or to their relationships. He found that both types of threats can significantly increase the level of intensity of the jealous reaction. Erber and Erber (2001) commented on Sharpsteen's findings and said that "the degree of security and trust we have in the strength and validity of our relationship influence how secure or insecure, and hence how safe or threatened, we feel. In this manner, our feelings about our relationship, not surprisingly, directly affect the degree of threat we perceive, and therefore the intensity of jealousy we experience" (p.194). In summary, the cognitive motivational approach considers both situational factors and a person's disposition to jealousy in the light of the interactions between, the relationship the jealous person and the various thoughts, feelings and perceptions that they have. However, one criticism of this approach to jealousy has been that it does not take into account the role that the third person or rival may play. For example it may be the case that one is jealous of a certain rival and not others specifically because of the certain characteristics they possess. A person may therefore, have a more intense jealous reaction if the rival possesses one or more characteristics that he/she hasn't (i.e. higher self-esteem, higher status, more attractiveness). Attention to the rival was initially drawn by Tesser (1988; cited in Berkowitz, 1989), who argued that the rival and his or her characteristics can significantly influence how jealousy is experienced. Tesser, maintained that when faced with a romantic rival, people go through the process of comparing themselves to the rival. During this process people evaluate whether they are better or worse than their rivals and, arguably, the outcome of this self-evaluation affects how jealousy is experienced. Therefore, the level of the threat can either be reduced or increased according to how one measures up against their rival. Tesser termed this process of self-evaluation and comparison as, Self Evaluation Maintenance (SEM). The SEM model was later supported by other researchers in the field.
Recent work by Beach et al., (1998) has shown that the SEM model can explain how and with what intensity jealousy is expressed not only in close romantic relationships but also in other types of relationships such as friendships. Beach and his colleagues maintained that self evaluations occur outside the romantic dyad, for example, in situations where two people compete for the friendship of a third. This research highlighted the importance of examining jealousy as an emotion that affects, and is affected by three people not just two. DeSteno and Salovey (1996a) explored the jealousy triad in a study with male and female university students. In their study, DeSteno and Salovey, asked participants to imagine that their partner is flirting with someone else. In addition to the scenarios the researchers gave participants the descriptions of three potential rivals. The rivals were described as extremely intelligent, athletic, or popular. The main aim of the study was to see whether feelings of jealousy can be affected by rival characteristics. Indeed, participants were found to experience more extreme jealous feelings when the rival possessed more qualities than them and when participants felt that they could not compete with certain rival characteristics (i.e. popularity). Therefore, it was concluded that the jealous person will have a more intense experience of jealousy when the rival is deemed superior in at least one domain, a domain which is usually the jealous person's 'weak spot'. DeSteno and Salovey's explanation of what provokes a more intense jealousy reaction is insightful, because it attempts to explore the internal workings of the jealous person's mind and identify what instigates the jealous feeling. However, it can be argued that DeSteno and Salovey have not identified what makes one jealous but what makes one competitive. As Erber and Erber (2001), put it, "one alternative explanation for DeSteno's and Salovey's findings might be that the participants were not jealous, but instead were competitive with rivals similar on key attributes" (p.196). The answer to this argument comes by closely examining the study's method. The study included participant evaluations of the rivals outside the boundaries of the jealousy scenarios. Analysis of these evaluations revealed that participants viewed rivals in a positive and not in a competitive way; this was evident in participants' expressions of fondness towards rivals. This confusion
arose because Self Evaluation Maintenance is a process that involves social comparison, and for this reason its effects cannot be entirely attributed to jealousy. Nevertheless, in this particular study the authors were able to conclude that it was "the jealousy-provoking situation and not social comparison alone that was responsible for the intense negative emotional experiences" (Erber and Erber, 2001; p.196).

In summary, the SEM model has attempted to identify the sources of jealousy by considering the influence of the third party on the person and the situation. Overall, this model has achieved a very important goal; it helped researchers to realize the complexity of the dynamics involved in a jealousy-provoking situation. One can only fully understand jealousy as an emotion by examining all factors that affect how it is initiated, expressed and experienced. As seen, the jealous individual is at the centre of explanations offered by researchers. Nevertheless, other factors have been shown to be equally important; Situational influences make each jealous experience unique, the perceived threats to the person and the relationship have great importance, and the specific characteristics of all parties involved (the jealous person, the partner and the rival), add meaning to how jealousy is experienced. All these factors are needed in order to understand jealousy as an emotion. However, the exact sources of jealousy cannot be identified before considering alternative explanations offered by evolutionary psychologists. Therefore, the evolutionary perspective to jealousy will be examined briefly in an attempt to unravel the mysteries of this emotion.

Evolutionary psychologists view jealousy as an innate, deep-rooted and inevitable reaction (Buunk et al., 1996; Buss, 1999; Haselton and Buss, 2000). Researchers in this field have long argued that jealousy acts as a natural defensive mechanism that is designed to protect people's relationships and ensure the continuation of the gene pool through procreation (Buss, 2000). According to this view romantic rivals are seen as intruders that threaten successful reproduction and hinder ones efforts to produce a healthy offspring.
Buss and his colleagues (1992) argued that men and women experience jealousy in different ways. This difference is argued to be derived from differences in male and female motivations in mating. Men are thought to be motivated by a deep desire to ensure paternity certainty and women by a desire to maintain their partner's affection and support (Buss, 1999). Women as child bearers can be certain that the child is theirs and therefore do not suffer from the same type of anxiety as men do. Men's anxiety focuses around reproduction as they cannot ensure that an offspring is theirs. Seen in this light, the source of jealousy for men is different to the one for women. In a study with male and female participants Buss and his colleagues gained support for this theory and concluded that men tend to suffer more from sexual jealousy and women from emotional jealousy (Buss et al., 1992). Participants in this study were given two jealousy-provoking scenarios and asked to report which one of the two would upset them the most. The first option asked participants to imagine that their partner was “forming a deep emotional attachment” to someone else; the second option, to imagine that their partner was “enjoying passionate sexual intercourse” with someone else (Buss et al., 1992; p.252). The results confirmed the authors’ predictions and showed that 60% of men would feel more jealous and suffer more if their partner engaged in sexual activities with someone else whereas 83% of women would feel more distraught if their partner formed an emotional attachment with another person. The results of this study attracted a lot of attention from the research community. On the one hand researchers accepted that the evolutionary view of jealousy ‘made sense’ and that there are apparent sex differences in jealousy (Brehm et al., 2002). On the other hand, the study results was criticised for ignoring a methodological flaw. DeSteno and Salovey (1996b) argued that participants in Buss et al’s study were not given a ‘real’ choice but were forced to chose one of two very similar and, arguably, equally upsetting scenarios. One could reason that both scenarios have the potential of being equally distressing. As Brehm et al., (2002) said, “The use of a forced-choice question in which research participants have to pick one option or the other can exaggerate a subtle and relatively minor sex difference. If men find
sexual infidelity only slightly more threatening than women do, a forced choice question could yield the striking results Buss et al., (1992) obtained even if the actual difference in men’s and women’s outlooks was rather trivial” (p.290). Indeed, this methodological flaw may have produced exaggerated results because the evidence from subsequent studies has not been entirely consistent with the evolutionary view. Harris (2000) conducted a study that involved participants’ physiological measurements while they were imagining sexual and emotional infidelity. The results showed that indeed males tended to get more aroused when imagining that their partner was engaging in sexual activities with someone else. However, a closer examination of the data revealed that males in the study were generally more aroused by any imagined scene that involved sexual activities. In another study, Hupka and Bank (1996) failed to obtain support for the claim that men find sexual infidelity more distressing. On the other hand, there has been some support for the evolutionary explanation of how men and women respond to jealousy. Studies in Sweden, Japan and the Netherlands have yielded similar results to the original study (Wiederman and Kendall, 1999; Buss et al., 1999; Buunk et al., 1996). Although, reactions to infidelity vary significantly from one culture to the other (Brehm et al., 2002), recent research has confirmed that men consistently experience higher level of distress when infidelity is of a sexual rather than an emotional nature (Wiederman and Kendall, 1999; Buss et al., 1999; Buunk et al., 1996). Moreover, Sagarin et al., (2000) addressed the ‘forced-choice’ problem by asking participants provide a rating for both scenarios instead of forcing them to choose one. The results confirmed that a clear sex difference exists in jealousy as males rated sexual infidelity as more upsetting than emotional infidelity.

In summary, some of the studies on jealousy have yielded support for the evolutionary view on jealousy and others did not. The value of this perspective lies with the fact that it has provided a fascinating explanation of jealousy and has generated a lot of interest. The sheer complexity of this emotion has made it difficult for researchers to try and explain and understand it by using a single
theory. All four theories that are discussed in this chapter have made a significant contribution to our knowledge of what constitutes and what causes jealousy.

Aggression
Aggression has been part of people's lives probably since the beginning of time (Myers, 2005). There is archaeological and historical evidence that early humans engaged in aggressive acts either in a planned and calculated manner or as a reaction to a certain stimulus (Berkowitz, 1989; Tedeschi and Felson, 1994). Early indications that aggression can be either premeditated or simply a reaction to certain stimuli has led researchers to believe that there are two 'types' of aggression that require separate definition. The first 'type' of aggression is called 'instrumental' aggression and it is defined as "a calculated, premeditated attack designed to gain material benefit for the aggressor" (Moghaddam, 1998; p.366). The second is termed 'affective' or hostile aggression and involves any aggressive act that is driven by anger and is performed with the intention to hurt someone. Affective aggression is explosive and spontaneous with the aggressor being in an emotionally heightened state; in this case the main aim is inflict damage to or hurt somebody. An example of affective aggression is road rage where an individual becomes angered because of the driving behaviour of others and responds by engaging in verbal or physical acts of aggression (i.e. shouting, pressing the horn, or hitting someone). On the other hand instrumental aggression is cold and calculated and free from impulsive or emotional cues; the aggressor in this case, is aiming to inflict damage or cause pain in order to achieve a certain goal or receive a certain reward. An example of instrumental aggression is terrorism where the aggressor aims to injure or kill people in order to achieve a certain objective (i.e. the release of other terrorists from prison or simply the increase of public awareness of a specific goal) (Moghaddam, 1998). The distinction between instrumental and affective aggression has been very important as it helped scholars to conceptualise the topic and analyse this part of human behaviour more effectively. However, in practical terms it is somewhat more difficult to draw a clear line between the two types of aggression because
the factors that motivate premeditated and reactive aggression have common characteristics. This argument was supported initially by Averill (1982) who claimed that people can manipulate their feelings of anger and adjust their aggressive behaviour irrespective of whether they have pre-planned to act aggressively or not. Averill maintained that humans have a certain level of control over their feelings. A person's ability to control or manipulate his/her aggressive mood, emotions and behaviour depends on cognitive factors such as thinking logically, analysing a situation and deciding to act in a specific manner. For example, let us assume that someone is driving to work in morning traffic and gets angry because of another driver's behaviour. They either can express their anger by acting in a verbally or physically aggressive way or they can continue driving ignoring the incident. If they behave aggressively it would be difficult to judge whether their aggression was impulsive and instantaneous instead of calculated and instrumental because it is difficult to know with certainty their motives at that specific moment. In this case it may be that the aggressor impulsively reacts to a stimulus (the driving behaviour of others) and therefore has nothing to gain by being aggressive. Alternatively, it may be the case that the aggressor focuses his attention on the event that made him angry, thus reinforcing his aggressive behaviour, in order to attract the attention of the other driver and achieve a specific goal (i.e. force the other driver to compromise and give him way, or simply boost his self-esteem). So in practice, it is difficult to distinguish whether an aggressive act is performed in the heat of passion or whether it is designed to achieve a goal that would benefit the aggressor. Parrott (1993) agreed with this view and maintained that in real life situations it is often impossible to separate affective and instrumental aggression. Whether affective or instrumental aggression and its causes have attracted a lot of research interest. Researchers from a variety of fields have attempted to explain what causes aggression. In the following section three explanations will be discussed in an attempt to understand what influences aggressive behaviour.
Aggression can be explained by examining three different theoretical positions, the biological position and the argument that humans have an 'aggressive drive', the frustration-aggression hypothesis and the belief that aggression is the result of frustration, and the social learning position that views aggression as a learned behaviour.

From a biological point of view, aggression is seen as an innate characteristic that is unavoidable (Lorenz 1966). During the first 25 years of the 20th century aggression was seen as an innate mechanism that was supported by primary biological mechanisms (Cannon, 1925, cited in Gilbert, Fiske and Lindzey). This view was supported initially by Freud who believed that aggression is an innate instinct and as such, it cannot be learned or unlearned (Badcock, 1992). Further support for this view came from a German animal-behaviour researcher called Lorenz. Lorenz viewed aggression as an inherent mechanism that involves the gradual accumulation and eventually the release of aggressive energy (Lorenz, 1966). Both Freud and Lorenz maintained that aggression is a universal attribute that can be found in every living human being. Both theorists had strong convictions that aggression is part of human nature but they did not ignore the influence of environmental factors. Lorenz in his book 'On Aggression' discussed the impact of environmental stimuli on the aggressive process and concluded that external stimuli act as triggers or instigators of aggressive behaviour (Lorenz, 1966). This perspective was criticised on three grounds. First, the conclusions drawn by Freud in his early writing were based on a small and unrepresentative sample, his patients. His theorising, although fascinating and important, it lacked basic empirical support. Nevertheless, the idea that aggression has a biological basis was later supported by Cannon (1925) who found evidence of brain activity that directly linked to aggression. Second, Lorenz's research was based on his observations of animal behaviour and therefore was criticised for not being applicable to humans (Gilbert, Fiske and Lindzey, 1998). In response to this criticism, Rajecki (1983) theorised that investigations based on animal behaviour can provide some valid explanations for human behaviour because both species
have evolved in a similar environment. Third, the biological approach to aggression was criticised for undermining the influence of environmental stimuli. The biological approach considers environmental influences to be secondary or inferior to biological mechanisms and thus rejects the view that the environment can be part of the causal explanation of aggression (Gilbert, Fiske and Lindzey, 1998). As we will see later, social psychologists disagree with this view as they content that aggression is a response to external stimuli and not part of human nature.

Aggression as a response to environmental influences was first ever studied from a psychological point of view by Dollard and his colleagues. (Myers, 2005). Dollard et al (1939) examined the links between frustration and aggression and hypothesised that aggression is the result of frustration. Frustration was defined as anything that prevents an individual from achieving a certain goal. For example, a malfunctioning printer when in urgent need for a printout, or constant interruptions to one's speech would be classed as frustrations. The frustration-aggression hypothesis "states that frustration can have several outcomes, one of which is aggression, but that aggression is always the product of frustration" (Gilbert, Fiske and Lindzey, 1998; p.321). Initial support for this hypothesis came from a widely cited but controversial study conducted by Hovland and Sears in 1940. The study examined two variables, the price of cotton in South America and the number of lynchings of African-Americans by Whites over a 50 year period (1882-1930). The results revealed that a decrease in the value of cotton signified an increase in individual lynchings. Apart from methodological problems (i.e. its correlational design) the study was criticised for not considering other causal agents that may have had an effect on the results. Smith (2002) argued that it may not have been the economic hardship that caused the increase in lynchings but the fact that white Americans were the majority in that population and thus, had increased power over the African-American minority. A more systematic, county by county, analysis of the original data revealed that the lynching rate increased significantly in the counties that had fewer African-
Americans (Raper, 1933 cited in Smith, 2002). As Smith concluded, "At the individual-level, it appears that economic adversity encouraged certain individuals to act on their racist beliefs. At the aggregate-level, the presence of a visible and distinctive minority may have been what caused lynchings to be more frequent in some counties than others" (Smith 2002, p. 2). Despite these criticisms Hovland and Sears did provide some support for the frustration-aggression hypothesis and alerted the research community to the fact that environmental or external stimuli may have a more significant influence on aggression than originally thought. In the years that followed, the popularity of the frustration-aggression hypothesis increased and so did the number of studies that wanted to explore it. In the early 1980's Steinberg, Catalano and Dooley, investigated the effects of economic antecedents on child abuse and neglect. Their results revealed that economic hardship resulting from redundancy was indicative of an increase of reported child abuse and neglect cases (1981). More recently, Catalano et al (1993) investigated the relationship between unemployment and violent behaviour in a sample of 4000 men and women. He found a six fold increase on violent behaviour amongst people that were either unemployed or have been recently made redundant. Additional support for the frustration-aggression hypothesis came from a variety of studies that examined the impact of other frustrations, such as traffic jams, over-crowding, heat, pollution and cigarette smoke on aggressive behaviour (Novaco, 1991; Rotton and Frey, 1985; Anderson and Anderson, 1998; Cohn, 1993). However, the support for the frustration-aggression hypothesis was questioned on two levels. First, problems with methodology and sampling meant that the results should be approached with caution. Most of these studies were correlational and thus, causality could not be deduced from their results. Moreover, the majority of the studies were carried out either in North America or Western Europe with samples that were not diverse, thus limiting the extent to which their results can be generalised. Second, the frustration-aggression hypothesis was criticised at a deeper level. Berkowitz (1978; 1989), argued that the original version of the theory overemphasised the link between frustration and aggression. He based his argument on the fact that
laboratory experiments on the frustration-aggression hypothesis produced mixed results. It was found for example that frustration did not always lead to aggression (Burnstein and Worchel, 1962). In a laboratory setting frustrated participants would sometimes be aggressive but other times would just report that they feel irritated. Berkowitz therefore, theorised that an increase in frustration can produce anger which in turn may or may not be expressed in an aggressive manner. He argued that environmental and internal cues play the crucial role of regulating one's potential to aggress when he/she is frustrated (Berkowitz, 1988).

In Berkowitz's revised version of the frustration-aggression hypothesis, cues can either strengthen or weaken one's aggressive potential. These cues can either be internal or external, with the former identified as playing a more significant role in the process. Internal cues such as cognitive processes can influence whether an individual will express their frustration in an aggressive manner. Cognitive processes according to Berkowitz can be learned through socialisation and are responsible for the development of aggressive cognitive networks. Aggressive cognitive networks are thought to be activated through arousal, so when an individual becomes aroused through frustration the potential to aggress depends on these pre-formulated networks. Berkowitz's revised model gained support from studies investigating aggressive acts such as homicide (Messner, 1980), as well as cross-cultural studies that investigated links between poverty and violent crime (Landau, 1984). Nevertheless, the model was criticised for not taking into account cultural variations in aggressive expression. Landau's study involving samples from 12 different countries revealed that indeed social pressures and poor economic conditions can create frustration which in turn can lead to higher levels of aggression. However, a closer examination of the data also revealed that specific cultural characteristics can either inhibit or amplify aggression (Landau, 1984). In Japan for example, frustrations caused by financial hardship, overcrowding and environmental stressors are not indicative of an increase in aggression. In her study, Landau found that the personal involvement of police and civilians in crime prevention, as well as the influence of deeply rooted Japanese principles such as personal responsibility, respect for others and an
increased sense of duty, make Japanese people less susceptible to the frustration-aggression process. Therefore, there is a pressing need to consider cultural influences on aggression as such influences can determine how aggression is expressed and experienced.

The frustration-aggression hypothesis has contributed greatly to the study of aggression. It was the first systematic attempt to explain aggression and it is still influential today, as it emphasised the importance of considering the impact of environmental factors on aggression. After all, it would be impossible to explain human behaviour as an isolated variable. People's interaction with the environment, and as we shall see next, their interaction with others can play a significant role in explaining human behaviour.

The beginning of the 1960's saw the genesis of an alternative explanation to aggression. The social learning theory challenged existing views that saw aggression as a reaction to stimuli and put forward the idea that aggressive tendencies can be acquired and maintained throughout life. Although, this view contradicted the frustration-aggression hypothesis it did not reject the idea that frustration can contribute to aggression. Nor did it reject the notion that biological factors play an important role in aggressiveness. However, the social learning view of aggression did not accept that one's environment or biological makeup causes aggression. Instead, it considered environmental factors to be "conditions under which learned aggressive behaviours may be enacted" and biological factors to be the ones that merely create the potential for aggression (Gilbert, Fiske and Lindzey, 1998; p.324). Social learning theorists argued that human behaviour is learned by observing and imitating others (Myers, 2005). The social learning theory of aggression therefore, states that aggressive behaviour is learned at an early stage in life by observing and imitating others and that such behaviour is reinforced or discouraged by rewards and punishments. Through observation an individual learns which behaviours will bring benefits and which ones will bring punishment (Bandura, 1983). Bandura and his colleagues (1961)
provided initial support for this theory with their famous 'bobo' doll experiment which involved children observing an adult attacking an inflatable doll. The results showed that children that were exposed to this condition imitated the observed behaviour and reproduced the aggressive act when allowed to play with the doll. Bandura et al., (1961) concluded that people can learn how to aggress through exposure to aggression in everyday life. Bandura argued that people learn the rewards of aggression by behaving aggressively and observing the consequences (Bandura, 1983). However, his initial investigations were heavily criticised for being artificial as they were based in a laboratory and not in natural settings (Myers, 2005). Nevertheless, the social learning theory of aggression generated a lot of interest and is still influential today as subsequent investigations sought support for its principles. In a study with school children Patterson and his colleagues (1967) found that children who successfully intimidated others became increasingly aggressive in an effort to continue receiving benefits for their behaviour (i.e. lunch money, respect and fear in the schoolyard). In a study with parents as spectators at their children's' sports matches, Ennis and Zanna (1991) found that children's aggressiveness in play increased when parents applauded more aggressively. Therefore, it appears that aggression can be instrumental when the aggressor perceives his/her behaviour to be rewarding. In a relationship, for example, verbal aggression may become the preferred method of putting a point across to a partner and as such become a learned behaviour that brings a reward.

In summary, the social learning view of aggression has been very influential as it emphasised the impact that models within a family, a culture and the popular media can have on a child's potential to aggress. Its contribution to knowledge regarding the causes of aggression has been considerable.

Lastly, some researchers in this field have argued that the roots or causes of aggression can only be understood by examining both biological and psychological theories and combining their explanations (Taylor and
Moghaddam, 1994; Kaplan, 1994). There is increasing support for the 'realistic conflict model' which states that aggression is the result of two main factors; competition for the increasingly limited resources available and the struggle to dominate territory and ensure the continuation of the 'selfish gene' (Moghaddam, 1998). This model combines evolutionary principles with the frustration-aggression hypothesis. Its similarity to the evolutionary view on aggression lies with the fact that both models argue that competition for scarce resources can give rise to aggression. However, the motive behind aggression according to the evolutionary view was to gain access to more females in order to pass one's genes successfully. In contrast, the realistic conflict model states that the competition is fuelled by a desire to gain materialistic benefits such as power, money and status which in turn will ensure the continuation of one's genes through better lifestyle, nutrition and health care. The similarity between the realistic conflict model and the frustration-aggression hypothesis is that both models argue that limited resources will inevitably create frustration which in turn can lead to aggression. However, as Moghaddam argues, "the way the theories explain the link is different. Realistic conflict theory assumes the process to be rational and direct, in the sense that the competing parties know what they are after and use aggression as an instrumental means to the goal, access to resources. The frustration-aggression view, on the other hand, is that resource scarcity leads to aggression indirectly and perhaps irrationally, because stressful environmental conditions create frustration, which may then lead to destructive aggression without the parties involved actually realising what is going on" (p.388).

Researchers have provided explanations for aggression and what causes it. As seen earlier, explanations came from a variety of perspectives. The biological perspective was that aggression is caused by inherent factors and that humans have an 'aggressive drive'. From a psychological point of view, the frustration-aggression hypothesis saw aggression as the result of accumulative frustrations, and the social learning position saw aggression as a learned behaviour that is
influenced by the environment and the behaviour of others. Lastly, more recently aggression was explained by the realistic conflict model and using an integrative approach that considers both biological and psychological factors it concluded that aggression stems from both environmental frustrations and biological predispositions and that it is expressed in an instrumental and direct manner. Overall, these explanations have provided the basis for understanding what causes and influences aggression and as we shall see later in this chapter they can help explain how aggression is expressed in intimate relationships. Before that though, another relationship aspect needs to be examined. In the next few paragraphs research on sexuality and sexual desire will be reviewed.

**Sexuality and Sexual Desire**

Human sexuality has been an intriguing topic across history (McAnulty and Burnette, 2004). Early records from prehistoric tribes provided evidence that sex was as much an interesting topic 20,000 years ago as it is today (Dening, 1996). Cave drawings and artefacts from the Stone Age depict sexual practices and stand as evidence of early human preoccupation with the topic. This strong interest about the mysteries of sexuality did not cease in later years. Ancient Greece had a sexually open culture where sex for pleasure was seen as a basic need (Dening, 1996). Sexual permissiveness continued during the years of Roman domination of the western world. Orgies, prostitution and the belief that humans are inherently bisexual were commonplace in the Roman Empire and characteristic of that era (Edwards, 1997). The fall of the Roman Empire saw the rise of Christianity and in specific the Catholic Church as the dominant institution that regulated sexuality and morality for nearly a thousand years (Dening, 1996). The church created strict rules in an attempt to regulate and control people’s sexuality and under this strict code of practice sex was seen as an ‘act of evil’ that could only be tolerated for the purposes of procreation (Bullough and Bulough, 1995). The belief that human sexuality must be controlled was at the centre opinion during the Victorian era. However, the major economic and social changes that occurred between the early and late 1800s brought inevitable
changes in attitudes towards sexuality. The beginning of the 20th century saw more social changes and a renewed interest on sexuality (D'Emilio and Freedman, 1997). During this time Freud made the first systematic attempt to understand and explain sexuality (Person, 1987).

According to the psychoanalytic perspective sex is seen as the most powerful human drive (Person, 1987). Freud maintained that one's libido or sex drive plays a significant role in their psychological development as it can shape their personality. The libido is seen as an innate instinct that is present at birth. As such, the libido is thought to be responsible for the accumulation of sexual tension which motivates an individual to seek out gratifying ways to release it (McAnulty and Burnette, 2004). Freud's theory of sexuality although influential, it was criticised for lacking in empirical evidence. In the years that followed, other researchers failed to gain evidence to support Freud's views. Moreover, the psychoanalytic view was criticised for over-emphasising the influence of internal or innate factors on sexual development (Holt, 1989). The belief that sex is the most significant factor in one's development and that it influences his/her behaviour from birth to death has long been questioned (Fisher and Greenberg, 1977; McAnulty and Burnette, 2004). These criticisms motivated researchers to look elsewhere for explanations on sexual behaviour.

Freud's argument that sex is an innate drive was contradicted by behaviourists and learning theorists who believed that most human behaviour is learned and that environmental influences (such as the family environment and the behaviour of others) play a significant role in how sexuality is developed, perceived and expressed (McAnulty and Burnette, 2004). According to the learning perspective, sexual behaviour is a learned behaviour that is influenced by life experiences and interactions with others. Environment and life experiences are seen as the crucial factors in sexual development whereas biological factors (such as hormones and genes) play a secondary role. This view was one of the reasons the learning perspective was criticised as McAnulty and Burnette, (2004) argue "several
biological factors, including sex hormones and heredity, play critical roles in shaping sexuality" (p.30). Another criticism was that the learning perspective does not consider the impact of other influences such as cultural norms and societal rules on how sexuality is developed, perceived and expressed. The importance of cultural norms or rules was underlined by another perspective that attempted to explain human sexuality.

The sociological perspective on sexuality argues that an individual's sexual behaviour is shaped by a variety of factors within his/her environment (Gagnon et al., 2001). Central to this view is the notion that each society writes its own rules about how sexuality is developed and expressed and that cultural norms within that society determine which behaviours are acceptable and which are not. In addition sexual behaviour is determined and regulated by influential forces within a certain society (i.e. family, government and religion). The sociological view of sexuality has made an important contribution as it emphasised the importance of individual differences and cultural diversity in the development and expression of sexual behaviour. It has provided an account that is culture-sensitive and inclusive because it values variations in sexual behaviour across different cultures. At the same time, some researchers argue that emphasising cultural diversity is a strength but it can also be a weakness because "it may overemphasise cross-cultural differences while effectively ignoring similarities in sexual behaviour across the world" (McAnulty and Burnette, 2004; p.32).

The evolutionary perspective emphasised the importance of similarities in sexual behaviour across cultures and put forward an alternative explanation. Buss (1994) argued that sexual behaviour is motivated by an internal need to reproduce successfully. Seen this way sexual behaviour can be explained by looking at patterns of sexual behaviour across the world and identify those that appear to be global. According to evolutionary theory practices that reinforce the successful transmission of genes get established, whereas maladaptive practices that inhibit the successful reproduction diminish (Buss, 1994; Buss, 2001). Evolutionary psychologists have found some support for this argument by looking
at sexual selection techniques across culture and gender (Buss, 1999). According to Buss (1994, 1999) similarities in sexual selection across different cultures are indicative of adaptive and successful sexual practices; additional support for the evolutionary approach was gained as researchers have found evidence of distinct variations and differences in the way that males and females choose and attract a partner (Buss and Schmitt, 1993; Schmitt, Shackelford and Buss, 2001). Studies that explored the sexual behaviour patterns in males and females have shown that males are driven by a desire to pursue multiple sexual encounters whereas females seek out long-term and secure relationships (Buss et al., 1992; Buss and Schmitt, 1993). Differences were found in other aspects of sexual selection. In a study examining the challenges faced by men and women in mate selection, Buss and Schmitt (1993) found that the main male challenge is to find a partner that has high reproductive value and that can provide paternal certainty; whereas the main challenge for females is to find males that are willing to invest in a long-term relationship, provide security and become successful fathers. The evolutionary view of sexual behaviour has made an important contribution to knowledge on this topic as it helped identify global trends. However, it has been argued that global trends and gender differences in sexual behaviour can be attributed to other factors such as socialisation processes and not evolution. Burns (2000) contradicted the view that men and women have different sexual motivations. He argued that gender differences in sexual practice can be explained by looking at power imbalances. As McAnulty and Burnette, (2004) explain, “with a few exceptions, men in most cultures have more power than women do, and many differences in sexual practices may be more a function of that power imbalance than of evolution. In a female-dominated society women might prefer to have multiple short-term partners” (p.34). Other criticisms concentrate on methodological issues; in specific the majority of the studies within the perspective base their results on correlations between variable and thus, conclusions about causality cannot be made. Finally, the evolutionary view was criticised by feminist psychologists for propagating gender bias and justifying
double standards (i.e. men are biologically predisposed to have multiple partners whereas women have to ensure paternal security and prefer long-term partners). Instead on relying on a single approach to understand human sexuality one should maybe try to adopt an integrative approach because an analysis of sexual behaviour from different points of view may provide a more insightful and comprehensive explanation.

Up to this point, theories on three variables were reviewed. The focus now is placed on examining potential links between these variables. In order to achieve this, the author will review and examine specific pieces of research that have explored the relationships between the following variables: jealousy and aggression, aggression and sexual desire, sexual desire and post-conflict sex. The majority of the research to be presented comes from the domestic violence field as potential associations between the variables above have been mainly explored by studying abusive relationships. During the next few pages the author will attempt to explore potential links between the variables in this study, and state the study's hypotheses.

**Jealousy-Aggression-Sexual Desire-Post-conflict Sex**

During the last 30 years theorists have provided at least four theoretical frameworks in an attempt to explain violence against females by a male partner. Family systems researchers have argued that men may use domestic violence simply because they lose control over their feelings of anger (Geller, 1992). Psychoanalysts suggested that this loss of control over ones angry feelings may stem from possible internal conflicts with the person's maternal figures and from insufficiencies in the violent man's ego structure (Adams, 1990). From a communications/cognitive point of view, abusive behaviours were explained in terms of dysfunctional interaction patterns and abnormal cognitive processes within the couple (Deschner, McNeil & Moore, 1986; Neidig & Freidman, 1984). On the other hand, feminist theory stressed that violence in relationships does not stem form deficits, as seen above, but instead is used by men systematically
and intentionally in order to exert and maintain power and control over partners (Adams, 1988, 1990; Walker, 1979, 1994). In accordance with the feminist view, evolutionary psychologists, argue that domestic violence is the males' way of controlling his partner's sexuality and discouraging or preventing infidelity (Wilson & Daly, 1993; Peters, Shackelford & Buss, 2002).

Moreover, extreme cases of jealousy correlate with incidents of violence and for intimidation. However, Mullen and Martin (1994) noted that not only people who suffer from extreme forms of jealousy use violence. He found that 15% of participants in a large scale community sample of males and females, reported having experienced physical aggression as a result of their partner's jealousy. Furthermore, in domestic violence studies jealousy appears to be one of the most influential factors. Gayford (1975, 1979) claimed that over two thirds of the women he interviewed attributed their partner's violent behaviour to their extreme jealousy and possessiveness. A study in Scotland by Dobash and Dobash (1980) produced similar results with 60% of women attributing violence to their partner's excessive sexual jealousy. Moreover, studies all around the world reported that jealousy could play a significant role in violent relationships. A study in North America, found that jealousy is a key antecedent of domestic violence (Hilberman and Manson 1977). In another study, Rounsanville (1978) confirmed this finding as his results showed that 52% of abused women viewed jealousy as a causal factor in problematic relationships. In the same study 92% of women saw jealousy as a recurring factor that can instigate violent episodes. In a series of interviews with abusive males the most frequent explanations for aggressive behaviour were frustration and feelings of anger at supposed infidelity (Brisson, 1983).

Other researchers concentrated on addressing the problem of same-sex domestic violence. It is apparent that jealousy is strongly associated with aggression in same sex relationships. Renzetti (1988) reported that 70% of lesbian couples regarded jealousy as a major problem in the relationship. In her
study, correlations revealed that the more jealousy problems in a relationship the more abuse occurred. Jealousy was positively correlated with several forms of abuse, such as throwing objects at their partners \((r=.480)\), demeaning their partners in the presence of others \((r=.670)\), destroying or damaging partners' property \((r=.435)\), and hitting their partners \((r=.732)\). In the same study, 31 out of 40 participants described their abusive partners as extremely possessive and as people who experienced 'delusions of infidelity'. In many cases victims report that their every move, word and behaviour was monitored and subjected to thorough analysis and questioning to ensure commitment and faithfulness.

In summary, considerable research has suggested that there is a link between anger, and jealousy and the instigation of physical and verbal aggression (Daly, Wilson & Weghorst, 1982; Roy 1977; White & Mullen, 1989). Extreme jealousy and possessiveness aid the abuser in controlling and restricting the victim's life in such a way that the victim becomes isolated, depressed and insecure which further inhibits him/her from leaving the abusive relationship. Malamuth (1996), found that male sexual jealousy and possessiveness can induce a variety of abusive behaviours. According to Daly et al (1982) the male strives to control the female's choices whether they are choices of social, work or casual activities or choices of sexual behaviour. Chronic efforts to control the partner's behaviour by restricting their everyday interactions and interrogating them can seriously disrupt the relationship. Extreme jealousy can induce tension and negative emotions, which in turn can create conflict incidents. However, differences between partners cannot always be resolved through conflict; sometimes conflict can lead to escalation and ultimately erode the relationship. This in turn can result to violence.

In an attempt to explore and explain the dynamics in abusive intimate relationships, Walker (1979) described what she called 'the cycle of violence'. The model she proposed had three phases: the tension building phase, the battering/abusive phase and the contrition/loving respite phase. Walker,
described this last phase as being characterised by contrition, confession, promises of reform and generally, an attempt to convince the victim that he/she will change and that he/she loves him/her. However, this theory excludes information of how exactly, the abuser achieves relationship repair and reinstates his role as a loving, caring partner. The author will not attempt to challenge Walker's theory nor will she try to provide contradicting evidence. Rather, this study will represent an exploration of the ways people use sexual intimacy following a verbal and/or physical conflict.

There is a wealth of literature documenting the extent of conflict resulting in domestic violence. What theorists have yet to address is what happens after a conflict situation, irrespective of the fact of whether conflict escalates to a violent episode, and how couples deal with a post conflict situation. It is being suggested that post-conflict sex can play a crucial role in a relationship. Post-conflict sex is a concept, which involves the use of sexual intimacy as a reconciliation and repair tool. In other words, post-conflict sex is nothing else but the deliberate or unintentional use of sexual intimacy and contact as a means of re-establishing the bond between partners after conflict. The author hypothesises that partners use sexual intimacy as a means of relationship repair and reconciliation following a conflict situation. There is no previous evidence to support this argument. However, as seen in the next few paragraphs, work by Freud and other theorists has shown that there is a significant link between aggression and sexual arousal. In addition, further support can be found in the qualitative assessments carried out by Douglas who worked with violent couples in therapy sessions.

Douglas (1991) assessed violent couples and found that violence can facilitate intimacy. She argued that the process of 'making up' after a quarrel is very common and it serves the purpose of restoring the emotional connection between the partners. She notes:
The "honeymoon" period following violence not only serves this function, but may in fact stimulate emotional and sexual closeness, which would not occur without the violence to facilitate it. In a couple system characterised by an almost total lack of meaningful personal communication, violence suddenly and dramatically breaks down the emotional barriers between partners, presenting a full range of ambivalent feelings—from rage and hate to love, need, fear of loss, and vulnerability. Because this period may represent the only true emotionally intimate moments available to the couple, both partners may anticipate the harmony that occurs after a violent episode. Similarly, sex following violence may be particularly intense and exciting. The sexual bond between partners can be exceptionally strong and loyal.

Freud who established the link between aggression and sexual desire provided some evidence for the aggression-sex link. The author will attempt to demonstrate that heightened aggression feelings can increase sexual desire; as well as, heightened sexual desire can increase the chances for someone to use post-conflict sex as a tool for reconciliation, reunion and repair following an aggressive episode.

As seen earlier Freud (1955) suggested that humans are born with an innate aggressive drive that is an imperative tool for human survival, just as an inborn sexual drive is essential for continuation of the human species. He was also convinced that aggression is a fundamental part of sexual desire. He speculated that, for example, the prehistoric man had to be aggressive in order to mate. In addition, Jaffe, Malamuth, and their colleagues (1974) examined the effects of sexual arousal on behavioural aggression in 44 male and 47 female undergraduates. Their results also indicated a strong link between sex and aggression for both sexes. Clark (1953) confirmed the sex-aggression link for men when he found that sexual arousal led to a parallel increase in hostile feelings. However, there was no evidence in his study regarding these effects for women. Following Freud and Clark's speculations, Barclay, (1965; 1969; 1970; 1971) conducted a series of studies in order to get experimental support for the link between sex and aggression. He found that indeed aggressive arousal can
lead to sexual feelings and desire but contrary to Freud’s and Clark’s initial theorising, Barclay argued that this connection is evident for both males and females. Furthermore, he suggested that the relationships between sex and aggression operates both ways; indicating that sexual arousal can lead to an increase in aggressive feelings and that aggressive arousal can lead to sexual feelings.

As already mentioned, conflict can create negative feelings and situations where negative emotions outnumber and overpower positive ones. Alienated relationships have been found to impair communication and create intense emotions, such as shame, emotional separation and anger (Retzinger, 1997; 2000). For example, following a conflict situation, a person is likely to have feelings of resentment, feel distanced or alienated from their partners. In cases like this, the person that has more power and/or control in the relationship may attempt to eliminate such feelings by being regretful, apologetic and by showing them that they care and love them. One way to achieve this is to verbally reassure the partner that they still have positive, loving and caring feelings for them. Another way to re-establish the bond between two partners may be by expressing their affection in a physical way. At this point it would be logical to speculate that if someone has a high sexual drive, they would be more likely to engage in sexual activities more than a person that has a low sex drive, following a conflict situation. Therefore, a partner who has a high sexual drive may be more likely to use post-conflict sex as a tool for reconciliation and relationship repair, than a partner who has a low sexual drive.

Therefore, a model is proposed that involves the generation of aggression and potential violent episodes through feelings of extreme jealousy; heightened sexual feelings through a heightened aggressive state; and in the relatively calm
period that follows an abusive episode, the engagement in sexual activities and intimacy in order to achieve relationship repair and partner bonding.

Jealousy $\rightarrow$ Aggression $\rightarrow$ Sexual Desire $\rightarrow$ Post-Conflict sex
CHAPTER 3

METHOD

STUDY1

Participants
The participants of this study were a convenience sample of 128 people of which 103 were students and 25 were professionals around the East Midlands area. A total of 105 (82%) participants answered to questions in terms of a current romantic relationship. The majority of the subjects were White British (93.8%) and their mean age was 22.5 years. In terms of sexual orientation, there were 38 heterosexual females, 42 heterosexual males, 27 homosexual females and 21 homosexual males. One hundred and seven people (83.6%) reported having 'dating' relationships, 19 were cohabiting and 2 were married. The estimated time for completion was approximately 15 minutes. 545 Questionnaires were distributed door to door in two university halls of residence in Loughborough and in Loughborough town centre. Pre-paid envelopes were provided. To ensure that an adequate number of homosexual participants were included the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Societies of two universities were approached. Initial contact was made through each LGB's chairperson. The author then attended two meetings with members of the society and explained what was required. Questionnaires and pre-paid envelopes were provided and the author returned to collect those two weeks after distribution. The two week period was agreed on the basis that not all members attend the meetings every week, thus ensuring that most members had a chance to participate.

Measures
The questionnaire had four measures (total of 73 items); the Self-Report Jealousy Scale (Bringle et al, 1979), the Sexual Desire Inventory (Spector, Carey & Steinberg, 1996), the Conflict Tactic Scale (Straus, 1979), and a scale devised by the author, called the Post-conflict Sex Scale (see Appendix, A).
Self-report Jealousy scale
The Self-report Jealousy scale has 23 items measuring sexual, romantic, and suspicious jealousy. It is designed to measure the intensity of jealous reactions so it was chosen in terms of its appropriateness for the present study. Moreover it was important to measure jealousy with a standardised instrument. The Bringle Self Report scale was easy to administer and score and fit the purposes of the study.

Sexual Desire Inventory
The Sexual Desire Inventory has 14 items and is designed to measure sexual desire. For the purposes of this questionnaire sexual desire was defined as interest in sexual activity and preoccupation with sexual thoughts. This measure was chosen as the most suitable scale for the purposes of the study. Evidence from King and Allgeier (2000) showed that the Sexual Desire inventory was suitable for use with both sexually experienced and inexperienced participants. This was deemed important given the young age of the sample involved.

Conflict Tactic Scale
The original CTS was a 7-point, 20 item Likert-type questionnaire designed to assess individual responses to conflict situations within the family. The items measure aggression on three levels: Reasoning, Verbal/Symbolic Aggression, and Physical Violence (Straus, 1979). The CTS in its original version and in the multiple modified versions has been used in domestic violence Nation-wide surveys and empirical studies both in the Unites States and in the UK (Arriaga and Oskamp, 1999).

A slightly modified version was used in this study. This was the result of qualitative feedback from a group of participants (3 male 3 female). Participants noted that the second column on the CTS scale (requesting information about their partners' behaviour) is 'slightly confusing'. Their feedback was used to make appropriate changes.
The study participants were asked to specify the type and frequency of certain behaviours over the previous 6 months on a 6-point scale. The second column of the scale, asking participants about their partner's behaviour was not used. The CTS has a Cronbach's alpha reliability that ranges from .42 to .88.

**Post-Conflict Sex Scale**

The Post-Conflict Sex Scale was designed and developed for the purposes of this study. It has 16 items designed to measure whether participants engage in sexual activities following a conflict situation. The scale also attempts to capture participant opinions as to whether post-conflict sexual intimacy can help them bond and re-establish their relationship. Examples of the items used can be seen in Table 1. The scale has a .69 Alpha reliability score.

**Scale development**

The measurement of the Post-Conflict Sex variable required the development and implementation of a scale, specifically designed to measure sexual activity in post-conflict situations. Initially a draft scale was created which was given to a group of participants. Evaluative discussion and feedback from a group of 5 participants led to the modification of some items. The feedback was qualitative in nature and aimed at making the scale clear and easy to read. As a result of that the wording of the items was modified.

<p>| TABLE 1 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAMPLE ITEMS FROM THE POST-CONFLICT SEX SCALE.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) I usually have a desire to engage in sexual activities shortly after arguing with my partner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Being intimate with my partner after a verbal/physical fight reassures me that h/she loves me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Sex always seems to be better after a heated argument.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) I feel that there is too much tension between us after an argument if we do not engage in any kind of sexual activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) I wait for the situation to be resolved before I engage in any kind of sexual activity with my partner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Having sex after conflict situations usually helps to re-establish the relationship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) My partner usually treats me better after being intimate following a heated argument.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) I feel that we bond more deeply if we engage in sexual activities after conflict.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ethical Considerations

The British Psychological Society Ethical Guidelines have been adhered to throughout this study. A consent form was signed by all participants, which briefed them on the study and gave them the opportunity not only to refuse to answer questions they felt uncomfortable with but also to withdraw from the study at any time. At no point were participants deceived or lied to about what the study involved. Participants were reassured that all information given would be kept confidential and anonymous at all times and for the protection of all participants involved in this study, all names stated are aliases.
The results were analysed using Pearson's correlations, Hierarchical Regression, and Structural Equation Modelling. Preliminary analysis involved examining differences between four different sample groups. These were: Heterosexual Female, Heterosexual Male, Homosexual Female and Homosexual Male. Results from 2x2 ANOVA's and z tests indicated that there was no difference between the sexuality groups. Consequently, the groups were collapsed and all analyses were carried out to the whole sample.

**Reasons for collapsing the sexuality groups**

A series of z tests (36) revealed that the four sexuality groups did not have significantly different correlations (See Appendix, C). This was confirmed by comparing the groups' means using 2x2 ANOVA'S. Heterosexuals and homosexuals as well as females and males did not have any significant differences in Jealousy, Aggression and Post-Conflict Sex (F=3.6; p>0.05, F=.550; p>0.05, F=1.53; p > 0.05). However, there was a significant main effect of the Sexuality factor (heterosexual-homosexual) on Sexual Desire (F=28.4; p<0.01). This indicates that there were no differences in scoring between the sexuality groups and provides justification for collapsing the groups.

The four study variables (Jealousy, Aggression, Sexual Desire, and Post-Conflict Sex) were examined. The alpha reliability scores, means and standard deviations for the study variables are shown in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 2</th>
<th>MEANS, SD's &amp; ALPHA RELIABILITY SCORES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MEANS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JEAлоUSY</td>
<td>122.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGGRESSION</td>
<td>24.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEXUAL DESIRE</td>
<td>68.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POST-CONFLICT SEX</td>
<td>84.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Alpha reliabilities for all four measures were high (.89; .83; .88; .69). The means of the measures showed that participants were generally jealous of their partners, were not very aggressive in conflict situations, had a relatively high sexual desire and engaged in sexual activities following conflict situations. Principal component factor analysis was also carried out on all scales in the questionnaire. There was one factor with an eigenvalue above one indicating that the scales were valid.

Correlations
Analysis using Pearson's correlations showed that participants who were more Jealous were likely of being Aggressive ($r=0.218; p<0.05$), and having an increased Sexual Desire ($r=0.27; p<0.01$). Aggression was found to correlate with Sexual Desire ($r=0.18; p<0.05$). Also, participants who were aggressive were more likely to engage in Post-conflict Sex ($r=0.40; p<0.01$). The correlations between the four variables and their significance levels are shown in Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JEALOUSY</th>
<th>AGGRESSION</th>
<th>SEXUAL DESIRE</th>
<th>POST-CONFLICT SEX</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JEALOUSY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGGRESSION</td>
<td>0.218*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEXUAL DESIRE</td>
<td>0.270**</td>
<td>0.181*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POST-CONFLICT SEX</td>
<td>0.400**</td>
<td>0.178*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
** significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Structural Equation Modelling
Overview
Structural Equation Modelling was performed by using a computer program called Lisrel. Lisrel is a computer program created by Joreskog and Sorbom (1989) that enables the user to analyse relationships between theoretical variables measured by empirical indicators (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2000).
Lisrel analysis for the present study required following the following steps:

**Model conceptualisation:** this involved the development of theory-based hypotheses about underlying variables and the links between them. In specific, this step required the specification of the hypothesised relationships between the latent variables. This is very important as it represents the model's theoretical framework. A differentiation between the *exogenous* and the *endogenous* variables was made. Exogenous variables are independent variables that are not directionally influenced by any other variable in the model. In this study there was one exogenous variable: Jealousy. Endogenous variables are the ones that are directionally influenced by other variables and in the present study these were: Aggression, Sexual Desire, and Post-conflict Sex. Endogenous variables can be influenced by various variables in the model. However, because endogenous variables are not generally, perfectly or totally explained by the variables hypothesised to influence them, an error expression (residual) is predicted to influence them. The next step in model conceptualisation was to specify the specific ordering of the endogenous variables and the number and expected direction of the associations between the endogenous and the exogenous variables. In this study's model it was predicted that Jealousy (exogenous variable) would influence Aggression (endogenous variable). Aggression would influence Sexual Desire (endogenous) and Sexual desire would influence Post-conflict Sex (endogenous). The order of the variables was:

JEALOUSY ⇒ AGGRESSION ⇒ SEXUAL DESIRE ⇒ POST-CONFLICT SEX.

**Path diagram construction:** A visual representation of hypotheses and variables was created. This was not a compulsory step in Lisrel modelling. However, the graphical representation assisted the author to understand the hypotheses included in the model without having to use complex mathematical representations. The path diagram of the hypothesised model is shown below but in order to fully comprehend it we have to briefly describe Lisrel's notation.
Path diagram: Example of a Lisrel model.

β = Directional relationships between 2 endogenous variables.
γ = Directional relationships between exogenous and endogenous variables.
ξ = Exogenous variable.
η = Endogenous variables.
δ = Measurement error for exogenous (ξ) variables.
ε = Measurement error for endogenous (η) variables.
ψ = Relationship between error terms for endogenous variables.

Lisrel uses a specific notation, which includes Greek letters that symbolise either the kinds of variables used or the different relationships between the variables. Although it is hard to understand this notation in the beginning it is a useful tool as it standardises the expression of any model and aids the reader to understand the output and related path diagrams better. A selection of these letters will be briefly presented and described here. In Lisrel notation, exogenous variables are symbolised with the Greek letter (ξ) KSI. In the present model we have only one exogenous variable (Jealousy). Endogenous latent variables are known as ETA's, the corresponding Greek letter for endogenous variables is (η). The ETA's of this model were Aggression (η1), Sexual Desire (η2), and Post-conflict Sex (η3). Non-directional relationships between exogenous (ξ) variables are denoted by PHI (φ). These relationships are only allowed between exogenous variables and between error terms of endogenous variables. If the relationship is between the endogenous variables’ error terms then we call it a PSI (ψ). The directional relationships between exogenous and endogenous variables are being symbolised by Gamma (γ). Directional relationships between the endogenous variables are
called BETA's (β). Measurement errors for exogenous variables are called Delta (δ) and for endogenous variables EPSILON (ε).

Model Specification: This involved a detailed description of the nature and number of parameters to be analysed.

Parameter Estimation: The model parameters were estimated and significance tests were carried out to determine whether they were significantly different from zero.

Assessment of Model Fit: Here, the quality of the measurement was evaluated in order to support the hypotheses.

Graph 1
LINEAR PATH MODEL

Jealousy → Aggression → Sexual Desire → Post-Conflict Sex

Lisrel analysis revealed that the original linear model did not fit the data (Graph 1). The results supported another, more complicated model. This model, with the different pathways and path coefficients, is shown in Graph 2. There are various explanations as to why the linear model did not fit the data. These reasons will be examined in depth in the discussion. Goodness-of-fit indices for this model are presented below.

Goodness-of-fit
The first measure included in the output (as seen in Appendix C) is the chi-square statistic which provides an evaluation of the overall model fit. This measure is named Minimum Fit Function Chi-Square in the output. The first indication that the model did not fit the data came from this figure. The Minimum Fit Function Chi-Square had a value of 27.40 with 3 degrees of freedom and a highly significant result (p<0.00) indicating that the model is not adequate. This can be confirmed by looking at the Normal Theory Weighted Least Squares Chi-Square, which also yielded a highly significant result.
(25.67; p<0.00) thus indicating an imperfect fit. The degree of lack of fit can be examined by looking at the \textit{Estimated Non-Centrality Parameter} (NCP) which in this model was 22.67 with a 90\% Confidence Interval of 10.06; 42.73). This discrepancy can be confirmed by looking at the \textit{Root Mean Square of Approximation} (RMSEA). An RMSEA value of 0.05 and below would indicate a good fit; a reasonable fit would be shown by a value lesser than 0.05 and 0.08; poor model fits are usually under the value of 0.10. The linear model produced an RMSEA of 0.24 indicating a very poor fit (all measures and values can be seen in Appendix C).

The second model indicated that there are two directional relationships between the exogenous and the endogenous variables. Jealousy influences Aggression (\( \xi \rightarrow \eta_1; \gamma=0.22 \)), and Sexual Desire (\( \xi \rightarrow \eta_2; \gamma=0.27 \)). Also, there was a directional relationship between two of the endogenous variables; aggression influences Post-conflict Sex (\( \eta_1 \rightarrow \eta_3; \beta=0.40 \)). PSI (\( \psi \)) indicated that there is an indirect relationship between the endogenous variables’ error terms. Aggression (\( \psi=0.95 \)), Sexual Desire (\( \psi=0.93 \)), and Post-conflict Sex (\( \psi=0.84 \)).

\textbf{Goodness-of-fit}

An examination of the goodness of fit statistics for this model indicated that it has a much better fit than the original model. Both models (by comparing the measures as shown in Appendix C) have 3 degrees of freedom. However, the
second model (Graph 2) produced the following measures all indicative of a better fit.

The chi-square statistic which provides an evaluation of the overall model fit (Minimum Fit Function Chi-Square) had a value of 3.96 (p=0.27). The first indication that the model did fit the data came from this figure. This was confirmed by looking at the Normal Theory Weighted Least Squares Chi-Square, which revealed a value of 3.87; (p=0.28). The Estimated Non-Centrality Parameter (NCP) in this model was 0.87 with a 90% Confidence Interval of 0.0; 10.27). The (RMSEA) had a value of 0.048 indicating a reasonable fit. (Modification indices and goodness of fit indices can be seen in Appendix C).
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION
STUDY 1

Overview of findings

The aim of this study was to explore the links between four variables, jealousy, aggression, sexual desire and post-conflict sex. It was hypothesised that jealousy will be linked to aggression; aggression to sexual desire and sexual desire to post-conflict sex. Therefore, a linear model was proposed which expected that jealousy can lead to aggression, aggression to high sexual desire and high sexual desire to post-conflict sex. The results supported an alternative model which has shown that jealousy directly affects both aggression and sexual desire, whereas aggression and sexual desire directly influence post-conflict sex.

Initial exploration of the data indicated that participants were generally jealous of their partners, were not very aggressive in conflict situations, had a relatively high sexual desire and engaged in sexual activities following conflict situations.

Correlational analysis provided support for the hypothesised links between the variables. The results from correlations showed that participants with a high jealousy score were more likely to score highly in both aggression and sexual desire. Also, a high aggressiveness score was indicative of an increased sexual desire and increased likelihood to engage in post-conflict sex. The exact nature and direction of these relationships was explored by constructing, testing and analysing a model with the help of Structural Equation Modelling. Systematic analysis using Lisrel did not support the proposed linear model. Rather, it was found that there were only two directional relationships between the exogenous variable (jealousy) and the endogenous variables (aggression, sexual desire and post-conflict sex). The model that gained support revealed
that jealousy directly influences aggression and sexual desire and that aggression is directly linked to post-conflict sex (see Graph 2; p.54). The model that emerged from the analysis indicated that the author may have underestimated the influence of aggression. It appears that aggression plays a more central role than anticipated as it was found to influence both sexual desire and post-conflict sex. The only other variable that appears to have the same level of influence is jealousy as it affects aggression and sexual desire. However, jealousy was an exogenous variable and as such, it is an independent agent that is not directly influenced by another variable; whereas aggression appears to be affected by jealousy. This dependence on jealousy, at least within the model, has a mediating effect and can regulate the extent to which aggression can affect other variables. Nevertheless, one could argue that the link between aggression and sexual desire for example, can exist irrespective of whether an individual experiences high levels of jealousy. This and other points will be addressed later in this chapter. First, a discussion of each finding will take place with the identification and examination of associations between the variables as shown by the correlational data, and with a discussion of the nature and direction of these associations as shown by the model that emerged from the data.

Jealousy

(Jealousy-Aggression; Jealousy-Sexual desire)

Results from correlations showed that participants who reported greater levels of jealousy also reported greater levels of aggression in their relationships. This link between jealousy and aggression is in accordance with earlier research. As seen earlier, studies assessing the instigators of abuse in violent relationships have shown that jealousy is a fundamental predecessor of aggression (Gayford, 1979; Dobash and Dobash, 1980; Mullen and Martin, 1994; Renzetti, 1988). However, most of the studies that assessed the link between jealousy and aggression were self-report studies, thus their results are open to criticism as seen in chapter 1. Furthermore, the majority of these studies performed correlational calculations to establish the links between jealousy and other variables. Calculations such as these can indeed indicate whether there is a relationship between two variables but they cannot reveal
the exact nature of that relationship nor can they imply causality. Thus, the link between jealousy and aggression could be questioned on the basis that it does not reveal the exact direction of this association and that it is not indicative of a cause and effect relationship. One cannot be certain that an individual who is experiencing high levels of jealousy will react in an aggressive manner. In fact, it may be that unobserved or otherwise unknown factors may affect the relationship between two variables. On the other hand, the strength of the argument that jealousy can instigate aggression can be found in the same contentions that create its criticism. Self-report methods provide valuable information about people's behaviour as they are direct representations of individual experience and correlations allow the study of naturally occurring relationships between variables. Jealousy has been repeatedly shown to correlate with aggression and although researchers cannot be certain about the direction of this correlation, there is enough evidence to at least conclude that a relationship exists between these two variables. The exact nature and direction of this relationship was explored in the present study by using a more advanced correlational technique. Structural equation modelling confirmed the finding that jealousy can lead to aggression as it showed a directional relationship between the two variables. This finding has great importance for two reasons; first, structural equation modelling enabled the calculation of confounded variables and external influences thus ensuring that jealousy has an unobstructed effect on aggression. Second, it revealed and verified the direction of the relationship between the two variables with a clear indication that an increase in jealousy may lead to an increase in aggression.

Contrary to the original hypothesis jealousy was found to be significantly correlated with sexual desire. This result was confirmed by the analysis carried out with Lisrel. Within the structural equation model, jealousy appears to directly influence sexual desire; according to this finding, a high jealousy score would indicate a high sexual desire score. This was an unexpected finding as the hypothesised model did not predict a direct relationship between jealousy and sexual desire. One way to try to explain this finding is by looking at research that has explored this link. As seen in chapter 2 a certain cultural
group in Tahiti has been found to have very low levels of reported jealousy because they do not tend to attach emotional and psychological meaning to sexual encounters (Buunk, 1991). By dissociating emotions and sex they are able to view sexual acts as acts of pleasure that have no affective undertones. It could be speculated that if the link between jealousy and sexual desire was also found in the Tahiti group then one would expect the members of this group to have a low sexual desire. However, this speculation is contradicted by Buunk’s findings because the Tahiti swingers were reported to have relatively high levels of sexual desire. This contradiction can be interpreted in various ways. First, it must be noted that the findings of the present study were based on a predominantly White British population so they cannot be applied or generalised to other populations and especially to other cultures. Second, in defence of the jealousy and sexual desire link, the Tahiti swingers are a cultural subgroup and as such their sexual practices are specifically influenced and emerge from the group’s ethos. Buunk noted that this group’s behaviour is regarded as unusual not only by Western standards but also by people of the same cultural heritage that do not belong to the group. Therefore, support for the link between jealousy and sexual desire cannot be found in Buunk’s study because of cultural and in-group out-group differences. However, as we shall see later, psychological theory may help explain this finding.

**Aggression**

*(Aggression-Sexual Desire; Aggression-Post-conflict Sex)*

The results from both the correlations and structural equation modelling, provided little support for the prediction that aggression will be linked to sexual desire. The correlations showed that there is a link between aggression and sexual desire but this link is weak and therefore does not allow the author to confirm the original prediction. This finding does not confirm nor does it contradict Douglas’ (1991) view that aggression can facilitate sexual intimacy and Freud’s initial theorising which saw aggression as a fundamental part of sexual desire. The lack of strength of the link between aggression and jealousy makes it difficult to reach clear conclusions. The author suggests that future research should explore this link more carefully in order to paint a
clearer picture. The inability to make clear comparisons to previous research and draw clear conclusions applies to early findings by Jaffe, et al. (1974), Clark (1954), and Barclay (1965) all of which argued that there is a distinct relationship between aggression and sexual desire. Support for the aggression-sex link was sought in all of the studies presented in chapter 2. However, their results can be criticised on methodological grounds. It is well known that Freud's theorising was based on a sample of patients that took part in therapeutic sessions. Freud's theories including his view that sex is the most powerful human drive were criticised in later years for lacking empirical support (Holt, 1989). Although Jaffe et al. Clark and Barclay gained empirical evidence for the sex-aggression link, their results can be criticised for lacking ecological validity as all three studies were carried out in the laboratory; furthermore, these studies involved physiological measurements of sexual arousal under laboratory conditions that were designed to induce aggressive feelings. Lastly, the findings by Douglas were based on a small sample of violent couples that sought therapy. Her conclusions were derived from qualitative data that although in depth and insightful, they cannot be perceived as evidence for a causal relationship between aggression and sexual desire nor can they be generalised. In the present study the notion that heightened aggressive feeling can increase sexual desire was not strongly supported either because such a link does not exist or because of other factors which are going to be discussed next. The participants' sexual desire was measured by the Sexual Desire Inventory (Spector, Carey & Steinberg, 1996) that is designed to measure sexual desire through assessing one's general interest in sexual activity and his/her preoccupation with sexual thoughts. The scale included hypothetical scenario questions (i.e. when you spend time with an attractive person how strong is your sexual desire), questions that focused on one's preference in terms of sexual activity frequency, and questions that assessed the level of importance placed on sexual activity (i.e. how important is it for you to behave sexually with a partner by yourself). Measured this way sexual desire may be perceived as a lasting trait and as such not something that can be altered or influenced by a high or low aggressiveness score. In addition, the very nature of this scale may have influenced the results. The questions were of a 'sensitive' nature and involved disclosing very personal
information which participants may not have felt comfortable to disclose. These two assumptions may help explain why the aggression-sexual desire link was not supported. The next finding may also help interpret the lack of strong support for the aggression and sexual desire link.

Correlational analysis showed a strong and highly significant link between aggression and post-conflict sex. This result revealed that participants with high aggression scores were more likely to engage in post-conflict sex after an argument. This finding was unexpected and is really interesting as the original prediction viewed sexual desire and not aggression as the variable that will directly affect post-conflict sex. The relationship between aggression and post-conflict sex was confirmed by the structural equation model; also the exact nature and direction of this relationship was determined, with aggression directly affecting post-conflict sex. The implications of this finding are considerable. First, it appears that one's aggression levels may affect how they act in post-conflict situations, and in specific, it may predict to an extent whether they are going to engage in sexually intimate activities as a means of repairing their relationship and bonding with their partner after an argument. Second, it makes the interpretation of the previous finding, that aggression has no link with sexual desire, clearer. Indeed, the assumption that sexual desire may be viewed as something that remains the same across different situations appears to be supported by the aggression and post-conflict sex link. What was originally proposed was that aggression will influence sexual desire which in turn will affect post-conflict sex, whereas now we see aggression playing a more central role in the model as it appears to affect post-conflict sex. It would be logical to assume that an individual's likelihood of engaging in sexual intimacy after an argument would depend more on their sexual desire and not their aggression levels. However, the results showed that the impact of sexual desire on post-conflict sex is not as strong as originally thought.

Previous research carried out by Douglas (1991) supported the view that aggression and violence may in fact help partners behave in sexually intimate ways following an intense conflict situation. According to this view, partners
relieve themselves of the tensions that build up between them during conflict through sexual and emotional intimacy; sexual bonding in this case serves the purpose of alleviating negative feelings and helping partners 'go back to normal'. Douglas focused her attention on violent relationships and her conclusions were based on what happens after a highly aggressive or violent episode whereas the present study did not focus on a target population (i.e. violent couples). Instead, participants were asked to report their own levels of aggression within the relationship by using a modified version of the Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, 1979); participants were also asked to report whether they engage in sexual activities after an argument. Therefore, although the present study included a measure of aggressive behaviour during conflict it did not concentrate on abusive or violent couples. Rather, the sample's responses to the CTS and the Post-conflict sex scale were correlated and analysed.

As seen previously Douglas's study has its criticisms; however, the results presented by Douglas are very important as they are data-driven (emerged from participants' accounts) and as such they provide an insightful, view of couple life as they relate closely to a real-life situation. No other study has examined this link to date, especially from a qualitative point of view; Douglas's contribution is considerable as it attempts to address an issue that has received little or no attention previously. In the present study, the author attempted to explore the use of sexual intimacy after conflict by creating a variable called, Post-conflict sex. This variable was measured by a scale that was specifically designed to assess whether participants engage in sex after an argument as a means of reconciliation and repair; it also attempted to capture participant opinions as to whether post-conflict sexual intimacy can help them bond and comfort each other.

**Sexual desire**

(Sexual desire-Post-conflict sex)

In accordance with the original prediction sexual desire was found to be correlated with post-conflict sex. However, this relationship was weak and less influential than originally expected. It was originally speculated that people
with a high sexual drive, would be more likely to engage in sexual activities than people that have a low sex drive, after conflict. Sexual desire was seen as a key factor in the use of post-conflict sex as a tool for reconciliation and relationship repair. The results did not fully support this expectation as the correlation between these two variables was not as strong as expected. Instead, as seen previously, aggression was found to be a better predictor of post-conflict sex. Once again, it was difficult to find evidence in previous research that can support or explain this finding. The work of Retzinger (1997, 2000) can provide partial support as she argued that intense emotional situations, such as arguments, can create emotional distance between partners. Emotional distance and an array of negative emotions such as anger, resentment and shame can be alleviated by one's efforts to be apologetic and regretful and by showing their partners that they still care for them. This is the point that sexual desire may be considered as a deciding factor, as one's chances of expressing their regret and willingness to 'make-up' in a sexual manner, would be expected to increase if that person has a high sexual drive. The results obtained from correlations and the structural equation model are not strong enough to fully support this claim. Once again, it may be the overriding influence of aggression that can increase or decrease the likelihood of sexual intimacy as a means of reconciliation and repair. To explain this we have to look at the unique properties and characteristics of aggression and sexual desire. Both are seen as fundamental human characteristics but their exact role in intimate relationships and, in specific, in conflict can vary considerably. Conflict between intimate partners has been shown to be an intense experience that is often characterised by negative feelings, such as anger, insecurity, sadness and fear of loss. Aggression in turn, is often seen as a negative attribute that can cause physical and psychological harm and that has negative connotations attached to it. The expression of anger in a physical or verbal manner is often frowned upon as it is an experience that is both intense and distressing (Hockenbury and Hockenbury, 2005). On the other hand, sexuality and sexual desire has positive connotations attached to it as it is connected to positive, pleasurable and euphoric experiences. It appears that if seen as attributes that may help an individual resolve a conflict situation, aggression would be a more useful
tool than sexual desire. Provided that the resolution that is sought is the one of bonding and relationship repair through sexual intimacy, aggression may prove to be a better attribute as it can both help an individual argue their case, and contribute to the increase of physiological arousal, which is an integral part of sexual arousal. On the other hand, an individual's high sexual desire may not be particularly useful in resolving an argument. Nevertheless, a high sexual drive can somewhat increase the likelihood of post-conflict sex, which would explain why there was not a total lack of support for the sexual desire and post-conflict sex link.

Theoretical Explanations
In this subsection an attempt will be made to interpret some of the study's findings in the light of existing psychological theory. The link between jealousy and aggression may be explained by looking at four theoretical perspectives the evolutionary perspective, the frustration-aggression hypothesis, the theory of displaced aggression and the social learning view. In the same manner, explanations for the relationship between aggression and post-conflict sex may be found within evolutionary theory and social learning theory. A discussion of these findings with regards to theory will hopefully help explain the model that was supported by the results of this study (see Graph 2 in the Results section).

As previously mentioned, jealousy is seen by the evolutionary perspective as an inevitable reaction to being faced with a romantic rival. It is thought to be a natural defence mechanism designed to protect people's relationships and ensure the continuation of their genes (Buunk, 1996; Buss, 1999; Haselton and Buss, 2000). Evolutionary psychologists view aggression in a similar way as they argue that aggression is an innate mechanism that is both unavoidable, and necessary for the survival if the species (Buss, 1999). With those two contentions in mind one could argue that the link between jealousy and aggression can be explained if seen as inherent or natural. To clarify, jealousy can provoke a variety of negative reactions such as anger, resentment, and sadness most of which could be expressed through aggression (Mullen, 1991). Thus, according to evolutionary theory, aggression
may be seen as a natural reaction to jealousy. Viewed this way, aggression can be perceived to be achieving two goals; first, by reacting this way the jealous aggressor sends a powerful message to the rival and his or her partner that territory and mating rights will be protected; and second his or her intense and distressing jealousy feelings are released and alleviated through an aggressive outburst.

Another possible explanation for the jealousy and aggression link may be found by looking at the frustration-aggression hypothesis. According to the frustration-aggression hypothesis, aggression is the result of frustration caused by environmental and psychological factors (Dollard et al., 1939; Anderson and Anderson, 1998; Smith, 2002). This view may help explain the direct link between jealousy and aggression; as seen earlier, jealousy is an emotion that is both very unpleasant and distressing (Mullen, 1991); therefore it would be logical to infer that jealousy creates frustration which in turn can instigate aggression. According to this view, a partner that suffers from feelings of jealousy may become increasingly frustrated and consequently respond in an aggressive manner. However, this view may be criticised for being over-simplified. The notion that a single source of frustration can explain aggression in relationships may not be a sufficient explanation.

Theorists have argued that a better explanation may be found if the occurrence of aggression is examined further, especially in relation to the balance between anger and the potential consequences for expressing that anger. As Horowitz puts it, “the occurrence of aggression has been viewed as the outcome of a test of strength between the level of anger and the level of inhibitions on expressing that anger. If anger exceeds inhibitions, aggression occurs. The choice of targets is also partly a function of these relative strengths, for anger and inhibitions vary with respect to particular targets” (Horowitz, 1973; p.4). Consideration of the issues relating to the balance of between anger expression and potential inhibitions for expressing that anger have led to the conclusion that a distinction has to be made between direct and displaced anger. Direct aggression would occur in the instance where the person causing the frustration (i.e. a flirtatious partner) would also be the
recipient of the expressed anger, thus becoming the victim. "If on the other hand, inhibitions against attacking the frustrator exceed the anger provoked by the frustration, aggression may be displaced onto a different victim" (Horowitz, 1973; p.4). In the light of this view, one could assume that accumulated frustrations about the evidenced promiscuity of a friend's partner may lead to aggression towards one's own partner. Inhibitions may obviously prevent an individual to express their anger towards someone else's partner but allow displacement of that anger onto his/her own partner.

A final explanation may be found by examining the jealousy and aggression relationship from a social learning perspective. As seen previously, social learning theorists maintain that most behaviour is learned so an assumption could be made that aggressive reactions to jealousy can be also learned. This supposition may be true, especially if the aggressor is aiming to benefit from his/her behaviour (i.e. if the aggression is instrumental). The benefits involved in aggressing as a response to jealousy can be various. The aggressor can learn that his/her behaviour may bring rewards. Popular media images that portray aggression in response to jealousy as acceptable or beneficial to individual may reinforce the learning process. A jealous reaction as a way to declare undying love and devotion for a partner may be the thing of the past, as we saw in chapter two (Mullen, 1991), but extreme and often aggressive reactions to infidelity are a regular occurrence in the media nowadays (Myers, 2005). Popular drama, real life documentaries and even items on the news depict verbally or physically aggressive scenes between partners that are either suspecting or have confirmed cases of infidelity. Jealousy is viewed by academics and lay people alike, as a negative experience that is irrational and that is often frowned upon; however, aggression as a response to jealousy may not have the same negative connotations attached to it. This lack of criticism may be based on popular beliefs that the 'cheater' deserves some form of punishment. Support for this assumption may be found in the 'just-world hypothesis' (Lemer, 1980) which maintains that people "get what they deserve and deserve what they get" (Hockenbury and Hockenbury, 2005);
In summary, the direct relationship between jealousy and aggression could be explained by evolutionary theory which views aggression and jealousy as innate human characteristics that can be intrinsically linked in order to form a protective shield that can safeguard the gene pool. Alternatively, the link between the two variables could be explained by the frustration-aggression hypothesis that views aggression as a reaction to certain stimuli, in this particular case, jealousy, and the theory of displaced aggression which argues that anger may be directed at an individual who is not responsible for causing the original frustration. Finally, aggressive reactions to jealous feelings may be explained by the social learning theory. Aggression as a reaction to jealousy may be a behaviour that can be learned either through real life experiences or though popular media portrayals of angry retaliations that are provoked by jealous feeling.

The relationship between aggression and post-conflict sex may be explained by examining it from an evolutionary point of view. In order to provide an explanation for this link an examination of three components is needed, aggression, conflict and sex. As already mentioned, aggression according to evolutionary psychologists is seen as an innate, self-defence mechanism that is designed to protect self and partner from rivals and intruders and ensure survival and successful procreation. Conflict, according to Buss (1995), arises from differences in partners' sexual and reproductive concerns. These differences can cause the individual to experience feelings of anger and sexual inadequacy which can significantly affect their self-esteem. Finally, sexual behaviour is seen as a fundamental human characteristic that is motivated by the internal need to reproduce successfully (Buss, 1994). The results revealed that a high aggression score can increase the likelihood of sexual interaction after conflict. Therefore, it could be argued that a high aggressive drive fuelled by sexual concerns, can amplify feelings of sexual inadequacy and decrease self esteem, which in turn are re-established through sexual intimacy and restore sexual confidence, thus, ensuring the continuation of the relationship. This explanation, although logical, it fails to account for environmental influences so an alternative explanation will be sought by looking at social learning theory.
The link between aggression and post-conflict sex may be explained if one considers the impact of environmental influences on behaviour. As already seen, social learning theory argues that both aggression and sexual behaviour can be learned through social observation and imitation (Mullen, 1991; McAnulty and Burnette, 2004). Therefore, it could be postulated that people may learn to associate these two variables by exposure to popular media images and the behaviour of others around them. Popular media images often portray intense verbal or physical fights between partners that are followed by passionate, sexual scenes. The notion that sex after an argument is better or more passionate is a popular belief amongst lay people (McAnulty and Burnette, 2004). Passion is an aspect of relationships that is seen as an integral part of falling in love with someone and that is desired by many (Crooks and Baur, 2005). So having passionate sex, after an intense and potentially aggressive argument, may be explained by these popular beliefs.

Limitations and suggestions for future research
There were several limitations to this study and they will be addressed in the section. An obvious limitation is that the present study relied on correlational data to infer links between the variables. The limitations of correlational studies have been discussed previously but not in connection to the present study. Initial explorations of the links between the study variables were made by using simple correlations; these did not provide conclusive evidence regarding the direction of the relationships in question, and could not imply causality. For example, jealousy may be one of the most significant factors that affect aggression but it cannot be seen as the single factor that causes it. In order to address the issues surrounding causality and to determine the exact nature and direction of the relationships between the variables, a more advanced statistical technique was employed to analyse the data. Structural equation modelling provided more concrete results and outlined directional tendencies as it enables the calculation of links between known as well as unknown variables. This technique enabled complex calculations that would not be possible otherwise and provided useful information about the exact relationships between variables in the model. However, both types of analysis (correlations and Structural equation modelling), cannot imply causality. In
addition, they were based on participants' reconstructed experiences which can be flawed for the following reasons; first, as mentioned in chapter 1, the accurate recall of behaviours, activities and experiences cannot be guaranteed because of memory problems. People's recollections and perceptions of events, experiences and feelings can be biased and the reliability of information they provide questioned (Davis, 1999; Loftus, 2001). Nevertheless, research has shown that participants provide accurate accounts of their experiences or opinions when asked specific questions about the recent past (weeks or months). This was taken into account before the questionnaire was administered and most items were asking for specific information that occurred either a week or few months previously (i.e. during the last month, how often have you had sexual thoughts involving a partner?).

This study's dependency on self-report data may be the source of additional problems because the accuracy and value of the information gathered depended upon how honestly participants responded to questions. Two potential sources of bias may have affected the results; the self-serving bias and the social desirability effect. The results may have been affected by these two biases because of the type of variables that were investigated in the study. The first variable, jealousy, was measured by the Self Report Jealousy scale (Bringle, 1979). The answers to this scale may have been affected by the self-serving bias and social desirability effects because of the negative connotations attached to this variable. As seen earlier, jealousy is perceived to be a negative human attribute that is often frowned upon in society (Mullen, 1991). Given this finding, it would be logical to assume that most people would not want to be portrayed as highly jealous. The same biases may have been present in the measurement of aggression. Aggression was measured by the Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, 1979), which is specifically designed to measure aggression in conflict between couples. Participants may have had difficulty providing honest answers to questions such as, "Insulted, yelled, or swore at other one", and, "Slapped the other one", because of fears of making a 'bad impression'. Although, anonymity was ensured, as it is a well known procedure that helps reduce social desirability effects (Brehm, et al., 2002) this form of bias may have affected the results.
The accuracy of participant responses given to the remaining two scales may have been affected by different factors. Sexual desire was measured by the Sexual Desire Inventory (Spector, Carey and Steinberg, 1996) and post conflict sex by the Post-Conflict Sex scale (created by the author). Both scales involved questions that asked for personal and sensitive information (i.e. Sexual desire scale: ‘during the last month, how often would you have liked to behave sexually by yourself’; Post-conflict Sex scale: ‘I have a desire to engage in sexual activities shortly after arguing with my partner’). Participants, therefore, may have found it difficult to disclose personal information because of the sensitive nature of the questions asked which may have limited the answers they provided. Closely related to the problem of obtaining honest responses when researching a sensitive issue, is another form of bias which is called the volunteer bias. Of the people that were invited to participate in this study the ones that actually agreed and consequently filled in the questionnaire may be different to the ones that refused to take part. There is no way to know with certainty that this bias has affected the results as we have no information about the people that chose not to take part. This study investigated a sensitive topic that required people to disclose information about themselves, their relationships and their sexual habits. One could argue that the people who chose to disclose such information may be more open-minded and liberal in their views of jealousy, aggression and sexual behaviour, than the ones that did not take part. There is evidence to suggest that, although subtle, the effects of this bias can influence the results (Wiederman, 1999); therefore, the extent to which the results can be applied to other populations is limited.

Moreover, research that uses questionnaires as the method of data collection has been shown to be influenced by boredom effects (Erber and Erber, 2001). The author was aware of this problem before administering the questionnaire and action was taken to minimise its effects. The questionnaire was presented in sections, each section corresponding to a different measure. Each section had between 14-23 items and a different style in terms of format (i.e. some questions required answers on a 5-point scale, others on a frequency scale).
In addition, a combination of positively and negatively worded items was used in order to minimise boredom and to control for perfunctory responding.

Another limitation lies with the fact that the results were based on a relatively small sample of students and professionals in the East Midlands area; this sample comprised predominantly white British individuals. For these reasons the results of the present study cannot be generalised nor can they be applied to populations that don’t have the same or very similar characteristics. Furthermore, the present study did not take into account cultural influences, which limits the scope of the conclusions drawn. The author does not underestimate the importance of cross-cultural variations; rather, financial and time constraints made it impossible to encompass such considerations. Future investigations of the relationship between jealousy, aggression, sexual desire and post-conflict sex should consider such influences and examine how cultural variations can affect the results.

In order to tackle the effects of social desirability the author suggests that in future investigations a social desirability scale should be included. The administration of this scale will not minimise or reduce the effects of social desirability but it will help the researcher to estimate the effects of the bias and take them under consideration when interpreting the results.

To address the problem of the self-serving bias in future research the author would consider using alternative methods of obtaining data. As seen in chapter one, Gottman (1999), used a combination of methods in his study and managed to minimise bias effects. The use of observational data in conjunction with self-report and qualitative data may provide more accurate and reliable data. Also, as seen previously, relationship research has been criticised for relying heavily on self-report data from a single-participant perspective (Brehm et al., 2002; Ickes and Duck, 1999). This criticism can be applied to the present study as the information obtained was based on the views of individual participants. Information from dyads was not obtained; therefore the results are limited in that they cannot describe with accuracy the role of jealousy, aggression, sexual desire and post-conflict sex in a dyadic
interaction. In future investigations the author will endeavour to examine relationship behaviour using methods that allow the study of interactions between couples and thus, paint a richer and fuller picture.

**Summary and Conclusion**

In summary, the results of this study revealed that important relationships exist between jealousy, aggression, sexual desire and post-conflict sex. In specific, the model that emerged from the data suggests the increase of aggression and sexual desire through feelings of extreme jealousy; and the engagement in post-conflict sex through heightened aggression and sexual desire. These four variables have not been studied in conjunction with each other before and the combined analysis of how they are generated and expressed has provided an interesting account of relationship behaviour. One possible application of these findings may be that they can be used to enhance our understanding of abusive relationships; this study's results may help explain what precedes and follows violence. As seen previously Walker (1979) asserted that the last phase in the cycle of violence is the loving-respite phase during which the abuser makes an effort to apologise for his/her behaviour and repair the damage done. This model, however, does not explain exactly how the abuser achieves relationship repair after a violent episode. The author attempted to explore this aspect and suggests that sexual intimacy is used as a way of repairing the relationship and re-establishing or strengthening the bond between partners. What was discovered is that factors such as jealousy, aggression and sexual desire may play a significant role in how couples deal with conflict. Although, the results did not reveal what goes on after an argument, they did reveal that sexual intimacy may be used as a way to repair the damage caused by conflict and re-establish the bond between partners. It appears that people's feelings of jealousy and their aggression and sexual desire levels may affect how conflict is resolved and how partners deal with a post-conflict situation. This is a fascinating discovery because a lot is known about what instigates conflict and the processes that partners go through during it, but very little is known about what happens after
conflict and in specific, how couples reach closure and start attempts to re-establish the bond between them.
Conflict

Although, several researchers have focused their attention on conflict in social and other personal relationships the majority of the literature is centred on conflict between intimate partners (Cupach, 2000), which will be the focal point of this chapter. This chapter will firstly attempt to demonstrate the importance of studying conflict then attempt to define it and subsequently review existing literature concerning this subject area.

There has been a considerable amount of literature relating to interpersonal conflict. Conflict has received great attention because it is a common and frequent occurrence in people's everyday lives. People engage in conflict in various settings, with a variety of people and for a vast array of reasons. People, can engage in conflict whether they are at home, at work, university or school or in social settings. Research has shown that conflict occurs in people's lives irrespective of their age (Peterson, 1983; Brehm, et al., 2002). Children as young as 3 can have arguments and disputes with their parents and peers and adults can have arguments with parents, friends, work colleagues and close partners. It seems that there can be potential for conflict in virtually every situation and with every possible relation in someone's life. This is one of the reasons why conflict has received great academic attention. Some theorists have argued that conflict and the way people manage it stands as the ultimate test of the character of relationships (Canary et al., 1995). "Partners in quality relationships manage conflicts through positive interaction
behaviours, which include collaborating with each other and disallowing escalation of anger into aggression, rejecting withdrawal as a viable management strategy, and avoiding or changing destructive behavioural patterns and cycles" (Canary et al., 1995; p.1). Furthermore, Valsiner & Cairns, (1992) suggested that conflict is an integral part of an individual's personal growth and development. They supported this argument by indicating that conflict is one of the few concepts that emerge in nearly all of the key theories of human development.

The significance and centrality that conflict has in people's development of social insight and understanding can be summarised in the following four sections of human interaction: "in understanding others' feelings and intentions, in using or grasping social conventions and rules that guide behaviour, in children's use of strategic communication, and in knowledge of different categories relevant to interpersonal relationships" (Dunn & Slomkowskii, 1992, cited in Canary et al, 1995; p.2). According to these researchers conflict is a learning process. People learn to adapt to other people's needs through the development and enhancement of their social skills, thus advancing the quality of social and personal interactions.

Marshall (1994) proposed that intimate partners in specific, must be able to manage conflict effectively and resolve conflict situations because of increased risks of psychological and physical harm. Conflict between intimate partners is often a highly emotional situation during which partners go through psychological pain and experience an array of negative emotions. Marshall reviewed studies on aggressive behaviour in intimate relationships and reported that 20-30% of partners recalled experiencing an aggressive act in their relationships. Whether, it is pushing, holding back or hitting someone aggressive episodes are common in intimate relationships. This places great importance on effective conflict management. Partners that have the ability to manage their conflict constructively and productively have been shown to be able to avoid physical and psychological aggression (Infante, Chandler & Rudd, 1989; Lloyd & Emery, 1994, 2000). Furthermore, effective conflict management between partners has been shown to reduce the chances of
parent-child neglect, abandonment and abuse (Minuchin, 1992). Finally, conflict is perceived to be an invaluable source of information because it can reveal how people interact, communicate with, and relate to each other. Gottman (1994) noted, "nearly all the research on marital interaction has involved the observation of conflict resolution" (p.66). In order to gain insight and knowledge about people as interactive members of a close relationship an attempt will be made to define conflict and examine its causes.

There has been much discrepancy over finding a single and complete definition of conflict. The diversity of the various definitions has made it almost impossible for researchers to develop clear and straightforward theories. Failing to reach agreement about what conflict really is, has hindered our understanding of how it works and created problems in conceptualising the term. As Hartup & Laursen (1993) observed, "variation in definitions makes comparisons across studies complicated and potentially misleading... we must separate conflict from related domains of behaviour" (p.55). In the following few paragraphs various definitions of conflict will be presented and examined.

Deutsch, (1973) proposed that most researchers seem to agree that conflict between people involves both parties to be incompatible with each other to a certain extent. However, any further additions or differentiations to this statement appear to be ambiguous. For example, Peterson, (1983) argued that conflict is "an interpersonal process that occurs whenever the actions of one person interfere with the actions of another" (p: 365). Other researchers stressed that conflict does not just concern people's actions. Rubin, Pruitt and Kim, (1994) emphasized the role that people's goals, plans and aspirations can play in interpersonal conflict. For example, in a conflict situation two intimate partners would initially be arguing about who did what (actions) to whom. However, according to Rubin et al., (1994) most arguments move away from just arguing about actions and soon engage in conflict that concerns motives. In a few words, conflict exists in a given situation when there are mutually divergent events, motives, ideas, intentions, behaviours, desires etc. Empirical evidence from a collection of studies showed that up to
eight different definitions exist in the literature. Prinz (cited in Hall, 1987) argued that conflict was defined as: "interruptions, disagreements, tension, defensive versus supportive communication, anxiety tension and negative emotions, antagonism, negative interpersonal expressiveness, and contradictions between verbal and non-verbal messages" (Canary et al., 1995; p.4). However, there is some agreement in the literature over conflict.

The question of how much people engage in conflict has been longstanding. Several researchers concentrated on the differences between various types of relationships in terms of frequency of conflict. Research revealed that frequency of conflict depends on the type of relationship, the way conflict is characterised and measured, and the sample studied. Studies on family conflict, for example, have shown that during family meals an average family had 3.3 disagreements (Vuchinich, 1987). Canary et al., (1995) argued that the number of disputes rises dramatically when the population under study is children. Children between the ages of 6-10 years, appear to have disputes on a daily basis with both their peers and their parents. Children's age appears to play a significant role in this as Eisenberg (1992) revealed that four-year olds have a dispute with their mothers every 3.6 minutes. However, according to Laursen & Collins (1994), the frequency of conflict decreases as age increases. They found that adolescents have an average of 7 disagreements per day with their peers and parents. This is an interest find as puberty is a stage in life greatly associated with parent-child conflict. However, a meta-analysis by Laursen, Coy & Collins, (1998), showed that as age increases the frequency of parent-child conflict decreases. It is evident from this meta-analysis that the frequency of child-parent conflict can be overestimated. Laursen, Coy & Collins concluded that the above misperception can be due to the fact that conflict between parents and adolescents was found more intense and heated than conflict between parents and younger children.

When studying conflict in intimate relationships researchers have often noted that it is difficult to accurately quantify the amount of disputes or disagreements because of diversity over conceptualisation and the partners' perception of what comprises conflict.
Studies have shown that conflict frequency varies and is dependent upon various factors, including the status of the relationship, the level of satisfaction and the partners' individual personality characteristics (Brehm, et al., 2002; Hassebrauck & Fehr, 2002). The following studies showed that there are varying degrees of difference in conflict frequency. Lloyd, (1987) conducted a diary study with 25 couples and found that intimate partners had 4.6 arguments in 14 days. Both partners agreed over the number of arguments reported in this study. However, a large community-based study with marital and dating couples showed that partners have one or two heated disagreements per month (McGonagle, Kessler & Schilling, 1992). Both studies used diaries and had similar samples. The difference in the frequency reported, therefore could be attributed to differences in defining conflict or other factors. In Lloyd's study participants were asked to record "conflict interactions" and in McGonagle et al.'s, "heated disagreements". Comparing these two studies can be very difficult because the two terms used to describe conflict vary in intensity. A "conflict interaction" can be perceived as any major or minor difference of opinion or dispute, whereas a "heated disagreement" implies the involvement of 'heat', passion, heightened emotions and escalation. More recently, Kirchler et al., (2001) suggested that minor differences of opinion, disagreements, and arguments comprise only 3% of daily partner interactions. However, Bradbury et al., (2001) stressed that this result is even lower when participants are asked to refer specifically to arguments only. Again varying conflict definitions and conceptualisations make these studies unique and incomparable. A study with distressed and non-distressed couples revealed that relationship satisfaction could play a role in frequency of conflict. Vincent et al., (1975) found that distressed couples have an average of one argument a day whereas non-distressed couples have one argument every five days.

A problem that arose in attempting to measure the frequency of conflict was that partners report that they do not always address their arguments. Rolloff & Cloven (1990) carried out a study with 300 university students and found that 40% of conflicts, annoyances or disputes were not discussed or addressed at
all. This showed that there could be many factors that influence the quantity and frequency of conflict in a relationship. There could be great variation in the level of expressiveness between intimate partners. As it will be seen later, there are different types of couples that have different kinds of strategies when dealing with conflict. Regardless of the exact number of conflict in intimate relationships, researchers suggested that overall, partners engage in conflict with each other frequently and that these conflict interactions can have serious effects on the quality of the relationship (Brehm et al., 2002).

Conflict: Good or Bad
Researchers have argued that conflict is an unavoidable aspect of people’s lives. However, lay perceptions of conflict and their attitudes towards it are quite negative as most people view conflict an unpleasant experience (Peterson, 1983). Gottman (1999) disagreed with this view and stressed that conflict is a very important component in a relationship as it can promote intimacy and closeness. Conflicts are considered to be crucial events that can make the relational bond stronger and thus, help partners grow. On the other hand conflict may weaken a relationship as we shall see later. According to Gottman (1999) “conflicts can be productive, creating deeper understanding, closeness and respect, or they can be destructive, causing resentment, hostility and divorce” (p. 23). Support for this view comes from past and recent studies. For example early studies from Canary & Cupach (1988) and Roloff & Cloven (1990) revealed that couples who avoid expressing their opinion about small irritating behaviours in their relationship and consequently avoid conflict experience higher levels of dissatisfaction and relationship distress than couples that are more expressive. More recently, Noller et al., (1994) and Canary & Cupach (2000), found that couples who mutually withdraw from conflict situations have a higher chance of later reporting to be unhappy or dissatisfied with their relationship. However, engagement in conflict only is not a predictor of relationship satisfaction. As Fincham & Beach (1999) argued, it is constructive conflict management and effective resolution that can determine whether conflict will help the relationship grow. Consistent with this view, Bach & Wyden, (1968) stated that arguing could be good for a relationship because if it is done ‘fairly’ and ‘skillfully’ it can increase intimacy.
According to this view, a fair fight can have a lot of positive effects on the relationship. Brehm et al., (2002), reviewed Back & Wyden's work and compiled a list of positive effects gained from a fair fight (see Table 4, below).

**TABLE 4**

**CONFLICT: POSITIVE & NEGATIVE EFFECTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>POSITIVE OUTCOME</th>
<th>NEGATIVE OUTCOME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hurt</td>
<td>Person feels less hurt, weak or offended.</td>
<td>Person feels more hurt, weak or offended.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>Person gains more information about the relationship or their partner's feelings.</td>
<td>Person learns nothing new.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolution</td>
<td>Open conflict aids partners to resolve the issue.</td>
<td>Low chance of resolving the issue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>Fear of arguing and/or the partner is reduced.</td>
<td>Fear has increased.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Person has more faith in partner's goodwill and lawful intentions.</td>
<td>Person perceives partner as selfishly motivated and behaving with negative intent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenge</td>
<td>Intentions to take revenge are not stimulated by the fight.</td>
<td>Intentions to take revenge are stimulated by the fight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconciliation</td>
<td>Person attempts to undo any harm done and welcomes similar efforts by the partner.</td>
<td>Person does not attempt or welcome conciliatory acts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Count</td>
<td>Person feels better about himself/herself. More confidence more self esteem.</td>
<td>Person feels having lowered self-esteem and reduced confidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catharsis</td>
<td>Person feels cleared of tensions and aggression.</td>
<td>Person feels as much tension and aggression as before the fight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion &amp; Affection</td>
<td>Closeness with the partner, affection and attraction levels have increased.</td>
<td>Closeness with and attraction to the partner have decreased.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Brehm et al., 2002

According to Bach & Wyden (1968), a fair and skillfully done fight should find both partners winners, i.e. both partners having more positive than negative outcomes. Obviously, when partners are having an argument about an issue that has great importance to them it is not easy to follow Bach's and Wyden's 'fair fighting' scheme. Conflict situations are very complicated occurrences that
involve the co-current existence of many different factors. Bach and Wyden's view on fair fighting does not undervalue the difficulty in managing a conflict situation. Rather as Brehm, et al., (2000) assert, "[a fair fight] requires strong self-discipline and genuine caring about the other person. Instead of being seen as a dreadful problem conflict can be seen as a challenging opportunity-the chance to learn about both partner and self, the possibility for the relationship to grow in strength and intimacy" (p.352).

Overall, conflict is seen as an inevitable part of people's lives and by the majority of researchers is viewed as an essential part of a relationship that can improve long-term partnerships. The frequency of conflict in a relationship does not necessarily predict how happy or unhappy a couple really is. What seems to have great importance is how partners resolve their differences. Partners that argue frequently but resolve their differences in a constructive manner may be happier than partners that don't have regular arguments but when they do they fail to deal with them constructively. Later in the chapter we will examine possible factors that can influence the way intimate partners manage conflict such as individual differences, conflict instigators and attribution errors.

Individual Differences
Researchers were interested in investigating whether conflict could arise from differences between types of people and whether there were any differences in the nature of conflict between types of relationships. They examined differences between men and women, married couples and newlyweds, friendships and intimate relationships and heterosexual versus same sex couples.

Buss (1989) looked at differences between men and women from an evolutionary point of view. He argued that conflict between intimate partners derives from differences in partners' sexual and reproductive concerns. Buss examined these differences empirically and found that female and male sexual interests differ significantly. For example, women in his study reported that sometimes men's sexual advances and the importance they place on
sexual contact left them feeling frustrated, angry and emotionally empty. Furthermore, findings indicated that women felt they were under pressure to engage in sexual activities in the early stages of the relationship and that sometimes men overemphasised the importance of frequent sexual contact. In contrast, men reported that they often felt frustrated and angry because women delay sexual contact (e.g. demanding to be given time), want to engage in sexual activities less often and restrict the male desire for multiple partners. According to Buss (1995) the evolutionary perspective can offer an in depth explanation of the origins of conflict between intimate partners. He proposed that differences in sexual and reproductive interests could create feelings of anger, frustration, and sexual inadequacy and seriously affect people's self-esteem.

In studies examining differences between friendships and intimate relationships researchers found significant differences in the way people deal with conflict. Baxter et al., (1993) found that friends were more likely to have 'fake' arguments such as name calling for purely entertaining purposes. Respondents reported that they could relieve tension and minor issues within the friendship and manage to avoid conflict by using 'fake' arguments. Intimate partners use this tactic less often and are more likely to repeat past conflicts, thus increasing the chances of conflict escalation.

Buss (1989) studied differences between married couples and newlyweds and found that the latter are less likely to discuss issues that concern infidelity, possessiveness and aggression. Newlyweds were also less likely to express their emotions if these were negative or related to a problematic area of the relationship. However, as the relationship develops and partners gain more knowledge and insight about each other, partners learn how to express their emotions without hurting the other and start having tacit conflicts. Tacit conflicts are conflicts during which partners can discuss issues and problems with an approach that can prevent conflict escalation and hurtful circumstances.
Other researchers attempted to investigate sources of conflict in gay, lesbian and heterosexual relationships. Kurdek (1994) assessed couples that have been together for over 5 years. He found that gay and lesbian couples had very similar sources of conflict as heterosexual couples. According to his results gay lesbian and heterosexual partners have arguments about issues concerning, power, social issues, trust, intimacy and personal distance in more or less the same way. The only significant difference found between the three groups was that gay and lesbian couples are more likely to argue about trust issues than heterosexual couples. However, this difference could be explained because as Kurdek notes “gay men and lesbians are likely to retain previous lovers in their network of friends, thus making issues of trust more salient” (p. 932). He concluded that the nature and origin of conflict does not change according to partner's sexual orientation.

**Conflict Instigators**

Researchers have long tried to identify potential reasons, issues and types of events or behaviour that can instigate conflict between two intimate partners. Trying to pinpoint exactly what causes arguments between partners has proven to be a very difficult task. The list of possible conflict sources was endless. Buss (1989) carried out a large-scale study in an attempt to identify the different justifications for conflict and create distinct source of conflict categories. Participants in this study were asked to identify things that women usually do to upset men and men do to upset women. Their responses were analysed and 147 distinct ‘source-of-conflict’ categories were created. In studies with heterosexual couples, Kelley, Cunningham & Stambul, (cited in Kelley, 1979), found that participants identified hundreds of problems which eventually comprised 65 categories. Gottman, (1979) argued that his research led to the development of 85 possible conflict situations categories. The examples of issues that create conflict reported by participants were numerous; partners argued about not spending much time together or spending too much time together; dealing with in laws, managing the couple’s finances; complaining about receiving too little affection, and annoying personality characteristics or habits. In a few words, it appears that couples
can have conflict about anything, from political and religious views to complaints about sexual contact.

Peterson (1983) argued that determining the exact number of categories could be very difficult. By looking at other similar studies he concluded that the exact number of categories could vary from 65 to 147. He reviewed all the available studies and started classifying events, behaviours and actions that occur before intimate conflicts. He found that there are four main broad categories of sources of conflict, criticism, illegitimate demands, rebuffs and cumulative annoyances. Peterson stated that criticisms could be misperceived thus triggering conflict. He defined 'criticism' as "verbal or non-verbal acts that are perceived as demeaning or unfavourable" (Peterson, 1983; p.368). For example, in an everyday conversation about household chores criticism may involve one partner making a remark about the other partners' unwillingness to help out, by saying for instance, “You are lazy, the only thing you do after work is sit around. It is unfair on me I do everything around here. You are not making an effort to help out whatsoever”. Furthermore, Peterson (1983) argued that partners often find themselves having to respond to requests that they perceive as unreasonable, extreme and beyond what they perceive as their duties in the relationship. An example of an 'illegitimate demand' may involve one partner asking the other to clean the house, prepare dinner, and pick up relatives from the airport while he or she relaxes in the garden. The third category identified by Peterson was rebuffs. A rebuff may occur when one partner does not conform to their partner's demands and hence reacts in an undesirable and unexpected way. Using the above example, if the partner that was asked to clean the house, prepare dinner and drive to the airport does not comply with their partner's demand, it may provoke a negative reaction, which may lead to conflict. The last category was cumulative annoyances, which "are acts such as blocking someone's view of the television that may initially go unnoticed but with repetition eventually become irritating" (Brehm et al., 2002; p.338).

Peterson (1979) argued that these four conditions could instigate conflict. He believed that empirical analysis of events that occur before the onset of an
argument could shed light into what causes conflict and consequently how to manage it. Partners that are at the receiving end of a critical comment may feel inadequate and devalued. This has major implications on the stability of the relationship. As Peterson put it “when one person criticises another, the critical party claims that the other has failed somehow to measure up to his or her standards” (p.372). Illegitimate demands are seen as acts that exceed reasonable or normative expectations. Peterson argued that the same happens with illegitimate demands as one partner makes a request that he/she perceives as rightful while the other just feels angry, frustrated that they cannot meet the demand and may be inadequate. Rebuff, the third condition, is also viewed as a failure on the part of one partner to meet the expectations of the other. However, the last condition differs; as Peterson stated, “cumulative annoyance probably functions somewhat differently from the other three initiating events in regard to more general causal conditions; implications of intentional norm violation are less clear” (p.372). What happens instead is that the ignorant or accidental actions of one partner create an irritation to the other and eventually, when the specific annoying behaviour cannot be tolerated anymore, conflict occurs.

Interpersonal perceptions / Attributions
Research has shown that when romantic partners are having a disagreement about a problematic issue in the relationship, they are apprehensive about what causes their own and their partner's behaviour (Hojjat, 2000). Instead of taking what is being said and done at face value, individuals often seek information regarding hidden motives and objectives. Fincham, Bradbury & Grych (1990) argued that the way people perceive their own and their partner's behaviour and the inferences upon those perceptions, play a crucial role in conflict. Attempting to find causal explanations is a common occurrence in romantic conflict. Researchers have termed this phenomenon attribution and stated that attribution processes are more intense during conflict situations. Moreover, as Schutz (1999) indicated, there seem to be "fundamental differences in the attributions people make of their own and of others' behaviour" (p.194). During conflict, individuals tend to view the situation from a subjective and biased lens. According to Schutz (1999) and
Hojjat, (2000), partners act in a self-serving manner attributing their own negative behaviour to situational, environmental or circumstantial causes and their partner's negative behaviour to internal, personal factors. As Brehm (2002) noted, "attributional processes at such times are not objective and impartial, they reflect a self-serving bias. Most of the time, most of us believe that our motives are good, and we almost always have a good excuse for our less admirable behaviours" (p.341).

In his study, Schutz (1999) used autobiographical accounts and narratives from married couples. He argued that during conflict partners assume two roles: the role of a 'critic', "the one who initially criticised the behaviour of his/her partner", and the role of a 'target', "the one whose behaviour was initially criticised" (p.197). Schutz summarised the findings using the following sections: 1) Biases in accounts, 2) Beginning of the conflict, 3) Attributions, 4) Needs and feelings, 5) Conflict resolution. In the first section, Schutz found that individuals described their own behaviour as suitable for the situation and rightful. Participants consistently regarded their partners' behaviour as illegitimate and placed the blame on them for initiating conflict through criticism, intolerable behaviour and failure to satisfy needs. Stories from both partners about the same events were narrated in completely different ways with each of the partners shifting the blame.

Similar attributional processes are evident in the second section, 'beginning of the conflict'. As Schutz notes: "critics typically described the target's behaviour as wrong, inconsiderate, or unfair. Targets in turn tended to describe their own behaviour as justified, but the critics' complaints as exaggerated or insensitive to their own needs, and indicated that the situation had been fine until the critic started complaining" (Schutz, 1999; p.202). In turn, critics claimed that their nagging or complaining was mere reaction to the target's provoking and illegitimate behaviour. These findings indicate that partners in conflict act in biased ways making it very difficult to avoid escalation.

In terms of 'attributions', partners again used justifications and excuses in regards to their own behaviour and strict judgemental comments when
referring to their partner's behaviour. Critics here asserted that their behaviour was justified because their intentions were good and attributed any angry outbursts to emotional and psychological pressure. The effect of stress or psychological pressure was regarded as a poor reason by the targets, who argued that the critics were just overreacting. Both parties placed great importance on the satisfaction of their needs and the protection of their feelings. Results in this section revealed that more attention was placed on one's own needs and feelings than on the partner's. In their accounts of conflict situations, participants often logged extensive descriptions of their own feelings (e.g. feeling sad, angry, hurt, disappointed etc) but had rare and brief descriptions on their partners' feelings and needs. Lastly, critics reported feeling that the problematic issue was not resolved at the end of the argument. Schutz viewed this finding as plausible and logical, as he explained critics are the ones that are dissatisfied with some aspect of their partner's behaviour and thus they are the ones that have expectations on the outcome of the argument. Targets just desire to end the conflict and relieve themselves of negative emotions and unpleasant feelings. Schutz's findings have great importance as attributions about partner behaviour have been found to directly relate to actual behaviour towards that partner (Bradbury & Fincham, 1992). Misreading the partner's behaviour, motives and intentions can lead to escalation, recurring arguments and reduced relationship satisfaction (Gergen & Gergen, 1998). If attribution processes affect relationship satisfaction then one would expect to see a difference in attribution between happy and unhappy couples. Research suggested that indeed during conflict, satisfied or non-distressed couples make different attributions and consequently different interpretations, to the ones distressed or unhappy couples make. On the whole, dissatisfied or distressed couples appear to overestimate and exaggerate negative events and bad behaviour and undervalue or minimise positive events and behaviour (Fincham, Harold & Cano-Phillips, 2000). However, researchers were puzzled as to whether attributions cause relationship satisfaction or relationship satisfaction cause positive or negative attributions (Bradbury & Fincham, 1990). To summarise, theorists agreed that there is a relationship between the two variables but were unable to determine the exact direction of that relationship. Recently, Fincham et al., (2000)
conducted a longitudinal study with 130 married couples in an attempt to shed light on the link between relationship satisfaction and attribution. Participants in this study were asked to report the attributions they made about their partner’s negative behaviour. The couples were studied over a two-year period and results revealed that there is a two-way relationship between the two variables. As Fincham et al., noted, “for both husbands and wives, a cross-lagged effects model showed that the paths from causal attributions to later satisfaction and from satisfaction to later causal attributions were significant” (p.267). These results indicate that unhappy couples appear to be entrapped in a vicious cycle where partners make ever increasing negative attributions because they are dissatisfied with the relationship as a whole and vice versa. In a few words, unhappy couples are more likely to regard their partners as egocentrically motivated and their partners’ actions as badly intended. Fincham argued that unhappy couples could break this cycle if they changed their expectations instead of just changing their attributions. For example, in a recurring argument they could try to expect less from their partners especially if a certain demand or expectation had not been met in the past.

Demand-Withdraw
The demands and burdens of maintaining a relationship make sporadic conflict in relationships practically inevitable (Stafford & Dainton, 1994). Despite common lay perceptions, happy partnerships are not conflict-free. Instead, as Gottman (1994) has revealed, conflict plays a vital role in maintaining stability and satisfaction in marital and dating relationships. Gottman has carried out extensive research during the last 20 years on married, cohabiting and dating couples. He argued that a couple’s relationship grows and develops only if the couple successfully settles the inevitable problematic issues that occur (Gottman & Levenson, 1992; Levenson et al., 1994). He noted, "a certain amount of conflict is needed to help couples weed out actions and ways of dealing with each other that can harm the relationship in the long run" (Gottman, 1994; p.76). Levenson et al., (1994) found that there are significant differences between men and women and the way they react during conflict situations. They suggested that men appear to suppress,
and restrain their emotions while women tend to be more expressive and communicative. In a few words women have been found to be more comfortable in dealing with conflict situations in intimate relationships. Overall, Gottman (1994) found that women are able to act as 'emotion managers' and intimacy care-takers in relationships. He suggested that women are more sensitive and more perceptive than men when it comes to dealing with problems in the relationship. They are the ones that usually initiate conversation about existing problematic issues. However, Gottman reported that there are no differences between a man and a woman when a situation arises that requires resolving an issue. Resolving a difference requires both partners to react and manage a conflict situation in such a way that escalation is avoided. This, however, can sometimes be jeopardised because of sex differences in the way partners perceive their own and their partner's behaviour and actions. As mentioned earlier, attribution plays a significant role in conflict management as actions and behaviours can often be misperceived leading to misinterpretations and consequently conflict escalation. The differences between men and women in dealing with a conflict situation gain further significance once an argument has started because they have been found to influence conflict direction and outcome.

Once a conflict situation has been initiated partners have two choices: stay and engage in conflict or leave and avoid it. Researchers called this the demand-withdraw pattern, and they stated that it is a very common phenomenon (Peterson, 1983; Brehm et al., 2002; Caughlin & Vangelisti, 2000). During the demand-withdraw cycle one partner attempts to approach the other with the intention of discussing the issue while the other partner reacts to that advance in a negative way with the intention to avoid dealing with the issue or the partner. In this case, the pursuer continues to complain both about the issue in question and their partner's avoidant behaviour, while the distancer continues to avoid the pursuer not only because they do not wish to discuss the issue in question but also because of the increasing complaints.
Cristensen & Heavey (1993) state that, “across several investigations we find that approximately 60% of couples would be classified woman-demand/ man-withdraw, about 30% would be classified as man-demand/ woman-withdraw, and about 10% are equal on these two variables” (p.122). These findings create the issue of why women usually act as demanders and men as withdrawers. Several explanations have been put forward to explain this finding. The majority of recent studies examined this issue from a social structural perspective (Klein & Johnson, 1997; Klinetob & Smith, 1996). The social structural perspective assumes that power imbalances between partners explain why women demand more and withdraw less in conflict situations within the relationship. Theorists believe that wives have relatively less power in the relationship, thus feeling less happy than their partners (Jacobson, 1990). Caughlin & Vangelisti, (2000) stressed that wives are more likely to want to make changes in their relationship if they are not satisfied with the way relational issues are managed. They noted, “the wives' desire for change makes them relatively likely to complain, criticize of demand when discussing relationship issues with their husband; in contrast husbands' comparatively powerful position makes them relatively content with the status quo, leading husbands to be likely to withdraw from conflict because engaging in conflict could potentially change the current situation” (Caughlin & Vangelisti, 2000; p. 524). To summarise, women nag because they want to shift the power balance and, men withdraw because they want to keep the power balance.

Gottman (1994) attempted find an explanation as to why people withdraw and why they demand in a conflict situation. He argued that there are two types of responses that occur during emotional conflicts, flooding and stonewalling. Flooding involves a partner feeling overwhelmed (flooded) by his/her emotions-feeling upset or out of control. When an individual becomes flooded he/she experiences high levels pf physiological arousal, namely high blood pressure, and increasingly fast heart rate. The physiological threshold for emotional overload varies from person to person. For example, some people have the ability to calmly discuss problematic issues and listen patiently to criticising or accusing remarks. However, others are less tolerant of criticism
and have a lower threshold so the slightest negative remark can lead to them being emotionally flooded. Gottman, (1994) noted that if people are already under pressure or stress they have more chances of becoming flooded. In a laboratory experimental study on conflict Gottman & Levenson, (1992) found that during marital conflict husbands, compared to wives, experience faster heart rate and blood pressure increase, and longer elevation. They stressed that the husband’s physiological state could make it very difficult for them to calmly listen to their wife’s long diatribe mainly because of the highly unpleasant physiological arousal that they are experiencing. These findings indicate that because of their strong physiological reaction to conflict men are less likely to be willing to engage in it. Gottman & Levenson argued that when men experience flooding they tend to go into the stonewalling mode. Stonewalling involves men withdrawing from the argument in order to contain their unpleasant and uncomfortable emotions and regain control (Levenson et al., 1994). Christensen and Heavey, (1999) argued that women also stonewall but their findings indicated that men are more likely to resort to this strategy. Subsequently, a continuous negative sequence of events occurs that intensifies the situation, whereby the male counterpart is being protected from stress and negative emotions through stonewalling and the female counterpart experiences enormous stress because of his stonewalling. Tannen, (1990) commented on this circle “She is (wife/female partner) accustomed to working through emotional problems and she tends to experience his stonewalling as disapproval and rejection-and sometimes as the ultimate power play. So she reacts [to her partner’s stonewalling] by flooding” (p.44). Researchers argue that at this point if the woman withdrew as well (her withdrawal caused by flooding) then the situation would be diffused. However, findings indicate that when a woman goes through flooding she becomes even more expressive thus intensifies her efforts to communicate her emotions. Consequently this type of response increases the intensity of the argument, which now becomes heated and very volatile.

Partners interact in various ways during conflict and Gottman (1993, 1994, 1999) argued that the differences between these various interactions are dependent upon the type of partnership couples have. In an attempt to
discover patterns in couple conflict interactions he conducted a series of studies involving heterosexual couples in the United States. He used video recordings of couples having recurrent arguments for approximately 15 minutes. He then observed the way in which couples interacted, focusing on, how the couples engaged in conflict, how often they interacted negatively and how they used persuasive language. This analysis revealed that there are four main types of couples: *volatiles, validators, hostiles and avoiders*. In terms of positive and negative acts during conflict, Gottman (1999) noted that, volatiles, validators and avoiders all had similar ratios of positive and negative interactions whereas hostiles had a high ratio of negative interactions with very few positive ones. In a few words, these findings indicated that couples classified as volatiles, validators and avoiders argue hotly and do use negative language such as name calling, sarcasm and put-downs but have a way of balancing out their negative behaviour by attempting to remain calm, engage in logical discussions and be affectionate to each other. Hostiles with a negative to positive act ratio of about 1:1 (compared to 5:1 for the other types of couples) appear to have great difficulty in modifying their behaviour according to the situation, thus remaining within the vicious circle of criticism, insult, contempt and withdrawal. Moreover, volatile couples were found to use persuasion very early in conflict. They were very expressive from the beginning of the argument and tended to immediately start efforts to persuade their partners. As the argument progressed their attempts to persuade their partners decreased, but there were still relatively high, compared to the other three conflict types. In contrast, validators appeared to avoid attempting to persuade one another, at least in the initial stages of an argument. Instead they intensified their efforts to persuade their partners during the middle stages of a conflict situation.

Gottman compared the results from all 4 types of couples and stated, "In the volatile case, the adaptation includes a lot of negativity. This tends to be balanced by a lot of laughter, positive presentation of issues and a passionate, romantic marriage. This is the adaptation with a lot of non-neutral affect. There are two other adaptations that involve much less negative and positive affect and much more neutral interaction. One adaptation, represented by the
validators, involves carefully picking and choosing when to disagree and confront conflict and them conveying some measure of support when one's partner expresses negative feelings about an issue. The other adaptation with high levels of neutral affect is the avoider adaptation; it appears to involve a minimization of the importance of disagreement. It results in a good deal of calm interaction, but pays the price with emotional distance in the marriage" (Gottman, 1993; p.11). These three adaptations, according to Gottman, have the function of balancing the amount of positivity and negativity displayed during an argument.

Gottman (1999) argued that what is really important is not the problem-solving style but the compatibility of that style between two people; for example two partners that feel comfortable in avoiding confrontation or two partners that are eager to face their problems directly. If both partners are conflict avoiders then avoiding conflict may be beneficial to their relationship as they can understand and accept each other's differences and still maintain loving feelings towards one another. However, problems may exist in a relationship where one partner persistently avoids conflict while the other partner demands it.

Conciliatory acts
Regardless of the conflict type of the couple, at some point in time partners make attempts to reach agreement, engage in calm problem-solving conversation or bring an end to the argument. Peterson (1983) stated "if conflict has escalated to high levels of intensity and if insulting remarks have been exchanged, it is difficult to move from open conflict to the rational problem-solving activity required for resolution" (p.377). He argued that before starting negotiation processes, partners go through a mediating stage. During this stage, an attempt is made to decrease negativity and "to express a willingness to work toward resolution of the problem" (p.377). An earlier couple-interaction study by Peterson (1979) revealed that partners engage in a conciliatory pattern that involves the reorganization of the problematic issue. In one way or another, partners at this stage, attempt to persuade each other that the issue in question is not more important than the relationship as a
whole, thus it is not worth jeopardising the relationship. In this case for example, the partner acting as the conciliator would make comments like, "this is out of control, we need to reconsider the situation and try to put things into perspective". Peterson noted that in his sample participants would also try to 'claim the blame' or take some responsibility for their actions. Conciliatory acts like these create a calmer atmosphere and if they are followed by positive reaction and conciliation on the part of the other partner, they can dramatically reduce the amount of anger, hostility, and negative affect. As soon as the negative emotions are diminished or at least minimised partners are able to think more rationally and act towards resolving the problematic issue. Peterson viewed conciliatory acts as a 'stepping stone' through which partners manage to start negotiations. However, he argued that if the argument was too intense and emotions were extremely negative, partners are likely to use another step before proceeding with calm discussions. He noted that, "if resolution is to be attempted following angry withdrawal, some kind of reconciliation seems necessary before any other negotiations can proceed. If feelings have run very high, the reconciliatory act will usually go beyond conciliation to unusual expressions of affection and commitment to the relationship" (Peterson, 1983; p.378). It can be argued here that partners express their affection to each other in an attempt to reassure themselves as well as their partner that they still care about the relationship. Affection can be seen as the mediating stage that boosts partner confidence and feelings of security, and allows the reinstatement of positive feelings in order to bring back normality in the relationship. The above function of affection is very important and will be examined in depth in the next chapter.

After reviewing the literature on conflict several questions still remain; what happens after conflict? What do couples do to achieve normality? How do they manage to relieve themselves of negative emotions and stress? This investigation aims to seek the answers to these questions using qualitative data from an interview study. There are several ways in which intimate partners could 'go back to normal' again. The study will examine a few possible strategies that are assumed to be used by partners following a
conflict situation. For this reason, in the next chapter the author will review literature on affection, sex, apology, distancing and humour.
CHAPTER 7
LITERATURE REVIEW:
AFFECTION, SEX, APOLOGY, DISTANCING,
HUMOUR AND RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION
STUDY 2 (A, B)

Affection
Physical affection has been identified as one of the most important aspects of intimate relationships (Menaghan, 1983); it has been shown to be a strong predictor of love and satisfaction (Dainton, Stafford and Canary, 1994) and it is argued, that it reinforces positive feelings between partners. Through the medium of touch partners convey important messages and ensure that they are perceived as warm, caring and attentive and affectionate (Baxter and Dindia, 1990; Sabatelli, Buck and Dreyer, 1983). Before we examine the possible meanings and indeed benefits of physical affection we have to review nonverbal behaviour research that explored the semantics of touch.

Non-verbal behaviour researchers have long argued that many types of non-verbal behaviour have recognised meanings (Burgoon, 1991; Burgoon, 1980; Burgoon, Coker and Coker, 1986). These behaviours are thought to be part of a non-verbal ‘coding’ system which people use in order to decode non-verbal messages. As Burgoon argued, “some non-verbal behaviours comprise a socially shared vocabulary analogous to verbal communication. Behaviours that form such a coding system are used with regularity among members of a social community, are presumed to be intentional acts (although any particular enactment need not be intentional), and have consensually recognisable interpretations” (Burgoon, 1991; p.234). Non-verbal communication between partners is thought to be particularly important, as couples often use it as a way to define and confirm the status of their relationship and enhance feelings of security between them (Burgoon et al., 1989). Initial explorations of non-verbal behaviour employed self-report methods and experiments and focused
on who does what to whom and how often, rather than trying to concentrate on semantic interpretations. The work of Jourard, during the 1960's, revealed information about patterns of non-verbal behaviour between opposite-sex and same sex interactions but was criticised for not attempting to explore the meaning of such behaviour. Another criticism was that Jourard (1966) and others (Jourard and and Rubin, 1968; Rosenfeld et al., 1976), relied too heavily on experimental evidence which involved asking participants to respond to hypothetical questions, or self-report evidence which involved recalling non-verbal experiences and reporting them to questionnaires. The methods used in these early explorations were deemed unreliable because of the artificial environment created in experiments and the potential flaws relating to memory recall (Jones and Yarbrough, 1985). These methodological issues were addressed in later years by Jones and Yarbrough, (1985) as they employed naturalistic methods to investigate the meaning of non-verbal behaviour in everyday interactions. Although, they were the first to systematically deal with the methodological problems of non-verbal behaviour research, they weren't the first to emphasise the importance of exploring underlying semantics of non-verbal behaviour. One of the first researchers to systematically address the issue of meaning in non-verbal behaviour was Mehrabian, as he explored semantic interpretations of behaviours such as touch, conversational distance and gaze (Mehrabian, 1967, 1968, 1969; Mehrabian and Williams, 1969). His work revealed that people rely on non-verbal signals to communicate feelings such as like or dislike and acceptance or rejection. This pioneering work inspired others to focus on the semantics of non-verbal behaviour and in specific, explore the meanings of touch. Touch as a non-verbal behaviour has been found to be an essential part of people's lives. Touch is seen as a human need as it has been shown to affect early development and psychological and physical well being (Montagu, 1971). Touching behaviour has been shown to be beneficial to adults as well. Silverman, Pressman and Bartel (1973) found that psychological and social adjustment can be influenced by people's ability to express positive emotions through touch. This study cannot infer causal relationships between psychological adjustment and touching behaviour as the results were based on correlational analyses. Nevertheless, it emphasised the importance of
tactile communication between adults and showed that such means of communicating can improve one's sense of well being. The benefits of tactile communication have been shown in other studies that explored the links between touch and health improvements on samples of hospital patients (McCorkle, 1974; Aguilera, 1967). The beneficial effects of tactile communication strengthened the belief that specific messages can be conveyed through touch; any changes to an individual's psychical or psychological state, however indirect or small, would imply that specific touches can convey specific messages to patients (i.e. support, reassurance, etc). As Jones and Yarbrough argued, "as a mode of symbolic communication, touch has certain distinctive features. It is a prototypic means of establishing and maintaining intimacy, as illustrated by various metaphors in English, e.g. 'staying in touch', and 'feeling touched', by what someone has said or done. Unlike numerous other types of nonverbal communication, a touch is ordinarily an undeniable message. That is, with the possible exceptions of touches which accomplish instrumental tasks or are apparently accidental, it is nearly impossible for a person to touch another and then claim that no meaning was intended (p.20). Jones and Yarbrough based this conclusion on results from their study, which was the most extensive and systematic attempt to classify tactile communications. In their naturalistic study 39 observers recorded and analysed a vast number of touches between adults (1500); their analyses led to the creation of an extensive list of touches which helped assess the meanings attached to them. The results revealed that there are 18 different types of touch fell under 7 main categories; the categories discovered were, 1) Positive affect, 2) Playful, 3) Control, 4) Ritualistic, 5) Hybrid (mixed) touches, 6) Task related and 7) Accidental touches. Of these categories, two are particularly interesting and relevant to the present study, positive affect and playful touches; they are going to be examined in detail after briefly describing the remaining five categories.

Control touches refer to tactile behaviours that aim to influence another person's behaviour, attitudes or feelings. The meanings attached to such touches include, compliance (i.e. 'stay here', 'hurry up', 'do it'), attention seeking (i.e. 'listen', 'look at me/that'), and announcing a feeling (i.e. 'I am
happy’, ‘that’s funny’, ‘I am excited’). The key characteristic of control touches is that they are almost always either preceded or followed by verbalisations. Ritualistic touches occur during departure or greeting situations and convey messages that intend to welcome another (i.e. ‘hi, nice to see you again’), mark the end of an encounter (‘goodbye’), or express the will for a reunion (‘see you later’). This form of touching was found to be more common amongst friends and acquaintances and less common amongst close friends and family and intimate partners. Hybrid or otherwise known as ‘mixed’ touches include a combination of meanings such as greeting someone in an affectionate way or saying goodbye while expressing an emotion (i.e. bye, I will miss you’). Task-related touching has three different groups of meaning. In the words of Jones and Yarbrough, “Reference to appearance (RA) touches are those which point out or inspect a body part or body artefact referred to in a verbal comment about the receiver’s appearance. Instrumental ancillary (IA) touches occur as part of the accomplishment of a task, but are unnecessary to task completion (e.g. touching hand-to-hand when passing someone the telephone). Instrumental intrinsic (II) touches accomplish the task in and of themselves (e.g. helping someone out of a car)” (p.45). Lastly, accidental touches are the only kind of physical contact that doesn’t convey any messages. Such touches are perceived as unintentional as both the initiator and the receiver do intent to initiate any physical contact.

The majority of the touches described above occur predominantly between friends, family and new acquaintances and as the focus of this thesis is on intimates (i.e. romantic partners); the focus will be placed on touches that can convey feelings and messages most relevant to intimate couples. Jones and Yarbrough’s results revealed that positive affect and playful touches mainly take place between intimates and close friends.

Touches of positive affect convey messages that have emotional undertones and that are aimed to show one’s support, appreciation, inclusion, sexual interest and affection towards a significant other. Jones and Yarbrough (1985) argued that support touches occur when one person (the communicator) wants to show he/she cares and supports another person who is experiencing
distressing feelings and may be emotionally upset. These touches serve the specific purpose of providing support to a person and through the medium of touch the communicator aims to comfort his/her friend or partner and provide assurances that the situation will improve. Support touches are usually perceived positively as the person who is at the receiving end is in a vulnerable position and in need for support. The next meaning of positive affect touches was found to be appreciation, which is a tactile way of communicating gratitude to someone who has provided a service or who has done something that one should be thankful for. Appreciation touches are usually either preceded or followed by verbalisations that strengthen the meaning of the message conveyed through a hand-hold, a touch on the shoulder or simply a hand-shake. Jones’s and Yarbrough’s results also supported a third meaning that positive affect touches can convey; partners or close friends were found to express their feelings of togetherness and relatedness through, what the researchers termed, inclusion touches. As they asserted, “Inclusion touches draw attention to the act of being together and suggest psychological closeness. They are tactile statements of ‘withness’ and as such, comprise a form of nonverbal expressions of relatedness (Jones and Yarbrough, 1985; p.37). Inclusion touches are seen as very important as a strong sense of togetherness can help partners during difficult or daunting situations; for example, partners may use inclusion touches when faced with a life-changing decision, health problems, financial hardship or a threat to the relationship, as a way of expressing their willingness and determination to stand together and deal with the situation as a dyad. The results also showed that inclusion touches are mutual and reciprocal as both members of the dyad make contributions in the form of tactile exchanges that are intimate and prolonged. Positive affect touches were shown to have another meaning. According to Jones and Yarbrough (1985), partners use tactile communication to express sexual desire, attraction or sexual intent. Under this semantic category are touches that are directed to both intimate and non-intimate parts of the body and that convey messages such as ‘I want you’ and ‘I love you, let’s make love’. These messages are clear and their meaning cannot be confused as evidence suggested that sexual touches are both intense and enduring. The last meaning attached to positive affect touches was found to
be affection. "Affection touches express generalised positive regard beyond mere recognition or acknowledgement of the other. The expression is generalised in the sense that the positive feelings are directed toward another person qua person and are not tied to a specific situation. As the most frequent translations indicate, the meaning of an affection touch is 'I like you', or 'I love you', rather than, 'I feel positive toward you because you need comforting' (touches of support); 'I feel positive toward you because of what you just done for me' (touches of appreciation); 'I feel positive toward you because of the activity we are sharing' (touches of inclusion); or 'I feel positive toward you because I am attracted to you physically' (touches of sexual interest) (Jones and Yarbrough, 1985; p.39). Affection touches appear to occur mostly between intimate partners; their main characteristic is that they are not the result of intentions to achieve a certain goal, as seen with instrumental touches; rather, the motive behind them is to express emotions such as warmth, liking, love and affection. These intense emotional messages, although not directly, help partners to confirm their feelings for each other, and increase their levels of experienced intimacy and security.

The second category of touches and their corresponding meanings to be examined here are playful touches. Playful touches were shown to have a specific function in intimate interactions; Jones and Yarbrough (1985) maintained that playful touches can lessen the effects of uneasy and difficult situations or simply reduce the perceived seriousness of a certain action. They are usually preceded by signals that intent to prepare a partner and warn them that what is to follow is only meant in playful manner. Playful touches are thought to be playing a central role in defusing a situation (i.e. after conflict or after a bad day at work), and in alleviating tensions and negative emotions that may exist between partners.

Jones and Yarbrough found two types of meanings attached to playful touches. First, playful affection touches are usually mutual and include tactile contact such as a playful grab of one's cheeks and a light slap on the back. Playful touches are also preceded or followed by verbalisations that aim to ensure that the touch is meant in a light-hearted and joking manner. The main
characteristic of playful affection touches is that the meaning they convey usually carries a double message. In the words of Jones and Yarbrough, "in these touches, the seriousness of the positive message is diminished by the play signal. Because of the teasing quality of the touches, the meaning is frequently quasi-sexual, and behaviours which would express sexual intent without the play signal are included in this category, as well as behaviours which more clearly indicate affection (p.40). The dual nature of these messages makes it easier on someone to express his/her affectionate and/or sexual feelings as it enables them to communicate intense feelings in a relatively safe way. For example, one could express their intention to be affectionate or sexual with a friend or a partner, without worrying about losing face in case of a rejection of their intentions. Playful affection touches therefore, enable the communicator to make underlying messages difficult to detect and understand.

The second meaning that can be deduced from playful touches is playful aggression. Playful aggression touches include tactile contact such as pretend fighting and wrestling, and mock "punching, pinching, grabbing, tickling, pushing, slapping and standing on another's toes" (p.41). These touches make the release of tension between partners possible; they also enable partners to express feelings and opinions about issues that cannot be verbalised; for example, a wife poking her husband in the stomach after a meal to indicate that he has put on weight (i.e. nonverbally communicating 'you are fat'). In summary, both kinds of playful touches (affection and aggression) are seen as ways to deal with situations, feelings and attitudes in a non-threatening and effective manner.

Overall, the extensive and systematic work of Jones and Yarbrough has emphasised the importance of investigating nonverbal behaviours such as touch, and provided invaluable information about the meanings of touch. Their results confirmed early speculations that nonverbal behaviour has symbolic meaning; however, perhaps the biggest achievement in this study was the fact that it tried to explore possible interpretations of behaviour in a context-specific manner. Previous studies did not address this issue as participants were just asked to interpret behaviours without considering contextual factors.
Later work however, confirmed the results shown by Jones and Yarbrough and emphasised the importance of considering contextual factors in the interpretation of nonverbal behaviour (Derlega et al., 1989). The review of research on touch is really central to the present study. It showed that feelings and emotions can be expressed and communicated through touch and that such behaviour is an integral part of relationships. As seen earlier, partners express their feelings of affection, love, belongingness, and their support for each other through the medium of touch. The importance of these findings lies with the fact that some researchers view the expression of emotions through touch (and other means as we shall see later) as a core ingredient in maintaining a relationship (Dainton and Stafford, 1993).

Early explorations of the role of love and affection in relationships saw the expression of these two emotions as crucial for both the development and the maintenance of the intimate bond between partners. First, Rotter et al., (1972) argued that love and affection are basic human needs and that a person must to be able to give and receive them in order to be psychologically adjusted. The view of love and affection as needs was based on the notion that their expression can be beneficial to the individual and the relationship. Rotter et al’s findings were confirmed by Fineberg and Lowman (1975) who studied differences in affection levels between adjusted and maladjusted couples. Their results revealed that adjusted couples communicated more affection both in verbal and physical ways. The benefits of physical and verbal affection were also examined by Rogers (1959), who saw the communication of positive feelings as having certain functions. He argued that by expressing their feelings to a significant other, people are enabled to grow psychologically. Central to his theory is the notion of unconditional positive regard which requires intimate disclosure between partners without the fear of rejection and negative evaluation. Indeed, in later years, Reis and Shaver (1988) found that intimate disclosure and affection between partners serves the purpose of instantly validating their relationship “particularly if the recipient of that communication believes the discloser truly understands and accepts him/her” (Prager, 1995; p.193). In more recent years, the expression of physical affection between partners was found to play a significant role in
relationship satisfaction as it was shown to strengthen the quality of intimate interaction (Mackey and Deiner, 2000). This finding confirmed earlier indications that affection can be beneficial to the relationship; for example, Dainton et al., (1994) found that partners show support and love by either verbally telling them (verbal affection) or showing them through physical affection. Dainton et al argued that both physical and verbal forms of affection serve the purpose of providing assurances which can strengthen the sense of security and unity in the relationship. Being physically or verbally affectionate towards a partner is therefore seen as very important as it can help maintain a relationship (Dainton, 1991; Dainton and Stafford, 1993).

The benefits and function of affection in relationships can be best summarised in the words of Floyd (1994), “Affectionate behaviour in a close relationship not only carries meaning about one partner’s feelings for the other, but also it often serves as a standard by which relational development is gauged (for example relational partners often remember the first hug, the first kiss, or the first time the words 'I love you' were spoken); as such, it can contribute to reduced uncertainty about the state of the relationship, by causing relational partners to feel valued and cared for” (p.321).

Sex
In order to examine the issues surrounding post-conflict sex we need to examine the role that sex plays in the relationship as a whole. Research has shown that most intimate partners perceive sexual interaction as an important part of their relationship (Blumstein and Schwartz, 1983). Blumstein and Schwartz (1983) investigated whether a frequent, positive and rewarding sexual relationship between partners can determine the degree of relationship satisfaction. Their results were mixed. In terms of frequency, they found that partners who have sex regularly are generally happier than partners who have sex less frequently. In the same study, Blumstein and Schwartz found that 89% of their participants, who engaged in sexual activities three times a week or more, reported being satisfied with their sex lives. Moreover, participants that engaged in sexual activities less often (once a month or less) reported feeling less satisfied with the status of their sexual relationships. These
findings were confirmed by Greenley (1991), and Laumann et al., (1994). Both studies argued that there is a strong association between sexual contact frequency and sexual satisfaction. It should be noted however, that the generic association between sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction is not causal as the results were based on correlations between the two variables. Brehm et al., (2002) examined alternative explanations for the existence of the association between sexual satisfaction and frequency of sex and noted “we cannot rule out other explanations-perhaps those who are happier with their sex lives choose to have sex more often (a reasonable sounding statement); or perhaps people who have a strong sex drive or who are sexually permissive in their attitudes are more likely both to have more frequent sex and to be happy with their sex lives” (Brehm, et al., 2002; p.264). However, most studies in sexual and relationship satisfaction have indicated that partners perceive sex as a crucial part of the relationship and that couples who are satisfied with their sex lives are also satisfied with the relationship as a whole (Cupach and Comstock, 1990; Haavio-Mannila and Kontula, 1997).

Intimate partners have underlined the importance of sex in a relationship because of the underlying benefits of sexual contact. It appears that sex is perceived as a vital relational experience as it can help partners to strengthen the emotional bond between them and intensify their sense of belongingness. The latter is evident in an interview extract by a lesbian participant in Blumstein’s and Schwartz’s study: (sex) “it is really important because it is one way of keeping in touch, feeling affectionate, keeping close, staying close...It is not so much the orgasm itself, although I feel this is a wonderful experience. It is the actual being close to each other and touching each other, feeling taken care of and taking care of someone else” (Blumstein and Schwartz, 1983; p.490). It is these underlying benefits of sexual contact between partners that make the whole experience so important for the relationship. As seen in the extract above, sex can provide partners with something more that sexual gratification; it can enrich their feelings of affection, closeness and belongingness. A more recent study confirmed these results and indicated that sexual interactions between partners can strengthen their sense of security about the relationship (Lawrance and Byers, 1995). In this study, over 90% of
their participants reported that sexual contact is a rewarding experience as it makes them feel more secure about their relationships. Participants also argued that the degree of comfort during sexual interactions with their partners was a reward in itself. Lawrence and Byers stressed that such reports indicate how multifaceted sex really is and that they justify in a way the importance of sexual contact in a relationship.

While some studies suggested a direct link between sex and relationship satisfaction (Cupach and Comstock, 1990; Greenley, 1991; Haavio-Mannila and Kontula, 1997; Lawrence and Byers, 1995), other studies proposed that this link is not very straightforward. Howard and Dawes (1976) argued that the relationship between sexual contact and relationship satisfaction could be complicated. In their study, they found that sexual activity as well as number and frequency of arguments were not associated with reported relational happiness. Instead, the results revealed that sexual activity and arguing were positively correlated, indicating that participants who engaged in sexual activities more, tended to argue more: These findings suggest that couples that engage in frequent conflict can feel satisfied and happy within their relationship as long as they have an equal or greater amount of positive experiences, like sexual contact. These findings can be explained further by looking at what Gottman et al., (1976) termed ‘the marital bank account’. Gottman and his colleagues argued that couples who have more positive sexual encounters than argumentative withdrawals report higher levels of happiness within their relationship. They stressed that it is crucial to have a positive balance in the conflict-sexual activity ‘account’, because negative experiences and emotions instigated by conflict need to be counterbalanced by positive ones through sexual contact. Couples in the Howard and Dawes study reported being happier with the relationship when there is a blend of both sexual activity and arguments. Thus, partners that tend to engage in conflict a lot can be happy and satisfied within their relationship as long as they have an equal or greater amount of positive, sexual or otherwise, interactions. The importance of healthy sexual interactions in relationships was supported by another study (Birchler and Webb 1977). This study comprised of two groups of couples, happily married couples and unhappily married couples that requested marital therapy. Their findings were in
agreement with previous research. In comparing the results from the two groups Bircher and Webb found that happy couples engaged in sexual activities more often than the unhappy couples. Furthermore, they added that the beneficial effects of joint participation in activities extended beyond the boundaries of sexual encounters. The results showed that couples that enjoyed spending time together sexually also enjoyed engaging in other activities such as community events, sports and hobbies.

**Apology**

In the previous chapter, research on conflict was reviewed and various conflict resolution techniques were explored. However, one conflict resolution technique that is commonly practiced, the apology, was not examined. An apology is seen as "an attempt by one party (the offender) to de-escalate a conflict by creating a change in the victim, e.g. more forgiveness, less anger (Frantz and Bennigson, 2004). Apologising has been shown to be an effective way to end conflict, as by taking responsibility for their behaviour, partners show that they are willing to start the peacemaking process (Wile, 1993). Nevertheless, measuring how effective an apology can be is not a straightforward issue. Researchers have argued that apology effectiveness depends on five main factors (Frantz and Bennigson, 2004; Bennet and Dewberry, 1994). The first two factors that were found to increase the effectiveness of an apology were expression of remorse and expression of responsibility (Scher and Darley, 1997). A genuine expression of regret can increase the chances of an apology being accepted as it helps convince a person that the apology is true and sincere. In the same manner, accepting responsibility for actions or behaviours can show that one is ready to make an effort to repair the damage done through conflict (Darby and Schlenker, 1989). Both these factors appear to achieve the same goal; they strengthen the sincerity of the deed, thus increasing the chances that an apology will be perceived positively and that it will be accepted. The third factor that can influence the effectiveness of an apology is timing which depends on the fourth and fifth factors, ripeness and voice. Anyone who has attempted to apologise to someone for his/her behaviour can probably say that a badly timed apology can instigate and not terminate conflict. Research has
supported this notion; in a thorough analysis of what makes an apology effective, Frantz and Bennigson (2004) found that apologies that are offered later in conflict are more effective than those that are premature. Central to the idea that timing can influence how effective an apology will be, is the notion that the person receiving the apology has to be ready to do so. Researchers have called this notion 'ripeness' which describes "someone's readiness for conflict de-escalation" (Frantz and Bennigson, 2004; p.202). In other words, ripeness means that one has stopped feeling angry or resentful and is ready to accept the other person's apology. Ripeness was found to depend on a factor termed 'voice'; this involves the satisfactory voicing or expression of one's views; Adams and Jones (1999) stressed that feeling 'understood' is very important in conflict de-escalation as it can reassure people that their opinions are being heard and respected; these assurances can in turn prepare them to accept an apology.

Frantz and Bennigson's results have great significance as they were confirmed by two studies; a naturalistic exploration of apologies which had high ecological validity, and an experimental investigation which measured apology effectiveness by manipulating the time they were offered. The combined use of naturalistic and experimental method adds weight to the findings, as it minimises problems relating to validity - one of the main criticisms of previous investigations (i.e. Scher and Darley, 1997; McCullough et al., 1998). To summarise, "a later apology, occurring after voice and understanding, is more effective than an early apology, occurring before voice and understanding. This suggests that the timing of an apology does matter, and that late is better than early. Not receiving an apology at all, even when there was voice and understanding, is worse than receiving an early apology. Thus, even an early apology is better than no apology-the words 'I am sorry' have a power of their own, even when circumstances are less than ideal" (Frantz and Bennigson, 2004; p.205).

Distancing
Another way that partners may use to deal with conflict is physical or emotional distance. Conflict as seen previously, is an emotionally draining experience because it is often characterised by intense and often negative emotions such as sadness, distress, anger and resentment (Christensen and Jacobson, 2000). The presence of such emotions can influence the conflict process, as increased sensitivity and a determination to put a message across can lessen the chances of reaching closure and increase the likelihood of prolonging conflict. Christensen and Jacobson (2000) argued that sometimes it is best if partners distance themselves, either emotionally or physically, because distancing and emotional detachment may help them gain perspective and understand the situation better. As they asserted, "distance allows you to view your struggles from a similar vantage point, to see your conflicts more clearly, and to accept the other's role in them. This emotional distance and the acceptance that goes with it may not solve the initial problem, but it often heads off associated reactive problems" (p.175).

Therefore, distancing whether emotional or physical can sometimes help partners take a step back and reflect on the situation; reflection, in turn, can allow them to assess the problems in hand in a less intense environment that is not emotionally charged; thus enabling them to re-enter discussion with their partners equipped with calm and well rationalised positions. However, physical distancing and emotional detachment are not easy to achieve during the heat of conflict. Christensen and Jacobson, (2000) recognised the difficulties involved in this process. They argued that the chance to act as an observer comes either before or after conflict, as it would be practically impossible for anyone to act as both an objective and rational observer and an emotionally aroused participant during conflict. Another problem with the distancing technique lies with the fact that such a method may not always be desirable by partners or indeed beneficial to them. As seen in the previous chapter, a persistent and reoccurring tendency to abstain from conflict may intensify the problems between a couple (see Gottman, demand-withdraw pattern). Christensen and Jacobson (2000) maintained that distancing can be beneficial only when both parties desire to take a step back and review the situation. If one of the partners insists on resolving the issue by continuing the discussion or the argument and the other partner wishes to withdraw.
completely, then the tension between them may increase and not subside. Therefore, the distancing technique can be beneficial as a way for reflecting on the issues at hand and reducing the risk of highly-strung and reactive exchanges. Nevertheless, researchers have argued that most couples can benefit from having a chance to objectively observe and analyse the situation; a well timed and equally desired break from arguing can smooth the progress of the interaction and increase the likelihood that the problems will be dealt with constructively (Christensen and Jacobson, 2000; Erber and Erber, 2001). The benefits of distancing lie with the fact that it can facilitate a change of perspective and make partners more prone to attempt reconciliation (Peterson, 1979). This may be achieved through tension-reducing methods such as affection, the well-timed use of an apology and humour. The functions of the former two techniques (affection and apology) were examined earlier in this chapter. The focus is now placed in exploring the role of humour in conflict and post-conflict situations.

Humour

Humour is perceived to be a distinctive characteristic of human nature; it is also thought to be a universal phenomenon as all humans do experience it at some point in their lives regardless of where they grew up on the planet (Hertzler, 1970; Paton, Powell and Wagg, 1996). There are three main theories to explain humour; Incongruity theory, superiority theory and relief theory. Incongruity theory states that “humour arises from the incongruity between what is expected and actually transpires, i.e. he was a writer for the ages-ages four to eight”, (Paton, Powell and Wagg, 1996; p.273). Superiority theory maintains that humour is the result of an individual’s feelings of superiority over another person or over a situation or event (i.e. laughing at someone’s choice of clothes or laughing at a badly organised event). Lastly, relief theory is based on the notion that humour stems from a desire to release tension that is psychological, social or physiological in nature (Paton, Powell and Wagg, 1996). These explanations can be used to understand the role of humour in intimate relationships and in specific, in conflict. Humour has been argued to perform certain functions in relationships and although this contention has not been researched in depth, some evidence suggests that
couples use humour to lighten certain situations (i.e. after an argument). As Christensen and Jacobson maintain, “humour can create emotional distance by providing comic relief and facilitating a quick change of perspective. Exaggeration, self-deprecation, and gentle sarcasm can short-circuit automatic retorts and give partners a chance to handle the situation better than they might have without the humour. Humouring comments might work as long as they are not made with such sarcasm that they could be interpreted as criticism” (p.181). It appears that the careful and well-timed use of humour can help couples achieve two goals; first they avoid further conflict by creating a light-hearted atmosphere, and second they can stabilise the situation by the use of teases and playfulness which may help them to discuss their problems calmly and with composure. Heyman et al. (1995), provided evidence for the use of humour by partners in their discussions of problems. The study involved the analysis and coding of videotaped conflict discussions from 995 intimate couples. The results revealed that humour was significantly associated with ‘responsible discussing’ which, “by definition excludes sarcasm, blaming and other hostile talk” (p.213). Therefore, there are indications that humour can play an important role in conflict and post-conflict situations as it can alleviate negative emotions and help partners approach their discussions with a positive attitude.

The review of the functions of affection, sex, apology, distancing and humour may help to shed light on the post-conflict process as the aim of study 2a was to investigate the ways in which intimate couples recover from conflict, reach closure over the issue(s) discussed, and achieve normality (i.e. return to the how they were before the argument occurred).

Following the qualitative study (2a), a quantitative study (2b) attempted to examine the links between these post-conflict processes and relationship satisfaction. The main aims were to explore the use of conciliatory acts and investigate whether these and the use of positive conflict outcomes have an effect on levels of relationship satisfaction.

Post-Conflict Outcomes were based on Bach and Wyden’s theory of ‘fair fighting’ and their notion that a constructive and well managed argument should produce a variety of positive outcomes. Partners should leave the
argument with a collection of positive emotions and a belief that the relationship status is not threatened. The hypothesis was that a high or positive score in Post-Conflict Outcomes will increase levels of reported Relationship Satisfaction.

The variable 'Post-Conflict Conciliatory Acts' was created in order to explore further the post-conflict tactics found in Study 2a. It was felt that the post-conflict process is an important aspect of the relational bond. Post-conflict tactics appeared to play a central role to the normalisation process. Study 2b aimed to address questions that remained unanswered in a quantitative manner, and explore any possible links between the post-conflict process and relationship satisfaction.

The frequency of use for each of the strategies (Affection, Humour, Sex, Apology and Distance) were explored in conjunction with four possible motivating factors (a. Avoiding further conflict, b. re-establishing a sense of security and safety, c. gaining control of the situation, and d. achieving normality). It was hypothesised that heightened use of Post-Conflict Conciliatory Acts will increase levels of reported Relationship Satisfaction.
CHAPTER 8
METHOD
STUDY 2A

Introduction to the Method
Before describing the method used in detail a brief note is needed to justify the use of qualitative data in this study. There are two reasons why the author chose to use a qualitative technique in this study. First, initial exploration of the topic in question (post-conflict situations) indicated that it would be very difficult to predict all the possible answers to the question 'what do you do after an argument with your partner', and consequently it would be impossible to include all those options in a questionnaire. Second, the lack of previous research on post-conflict situations and what happens during them, meant that an in depth approach such as an interview would produce more comprehensive, rich and fruitful data.

Qualitative Data Analysis
The above rationale outlined the importance of using qualitative data analysis in this study and provided the author with a clue on which analytical methods can be used in order to derive theoretically based, meaningful, and systematic conclusions from the data. Early exploration of the various methods available for qualitative data analysis has led to the conclusion that it is a practically impossible task to find a single 'right' way to analyse qualitative data. The specific analytical method chosen for this study's data required in-depth preliminary examinations of the type of data, and multiple comparisons of the various analytical techniques that led to code development and concept conceptualisation. For this reason the following few paragraphs will examine different qualitative data types and the variety of approaches available for their analysis.
There are many different kinds of qualitative data and a variety of perspectives available for analysing them. Qualitative data can take different forms depending on the way the researcher collects them, the conceptualisations made and the specific research aims. Qualitative data can be derived from field-notes, transcribed recordings, naturalistic observations, interviews and so on. Researchers have long argued that there are numerous ways of approaching data derived from the above sources and consequently many analytic strategies that could be applied to them (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996; Dey, 1993; Huberman and Miles, 1994). The diversity of approaches and analytic styles is assumed to be due to individual differences between researchers, i.e. their personal aspirations, expectations and varying degrees of analytic insight, as well as the diversity of various social settings and eventually during data collection. Strauss (1987) noted that “qualitative researchers have quite different investigatory styles, let alone different talents and gifts, so that a standardisation of methods would only constrain and even stifle social researchers’ best efforts” (p.7). This diversity of personal styles and kinds of data created a broad variety of analytic strategies but also discrepancies over the definition of the term analysis. Some researchers stress that analysis “refers primarily to the tasks of coding, indexing, sorting, retrieving, or otherwise manipulating data. Data analysis on this level is relatively independent of speculation and interpretation. For others in the field, analysis refers primarily to the imaginative work of interpretation, and the more procedural, categorising tasks are relegated to the preliminary work of ordering and sorting the data” (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996; p.6).

Examples of definitions provided by theorists on qualitative data analysis revealed differences in the specific processes that constitute data analysis. Huberman and Miles (1994), viewed analysis as a collection of sub-processes, namely, data reduction, data display, conclusion and result confirmation. They also stressed that the primary purpose of qualitative analysis is to systematically compare and explore cases in order to create meaningful, conceptualised categories. According to them the above analytic processes could be carried out using a variety of techniques either in an inductive or deductive manner. Dey (1993) offered a similar description of
data analysis and agreed that the analytic process should comprise sub-processes. He termed his sub-processes, description, classification and connection and argued that these should be carried out in an organised and methodical manner. Data coding and categorisation was viewed as an essential component of qualitative analysis according to Dey, as a way of exploring patterns and connections within the data. However, Dey's view of qualitative data analysis was mainly driven by his interest in computerised methods of analysis so interpreting or connecting concepts that emerge was seen as a rigid and rule-abiding process. In contrast to both these views Wolcott (1994) provided an alternative way of investigating and interpreting qualitative data. He talked about data transformation that included description, analysis, and interpretation. Wolcott argued that it is very difficult for the researcher to achieve pure, natural description as personal characteristics, beliefs, or aspirations often influence the way a researcher describes and presents data. However, Wolcott stressed that the researcher should make a conscious effort to allow the data to 'speak for themselves' by keeping all initial descriptions, as close as possible to the data as they were originally collected. By doing so Wolcott argued that data unfolds naturally creating the beginning of a 'story' as it happened without external influences. Wolcott, also viewed analysis as a way of transforming data. His view of analysis or 'transformation' consists of methodical, clear, impassive and structured efforts that focus on detecting and depicting themes or patterns. Wolcott stressed that data transformation should help the researcher to discover critical features and hidden relationships. However, some researchers saw this view of analysis as a description of data management rather than an in-depth investigation (Coffey and Atkison, 1996). The third stage in Wolcott's opinion is interpretation. The researcher should by this stage have a clear view of his/her data in order to develop arguments and make inferences about the findings. Wolcott's view of interpretation appears to be fairly different than Dey's and Huberman and Miles'. He argued that data interpretation involves the researcher having a non-interventionist, casual, artistic, and creative attitude. At this stage the researcher should be able to offer his/hers insightful and evaluative opinion of what was found.
These three lines of thought about qualitative analysis appear to be quite similar. The specific analytic processes and stages described by Dey, Huberman and Miles and Wolcott have several similarities. However, Wolcott's view of what constitutes analysis, with his three stages (description, analysis and interpretation), differs from the other two approaches, in that it recognises that the stages are not applicable to all kinds of cases. As Coffey and Atkinson (1996) put it, "Unlike Huberman and Miles and Dey, however, Wolcott does not envisage that description, analysis and interpretation necessarily will be part of one overall schema, to be applied in its totality in all cases; he also does not see them as being mutually exclusive; the transformation of qualitative data can be done at any of the three levels or in any combination of them" (p.9). To summarise, Wolcott's line of thought on qualitative data analysis involves creative, imaginative, and aesthetically satisfying examination of the text while helping the researcher to maintain a methodical and systematic method. For this reason, Wolcott's main suggestions will be followed throughout the analysis of the current study. However, the process that will be used for the data transformation will be thematic analysis with the help of a specific analytical technique, thematic networks analysis.

Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is an analytical procedure that can be applied to a variety of qualitative data and qualitative methods. Thematic analysis has been closely associated with procedures such as code and theme development. Boyatzis (1998) argues that thematic analysis "is a process to be used with qualitative information, it is not another qualitative method but a process that can be used with most, if not all, qualitative method" (p.4). This process allows the researcher to explore qualitative data through code and theme development with the purpose of discovering patterns within the data and attempting to make sense of them. Boyatzis (1998) viewed thematic analysis as a way of 'seeing'. He argued that through this process the researcher is enabled to open up, explore and expand his data in such ways that he/she will gain deepened and sophisticated insights into them. Through thematic analysis the researcher can facilitate the discovery of patterns in seemingly unrelated
material. Thematic analysis can be used in a number of ways. As Boyatzis (1998) stressed, it can be “a way of seeing, a way of making sense out of seemingly unrelated material, a way of analysing qualitative information and a way of systematically observing a person, an interaction, a group, a situation or a culture” (p.5). Through thematic analysis the researcher is enabled to explore his/her data in a methodical and systematic way, thus improving the quality of their observations, insights and interpretations.

Boyatsis (1998) placed emphasis on the importance of code development in the analytic process. He argued that the development and exploration of themes depends upon the consistency of the encoding process. However, as it will be seen later in this chapter, some researchers have questioned the centrality of ‘coding’. For example, Attride-Stirling (2001) views the coding process as an important but not obligatory or indispensable process. Other parts of the analytic process such as the exploration, description and interpretation of textual data carry equal if not greater importance. However, with regards to this particular study, coding was used as a useful tool in data reduction. Data exploration, description and consequently the interpretation of possible patterns were the focus of the analytic process in this study. Moreover, in order to ensure the accuracy and consistency of qualitative data analysis, a precise, systematic and sophisticated process was used. This process is called *Thematic Networks Analysis*.

**Thematic networks analysis**

Thematic networks analysis was put forward by Attride-Stirling (2001) as an analytic tool that could assist the qualitative researcher in conducting systematic and methodical analysis.

There are three analytic steps according to Attride-Stirling (2001). She argued that analysis of textual data involves three general phases, 1) reduction or dissection of the text, 2) the investigation of the text, and 3) the incorporation of the investigation. Unlike other researchers, Attride-Stirling stressed interpretation should be part of all the above stages. She viewed analysis as creative work that cannot be carried out independently of the analytic subprocesses. Data reduction, exploration and integration produce progressively
abstract assumptions. In order to progress from one phase to the other, the researcher needs to make logical interpretative inferences of some kind.

Attride-Stirling noted that qualitative research methods have received extensive attention during the last decade as a means of achieving a multifaceted, deep and profound understanding of social and behavioural phenomena (Bryman and Burgess, 1994; Denzin, and Lincoln, 2000; Jensen, 1991; Marshall and Rossman, 1999). However, as Attride-Stirling noted, "while the issues of when, why, and how to employ qualitative methods are receiving ample attention, there is relatively little said on how to analyse the textual material that qualitative researchers are presented with; if qualitative research is to yield meaningful and useful results, it is imperative that the material under scrutiny is analysed in a methodical manner, but unfortunately there is a regrettable lack of tools available to facilitate this task. Indeed, researchers have traditionally tended to omit the 'how' question from accounts of their analyses" (Attride-Stirling, 2001; pp.385-386). Lee and Felding (1996) reviewed existing literature on qualitative methods and revealed that indeed many researchers tend to avoid going into great detail about how exactly they analysed their data although, detailed descriptions of the specific techniques used, could aid them to achieve better interpretations. In addition, such detailed accounts could help alleviate possible criticisms on the reliability and validity of qualitative data analysis. However, more recent literature aimed at addressing specific issues within qualitative research, has provided promising detailed accounts on qualitative techniques (Cresswell, 1997; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Silverman, 1993). These accounts have proven invaluable in that they created the foundations for a vigorous and systematic methodology that can be adopted by social scientists regardless of their theoretical background. Huberman and Miles (1994) recognised these efforts but argued that more, highly developed and sophisticated tools, are needed to enhance the progress of qualitative analyses. As Attride-Stirling (2001) noted, "there is a need for greater disclosure in qualitative analysis, and as this research tradition gains prevalence, we must ensure that it does so as a learned and robust methodology. This can only be achieved by recording, systematising and disclosing our methods of analysis, so that existing techniques may be
shared and improved, and new and better tools may be developed" (p. 386).
In her article Attride-Stirling attempted to address this issue by rigorously presenting a technique for thematic analysis of textual data. She suggested that grouping sets of themes in a web-like manner could enhance thematic analyses. She termed these web-like themes, *thematic networks* and she argued that they can systematise textual data leading to better organisation, presentation and investigation of “a text's overt structures and underlying patterns” (p.386).

The theoretical and conceptual roots of thematic networks analysis can be found in many qualitative research approaches. Depicting and structuring themes from textual data has been a well-established process in qualitative research. Attride-Stirling (2001) stressed that thematic networks analysis does not constitute a new method, but one that depicts key characteristics from other types of analyses, and systematically represents them as a methodical way of progressing from text to interpretation. The basic structure and steps used in thematic networks analysis could also be found in theoretical frameworks and analytic techniques such as, grounded theory (Corbin and Strauss, 1990; Glaser and Strauss, 1967), frameworks (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994), and various other techniques (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Feldman, 1995; Miles and Huberman, 1994). However, thematic networks originated from principles within argumentation theory (Toulmin, 1958). Toulmin developed argumentation theory while searching for a suitable structured and methodical tool in order to analyse negotiation processes. Toulmin’s theory was developed as a means of defining and detailing the basic, formal, components of arguments. Thematic networks analysis was based on Toulmin’s main ideas. However, Attride and Stirling (2001), argued that Toulmin provided the background knowledge, logic and surrounding ideas but not the specific processes needed in the technique.

Thematic networks analysis could be defined as a method of systematising and organising a thematic analysis. It is aimed at assisting the researcher to discover and depict themes from textual data and, consequently aid him/her to structure them and represent them in a methodical and clear manner.
Thematic networks comprise of: 1) Basic themes, 2) Organising themes, and 3) Global themes (See Figure 1). Basic themes are “lowest-order premises evident in the text”, Organising themes are “categories of basic themes grouped together to summarise more abstract principles” and Global themes are “super-ordinate themes encapsulating the principal metaphors in the text as a whole” (Attride-Stirling, 2001; p.388).

Basic themes can be derived directly from the text or selected segments of the text. The interpretative value of a basic theme is low if the basic theme is examined as a single unit. However, basic themes can reveal a lot of information about the text as a whole when the researcher explores them in relation to other basic themes. When grouped together basic themes provide the basis for an organising theme. Organising themes can be used to create clusters of basic themes.

**FIGURE 2**

**STRUCTURE OF A THEMATIC NETWORK.**

Source: Adapted from Attride-Stirling 2001.
Organising themes serve the purpose of summarising the main postulations of a cluster of basic themes and in doing so, they help the researcher to attach meaning to, and enhance, their view of the text as a whole. Therefore, an organising theme’s interpretative value is fairly high as it is designed to capture the key assumptions from a group of basic themes, develop them and provide a meaningful foundation for the creation of a global theme. Attride-Stirling argued that the role of organising themes “is also to enhance the meaning and significance of a broader theme that unites several organising themes. They are the principles on which a super-ordinate claim is based. Thus, organising themes simultaneously group the main ideas proposed by several basic themes, and dissect the main assumptions underlying a broader theme that is especially significant in the text as a whole” (p.389). Viewed this way, sets of organising themes make up a Global theme. Global themes serve the purpose of making a claim or presenting a specific argument. They include all the main descriptions and metaphors in the text and they should stand as a meaningful summary of all the lower-level themes existent in the data. Global themes aid the researcher in gaining further understanding of the data as a whole and provide him/her with both a synopsis, and an initial interpretation of the main themes.

Overall, a thematic network starts with depicting, naming and describing basic themes from the text, elaborating on them and grouping them in order to create organising themes and eventually developing global themes in an attempt to present a conclusion or an argument.

Attride-Stirling (2001) created a step-by-step guide of thematic network analysis. She claimed that the analytic process could be divided into three sections, “the breakdown or reduction of the text, the exploration of the text and the integration of the exploration”. These three broad phases are being facilitated with the application of six steps of the analytic process (see Table 5).
**Table 5**

Analytical Steps in Thematic Network Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis Stage A: Reduction or Breakdown of Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1. Code material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2. Identify themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3. Construct thematic networks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Analysis Stage B: Exploration of Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 4. Describe and explore thematic networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 5. Summarise thematic networks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis Stage C: Integration of Exploration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 6. Interpretation of patterns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Attride-Stirling (2001)

**Coding** is the first step of the process. Coding is seen as a procedure that links textual material as they were gathered to the researchers' theoretical conceptualisations. By creating a coding framework the researcher is enabled to dissect the text and apply the codes to brief, meaningful, suitable and manageable text segments. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), coding is seen as “tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study. The organising part will entail some system for categorising the various chunks, so the researcher can quickly find, pull out and cluster the segments relating to a particular research question, hypothesis, construct or theme” (pp56-57). Coding, as mentioned earlier, involves a fair amount of interpretative work and is not just a method of simply reducing the data. While developing a coding framework, the researcher has to reflect upon the material in question and attach meaning to segments of it, in order to expand his/her analytical horizon. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) have questioned the importance and usefulness of the coding procedure. They argued that by coding textual data the researcher might miss out on important information that does not ‘fit’ the codes. Also, they stressed that interview data often involve long and intricate accounts, which could be spoiled if dissected and divided into sections. Attride-Stirling (2001) stressed “while debates over the centrality of coding and the homogenisation of qualitative analysis techniques continue, there is overwhelming agreement
that data reduction is an important strategy for qualitative researchers; in this context, coding is regarded as a helpful, though by no means unique or indispensable, technique" (p.190). Lee and Feilding (1996) supported the latter view and argued that the necessity of coding depends mainly on the type of data and the particular theoretical framework of a given study.

The second step of the analytic process involves the identification of themes. During this procedure the researcher has to examine the coded text segments and find the most frequent, prominent or significant themes. This procedure will assist the researcher in his/her efforts to detect and identify the principal patterns and structures within the theme. Theme identification is described as a lengthy and meticulous process that involves a fair amount of interpretative work. Attride-Stirling (2001) stressed that the identified themes need to be “specific enough to be discrete (non-repetitive) and broad enough to encapsulate a set of ideas contained in numerous text segments; as themes emerge they have to be moulded and worked to accommodate new text segments, as well as old ones” (p.392).

Theme identification provides the core requisites needed for the construction and organisation of the thematic networks. Thematic networks should comprise clusters of themes, for example, themes about certain issues within the text. The researcher should make his/her judgments about how to group the themes based on text content and if necessary theoretical considerations. A thematic network can comprise of numerous themes, as long as the themes summarise similar issues. Attride-Stirling (2001) argued that in most cases thematic networks consist of between 4 and 15 themes. As mentioned earlier, in order to construct a thematic network the researcher has to select a set of basic themes, restructure them into organising themes and finally deduce a Global theme. There should be one global theme for each thematic network constructed. In most cases one thematic network appears to be sufficient however if there are too many or too diverse basic and organising themes additional networks need to be created.
Subsequently the next step is to describe and explore the network themes in a sequential and methodical manner. The description of the network should involve step-by-step logical explanations with text segments used as a tool to support those explanations. This process is aimed at helping the researcher as well as the reader to identify, examine and justify underlying patterns within the text. Text segments play a crucial role in this process as they provide the examples needed to support the analysis and deepen the researcher's understanding of the data. Furthermore, text segments can help the researcher during the next and final two steps, the network summary and the interpretation of patterns.

During this step the researcher should provide a concise but clear and informative summary of all the themes and underlying patterns that typify the network. The discovered patterns should be summarised in a way that enables the reader to fully comprehend what they mean as well as be able to trace their origin. The summary of a network can make interpretation more compelling as it lays the foundations for theory-driven and analytical deductions and conclusions.

Lastly, the researcher is enabled to recapitulate all the deductions made in the summary, refine them, analyse them further and connect them to relevant past literature. As Attride-Stirling (2001) noted, "the aim of this last step is to return to the original research questions and the theoretical interests underpinning them, and address these with arguments grounded on the patterns that emerged in the exploration of the texts. This is a complex and challenging task" (p.394).

METHOD

Overview
This study was a qualitative study and comprised 13 interviews with heterosexual and homosexual individuals of both sexes. The interviews were semi-structured and aimed at exploring people's behaviours, thoughts and emotions following a conflict situation.
Participants
There were 13 participants, 9 female of which 3 were lesbians, and 4 male, of which one was gay. This was an opportunistic sample of Loughborough University students between the ages of 20 and 36.

Interviews
The interviews were semi-structured and had a variable duration. In an attempt to develop a friendly and relaxed atmosphere the duration and structure of each interview varied according to participant's needs. They lasted between 15-30 minutes. A total of 16 interviews were carried out. Of these, 6 were with heterosexual women, 3 with heterosexual men, 3 with lesbians and 1 with a gay male. The remaining 3 interviews were with two lesbian couples and one heterosexual couple. The latter were excluded from the analysis.

Pilot Interviews
Before designing and carrying out the interviews a pilot interview was conducted. The researcher's initial intention was to carry out the interviews with both couples and individuals. This idea was rejected after pilot interviews with heterosexual and homosexual couples were completed. The pilot interviews were done with a heterosexual couple and two lesbian couples. The first pilot interview was with a 20 year old male and a 20 year old female that had been together for a tear and four months. The duration of that interview was 22 minutes. The discussion involved conflict and post-conflict habits. The following two interviews were with two lesbian couples (Couple 1: two 19 year old females. Couple 2: A 20 year old female and a 19 year old female. Duration: 23 and 34 minutes respectively).

Preliminary analysis of these interviews indicated that the purposes of this study would be better served if the interviews were carried out with individuals only. In specific, the study aimed at exploring behaviours, actions, emotions, and thoughts in a post-conflict setting. It was revealed that individual participants could provide that kind of information in a concise, coherent, narrative manner whereas couples would often sidetrack from the main
subject of the interview and talk to each other about various aspects of their relationship. In addition, the interviewer felt that there was a greater amount of resistance and an obvious unwillingness to express emotions and thoughts during couple’s interviews. Lastly, recruiting individuals for interviews was easier and less time consuming than recruiting couples.

**Interview Structure**

The study comprised semi-structured interviews. All participants were given the same scenario to consider before the each interview began (see Table, 6 below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consider the following scenario:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imagine that you and your partner had a heated argument. Please try to think what you usually do or what is likely to happen concentrating on the different behaviours that you or your partner may display. For example, do you storm off, do you ignore them, want to talk about it etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Also, participants were given 10 theme cards (Table 7, below) and were advised that the use of those cards was not compulsory. Rather, the thematic cards served the purpose of helping participants stay within the given topic and articulating their thoughts in a more organised manner during the interview. The thematic cards were developed based on feedback from a group of individuals prior to the commencement of the interviews. They were suggestions made by participants in this group while considering the interview scenario.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>THEMATIC CARDS</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal expression of emotion (i.e. tell them that you love them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kissing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hugging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Want to stay alone, Isolate myself, Ignore them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Desire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual intimacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use humour, Make a joke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Ethical considerations
The research did abide by the strict ethical considerations imposed by Loughborough University and adhered to all notions of withdrawal, confidentiality and anonymity. Due to the nature of some questions asked, concerning social and emotional effects, each participant was debriefed at the end of the interview. If participants had any queries concerning the study or wished to receive a copy of the final results they were given an e-mail address to which they could do so.

Coding
The interviews were transcribed and the analysis process was initiated. The first step of the analytical process was the coding of the transcribed data (full transcripts can be seen in Appendix B). A coding framework was created based on prominent and recurrent issues that arose during the interviews. The codes created can be seen in Table 8 below. These five codes aided the researcher in her efforts to dissect the text into brief and significant text portions (see Table 8 below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CODING FRAMEWORK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Affection (Verbal &amp; Physical)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Humour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Apology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Isolation/Distancing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researcher explored the transcribed data and assigned a 'tag' of a specific code to segments of the text. Each of these coded tags was assigned to text segments based on the content of that particular text segment. The rationalisations involved in the decision-making part of this process were clear and precise; however, in order to avoid 'misfits' and in order to ensure that all text segments were assigned the appropriate code, the coding process was repeated three times. This evaluation of the assigned codes aided the researcher in her efforts to review the material and provided an opportunity for
further reflection and exploration. This was a slow but systematic process and involved reflection and a fair amount of interpretative work in order to transform the data. Coding proved to be a crucial part of the analytic process as it converted lengthy transcribed data into manageable and meaningful chunks of text.

**Identification of themes**

During this step the coded text segments were re-examined in order to identify re-occurring and significant themes. The prominent themes were based on the context of the text segments and provided a core basis for the construction of the network. As with the coding procedure, identifying themes proved to be a lengthy process that involved a fair bit of interpretive work. A total of 17 basic themes were identified, these can be seen in Table 9 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IDENTIFIED 'BASIC' THEMES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Affection can be used to avoid further conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Suitability of sex depends on timing and situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Apology has to be mutual/reciprocal to be effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Isolation can be used as a control factor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Sex can be seen as a manipulative act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Affection is a way of bringing back normality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Distancing or walking away can be used as a chance for reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Verbal affection is a need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Sex can be used to avoid further conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Verbal/physical affection can provide reassurance and security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Affection is a gradual, progressive but safe way of physical contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Humour can stabilise the situation and bring back normality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Apology can be used to avoid further conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Sex can be a way of bringing back normality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Isolation or distancing can be used as a way of avoiding further conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Sex can strengthen feelings of togetherness and security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Humour can be used to avoid further conflict</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The basic themes above were used to create four organising themes, which purposefully summarised the basic themes and captured the core assumptions made by clusters of basic themes. The four organising themes were, 'Avoiding further conflict', 'Gaining control of the situation', 'Achieving normality' and 'Reassurance, security, safety'. The first organising theme 'Avoiding further conflict' summarised a cluster of seven basic themes, the
second ‘Gaining control of the situation’ summarised three basic themes, ‘Reassurance/ security/ safety’, summarised six, and ‘Achieving normality’ summarised three basic themes (see table 10 below). Each basic theme was based upon a text extract within which participants discussed issues surrounding the function(s) of affection, sex, apology, isolation and humour (see Appendix B, ‘text extracts by theme’).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BASIC THEMES</th>
<th>ORGANISING THEMES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affection can be used to avoid further conflict</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suitability of sex depends on timing and situation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apology has to be mutual/reciprocal to be effective</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex can be used to avoid further conflict</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apology can be used as a means of avoiding further conflict</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolation or distancing can be used to avoid further conflict</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humour can be used to avoid further conflict</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolation can be used as a control factor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distancing or walking away can provide a chance for reflection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex can be seen as a manipulative act</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex can strengthen feelings of possessiveness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affection can provide protection and security</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal affection can provide reassurance and security</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal affection is a need</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affection is a gradual, progressive but safe way of physical contact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex can strengthen feelings of security</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affection is a way of bringing back normality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humour can stabilise the situation and bring back normality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex can be a way of bringing back normality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVOIDING FURTHER CONFLICT</td>
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<td>REASSURANCE/ SECURITY/ SAFETY</td>
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<td>ACHIEVING NORMALITY</td>
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**Network Construction**

The basic and organising themes created provided a meaningful foundation for the creation of the global theme. The 17 basic themes and the four organising themes made up on global theme as seen in the diagram below. The global theme of the thematic network was ‘Perceived Closure’. Closure can be temporary or permanent as it is likely that issues may remain unresolved even after closure has been achieved. Furthermore, it is possible for only one of the two parties to believe that closure has been achieved over
a specific conflict situation so the term *perceived* closure seems to be more appropriate.
Sex can strengthen feelings of togetherness and security.

Apology can be used as a means of avoiding further conflict.

Affection can be used to means of avoiding togetherness and security.

Isolation or distancing can be used as a way of avoiding conflict.

Verbal affection is a need.

Sex can be used to avoid further conflict.

Post conflict sex's suitability depends on timing & situation.

Apology has to be mutually reciprocal.

Humour can be used in order to avoid further conflict.

Isolation can be used as a control factor.

Distancing or walking away can provide a chance for reflection.

Sex can be used as a means of bringing normality back.

Affection is a way of bringing normality back.

Humour can stabilize the situation and/or bring normality back.

Sex can be a way of bringing normality back.

Affection is a gradual, progressive, but safe way of physical contact.

Verbal/physical affection provides reassurance, & security.

Perceived Closure.

Avoiding Further Conflict:
- Post conflict sex's suitability depends on timing & situation.
- Apology has to be mutually reciprocal.
- Humour can be used in order to avoid further conflict.

Reassurance/Security/Safety:
- Verbal affection is a need.
- Verbal/physical affection provides reassurance, & security.

Control of the Situation:
- Isolation can be used as a control factor.
- Sex can be used as a manipulative act.

Achieving Normality:
- Affection is a way of bringing normality back.

Gaining Control of the Situation:
- Distancing or walking away can provide a chance for reflection.

Perceived Closure:
- Sex can be used to avoid further conflict.
- Apology can be used as a means of avoiding further conflict.
- Isolation or distancing can be used as a way of avoiding conflict.
Overview
The constructed thematic network 'Perceived Closure' showed that there are 17 basic themes, 4 organising themes and, 1 global theme. The first stage of the analytic process was completed. The text was reduced by creating a coding framework which provided the basis for theme identification and eventually the construction of the thematic network. The next stage in the analytic process is the exploration of the text, which will be the focus of this chapter. In the next few paragraphs an attempt will be made to describe the network in a logical and systematic manner in order to detect and examine underlying patterns and consequently gain a deeper understanding of the data. The themes presented in this analysis emerged through comments, and opinions expressed by participants while describing post-conflict situations.

Analysis Stage B: Exploration of Text

ORGANISING THEME: ACHIEVING NORMALITY

BASIC THEMES: AFFECTION, SEX, AND HUMOUR

Basic theme: 'Affection is way of bringing back normality'
The first basic theme in the cluster was 'Affection is a way of bringing back normality'. Participants talked about whether they would be affectionate towards a partner following a conflict situation. There are several extracts in this section from different participants who described post-conflict situations and reported using affection as a way of normalising the situation. Clare, a 19-year-old homosexual female, reported 'using' affectionate acts like hugging, kissing and touching in order to 'get back' to how she was with her partner before the argument.

Clare (p2)
Clare: I'd use them all; (affection, kissing etc) there are two rules sort of in that funny period after an argument, and then, so you sort of use them to sort of get back to how you were, I mean like you would still do them normally but you are using them this time sort of making up going back to normal kind of thing (19-year-old, homosexual female).

Affection seems to have a very specific role or function in post-conflict situations. In non-conflict situations partners usually express their affection to each other without being fully aware or conscious that they are doing it; also their affectionate expressions do not necessarily directly relate to specific expectations or goals. In the extract above, Clare outlined the difference between being affectionate in 'normal' situations and being affectionate after a heated argument. This is evident in the last two lines where Clare stressed that one would still express their affectionate feelings to their partner in a 'normal' manner, but in a post-conflict situation they would purposefully use affectionate acts like hugging, and kissing, in order to 'go back to normal' again. The same theme comes up in another interview. Sue, a 24-year-old heterosexual female, discussed how affection is of great importance to her relationship as it helps her and her partner 'go back to normal' after an argument. She talked about how affection has a central role in post-conflict situations as it verifies in a way that everything is 'ok' and that the relationship hasn't changed.

Sue (p1-2)
Sue: And we are quite huggy, well I am quite a huggy person I like to, umm, it like comforts me, not comforts me but I like to feel his strength and his kind of like “ok, its ok” and this that and the other,
Interviewer: something like am here kind of thing?
Sue: yeah, I am still here and its not changed us as a couple, its not leading to an end, we just argued over something that is really not important and now we can go back to normal, umm, that kind of scenario would go back to us being quite normal with each other (24-year-old, heterosexual female).

It seems that intimate partners strive to achieve normality in a way that both them and their partners could feel ‘ok’, happy, and settled once more. It seems that if partners have the ability to be affectionate to each other then they could repair any emotional damage done and essentially move on. Steve, a 21-year-old heterosexual male stressed the importance of being able to 'move on'. As he puts it, affectionate acts such as hugging and kissing
function as indicators that a partner is ready to put the conflict and all the negativity that comes with it, behind him/her.

Steve (p.3)
Steve: yeah, “sorry, let's forget about it let's move on”; and that's what the hugging and kissing bit does it shows that you can move on and be together again normally (21-year-old-heterosexual male).

The notions of 'moving on' and 'being normal again' appear to have positive, 'feel good' connotations attach to them. As seen in the extract below, Alex a heterosexual 21-year-old male stressed that it is crucial for him to end the upsetting and hurtful experience (i.e. the argument) and work towards 'making it right again' and 'feeling good again'. The positive and comforting feelings associated with affection appear to provide a rationale on why a partner would use affectionate acts following a conflict situation. Moreover, in the lines that follow, Alex commented on affectionate acts and explained that in his opinion these acts are part of a conscious effort to 'take away all the nasty stuff' and make everything right again. Affectionate behaviour appears to be the result of an intentional and conscious effort. Also, Alex reported that he usually waits for what he calls a 'good moment' to express his affection to his partner after an argument. The latter, can support the argument that affectionate behaviour following conflict is part of a 'plan' that aims at stabilising the situation and reinstating normality.

Alex (p.1)
Alex: umm generally, I would definitely give an apology if I thought I was in the wrong and definitely I would show them affection and I would hug them and tell them I love them kind of thing
Interviewer: why do you think you do that?
Alex: umm, why? Umm, don't know, I guess, umm, yeah I guess I just sit there and think this is too much and it, kind hurts, you know, when you are in a bad argument, and you want it to finish, I mean if you still love her and stuff you just want to make it right again and feel good again. I don't know if I do that, umm, do it on purpose kind off thing but usually I just seem to wait for a good moment and get in there and kiss her, give her a hug, you know, make us both feel good again, make us safe, umm, and kind of take away all the nasty stuff; yeah I think you kind of do it consciously after an argument just to sort of get a bit of normality back into your relationship and really just, I don't know it's a way of demonstrating that you've forgiven them, forgive and forget everything (22-year-old, heterosexual male).

Another interesting point made in this extract was the 'forgiveness' argument seen in the last two lines. Kissing, hugging and generally expressing affection towards a partner immediately after an argument could be perceived as an act
of forgiveness. So apart from bringing back normality in the relationship, affection can give partners a false or true sense of closure. By being affectionate to each other partners automatically appear to be expressing their forgiveness as well as their ability to forget all matters related to the conflict situation.

**Basic theme: ‘Sex can be a way of bringing back normality’**

The second basic theme within the boundaries of the ‘Achieving normality’ organising theme concerns sex as an activity, taking place in post-conflict situations. In the following extract Alex explained why, in his opinion, sexual contact between partners after an argument could normalise the situation.

**Alex (p2)**

Alex: but I mean, if the argument is not that serious then definitely have sex afterwards rather than walk away
Interviewer: umm, and does that work the same way as the affection bit, like does it bring normality?
Alex: yeah, yeah, I think that it just shows that you are over the argument and that you are back to normal; I think sex is always more passionate after an argument, umm, there probably more feeling to it that all, I don’t know that’s just my opinion
Interviewer: why do you think that is?
Alex: I don’t know maybe its because you’ve got more adrenalin going and everything so you are more pumped up; I don’t know maybe just the tension thing, like getting rid of tension, yeah, definitively getting rid of your tension and, umm, I mean usually when you have sex after an argument it is more intimate, romantic and that kind of thing (22-year-old, heterosexual male).

He stressed that engaging in sexual activities in post-conflict situations is an indicator of a partner’s ability to put the argument behind them. Sexual contact between intimate partners is often viewed as a sign of passion, romanticism or even love. Such close contact requires partners to be in a position that enables them to be trusting and to have positive feelings about each other. Alex, argued that sex after an argument can be ‘more romantic’ and ‘more intimate’. The reasoning behind this statement, as given by Alex, is that emotions and feelings become higher and deeper during the conflict, so when the sexual contact situation arises then partners experience it with more passion. Also, Alex referred to sex as a tension-relieving experience. It is through this release that partners get a heightened sense of ‘passion’ and ‘bonding’.
In describing the experience of sex after conflict, other participants often talked about how they get a sense of bonding and closeness that would not be possible otherwise. In specific, the notion of sex being a form of passionate bonding is evident in the next extract. Here, Gemma, a 20-year-old, heterosexual female, elaborates on why sexual contact can be an important part of making up. She stressed that making love or having sex is ‘something really personal’ as partners attempt to bridge the emotional and physical gap created between them during the argument. Gemma argued that having sex after an argument is a way of ‘making up’ in a passionate and very personal manner while ‘taking back’ all the hurtful things said and done during the argument.

Gemma (p2-3)
Interviewer: why do you think you have sex after an argument? Why so you think you do it?
Gemma: umm, don’t know; umm its like, its passion isn’t it? I mean passion, having sex and making love is something really, really really, personal and you’re there with somebody and you are as close as you can be, umm, and probably during the argument you get distant and stuff and say things that hurt sort of thing but, umm, yeah, making love afterwards is kind of making up and being close to each other again and maybe going back to normal (21-year-old heterosexual female).

The profound emotional ‘closeness’ experienced after sex appears to have an important effect on the partners’ sense of normality. After sexual contact a partner can be perceived to be open, vulnerable, genuine and sincere. This is evident in the following paragraph by Gemma. The emotional connection between the two partners appears to be intensified and any apologetic or affectionate attempts made seem more genuine and honest. Gemma explained how that emotional and physical closeness could deepen the meaning of the word ‘sorry’ because after sex a partner is more likely to be ‘open’ and ‘vulnerable’. It is through this closeness that partners are enabled to go back to where they were before the argument, and through this perceived sincerity that they leave negative feelings behind them and prepare to move on.

Gemma: umm, afterwards you are just lying there and you say ‘I am really sorry you know’ and maybe you mean it more then because you’re just vulnerable and open after sex and you connect with them emotionally and physically during sex so its like you know that they are saying ‘I am sorry’ and that really, umm means a lot you know; it means they thought about it and really mean it and stuff (21-year-old heterosexual female).
In the next extract, Joy a 21-year-old homosexual female, put forward her view of events after a conflict episode. In the second part of this extract Joy provided a justification for engaging in sexual activities after an argument. She explained that sex 'is like a bonding thing' and that it brings her partner and her 'closer' together as it is a 'very personal' experience. She makes a reference to being 'naked with somebody' and it seems that this nakedness could imply that one is truthful and genuine. It is evident from this extract that sex is part of the normalising process as it can create a close and intimate atmosphere within which partners can be openly expressive to each other without any inhibitions or negative feelings.

Joy (p3)
Joy: Sex. It starts off as like a kiss or a hug and you say I'm sorry I'm sorry and affection and then depending on the time of the day and what you've been doing then fine might have sex.
Interviewer: why would you want to do that?
Joy: I don't know, it's just like a whole bonding, closeness and like the whole... the fact that you're with somebody on a very, very personal level and it's like, well because you are, you are naked with that person as well,
Interviewer: umm
Joy: and you are not showing everybody else because being naked is a very personal thing, so the whole sex thing and lying naked with somebody is a very personal thing and I think it brings you closer together, that's the whole idea
Interviewer: it kind of like brings you back to normal?
Joy: yeah, it brings you even, well your are closer even more than before you had the argument, in my opinion. I think (22-year-old, homosexual female).

Going back to the first paragraph of the extract, Joy explained that before her partner and she engage in sexual activities they go through a period of time spent being apologetic and affectionate to each other and then if the circumstances permit it they proceed in having sex. Joy's description revealed an important point. As mentioned earlier in order to engage in sexual activities partner first have to reinstate positive and affectionate feelings. According to Joy this process of re-gaining trust and reinstating positive feelings is a gradual and progressive process. So it seems that partners take a step-by-step approach to 'going back to normal' that requires them to take the time needed in order to adjust to the changes made. This step-by-step approach is evident in the extract that follows.

Clare (p.2)
Clare: I mean me and Nat had massive arguments and we needed a bit of time afterwards to sort of re-adjust and think about what've said to each other and then do all the hugging and kissing and laughing stuff. I don't know if it was like a proper heated argument then you always say things you don't mean and it feels weird afterwards. And then kind of say stuff like "I am sorry, I still love you, didn't mean what I said" "nothing has changed" and joke about it if you can (19-year-old, homosexual female).

Clare, stressed the importance of having 'a bit of time to re-adjust' because as she put it, herself and her partner needed to take a few minutes to think about what was said or done before progressing to affectionate acts, sexual acts or using humour.

Basic theme: 'Humour can stabilise the situation and/or bring back normality'

This basic theme emerged from extracts where participants were talking about the use of humour after an argument. Humour was talked about in terms of its diffusing and stabilising effects on the post-conflict process. In specific, it is evident from the text that humour can play a crucial role in 'normalising' the situation and 'clearing' the air. Clare, a 19-year-old homosexual female, noted that she used humour in post-conflict situations in order to 'get back to normal'. It seems that humour in this particular case, preceded any physical affectionate expressions. Clare made it clear in the first line that humour and the way it is perceived can be an indication of whether a partner is ready to 'move on' and whether they 'got over' the argument.

Clare (p4)
Interviewer I: you use humour before the affection bit, why do you think you do that?
Clare: well once you've made them laugh that's it, you know what I mean, you are back to normal again if they can laugh about the argument or something else then that's sort of going back to normal; it means that they are feeling that they are not bothered, well not not-bothered but they kind of got over the argument or what was said; and then you can give them a little kiss (19-year-old, homosexual female).

In a way, humour appears to be working as a 'test' of the willingness to forgive and forget. Clare also noted that, the way humour is perceived can reveal information about a partner's feelings at a given time. It can indicate whether they are 'bothered' or 'not bothered' and it can provide important clues about whether the argument is over or it is still ongoing. This kind of information appears to be crucial, in that it can give a partner the 'green light' to proceed with affectionate expressions or work towards closure.

The following extract by Gemma confirmed that humour could be used to 'test' the situation. Gemma described how her partner would make a joke out of the
argument in an effort to lighten up the situation and how she would accept the joke in a positive or light-hearted way only when she thought her points were understood and appreciated. It is apparent that the recipient of the joke (in this case Gemma), can control the situation by the way they react to a humorous remark.

Gemma (p1)
Gemma: because Paul would just make a joke of it (argument) because even if he knew he was in the wrong, he would make a joke out of it and he knew that if I was stroppy enough he wouldn’t be able to get around me anyway, so after I had my strop and my space to get over it, he would make a joke out of it and I would laugh at the joke when I thought he got the message (21-year-old, heterosexual female).

Basic theme: ‘Affection is a gradual, progressive, but ‘safe’ way of physical contact’
This theme revealed that the normalisation process is a step-by-step process and that partners often think carefully before expressing their affectionate feelings. Participants here, talked about how affection can be a ‘softer’ and ‘safer’ way of re-establishing physical contact and how it can aid them in their efforts to calm things down and normalise the situation. In the extract below, Clare stressed the importance of pacing one’s actions because, as she put it, if ‘you go straight in for the kill’, a partner might end up worsening the situation.

Clare (p2)
Interviewer: would she get emotional or passionate about it? (The argument)
Clare: Emotional yeah but not passionate; she’d try and distance herself which I would make it harder for her anyway, like because with the physical contact you have to sort of, you couldn’t just go straight in for the kill kind of thing, so it has to be done bit by bit (19-year-old, homosexual female).

Therefore, re-establishing psychical contact whether it is affection or sex, must be part of a gradual and careful effort, because otherwise a partner might get accused of trying to ‘manipulate’ the situation as will be seen when examining the ‘gaining control of the situation’ organising theme. Clare reported that her partner would get ‘emotional’ after a conflict situation and not ‘passionate’; therefore explicit or abrupt efforts to establish physical contact could get rebuffed whereas softer or more gradual efforts, like affectionate expressions, could be accepted more easily and eagerly. On an earlier part of her interview, Clare explained the reason why she would not make open sexual advances
after an argument, in the first line she stated that she would not even consider engaging in sexual activities as this kind of approach may be perceived as too direct or to 'invasive'. She later asserted that softer versions of physical contact, like hugging and kissing, can re-establish physical contact without completely invading someone's space and emotional defences.

Clare (p1)
Clare: (Looking at the theme cards) umm, I would probably throw those two out of the window
I Interviewer: no sex and sexual desire you mean?
Clare: Kissing and stuff that's a bit more personal without being completely in their personal space, do you know what I mean, its sort of, you've got the physical contact of like being with them but if you just had a massive argument then it is still a bit, you are on dodgy ground, you know what I mean? (19-year-old, homosexual female).

It seems that after an argument partners are still fragile and emotionally weakened so actions and behaviours need to be delicate, soft, slow, and steady. Any action that is too direct or unexpected could have a reverse effect and lead to greater physical and emotional distance. Another participant outlined the need for gradual and progressive physical contact. Steve stressed that a 'softer' approach involving expressions of affection and talking, could be perceived by a partner as an expression of caring and loving feelings. On the other hand, although direct sexual contact could relieve the tension and strengthen the bond between partners, it is seen as a short-term solution that only postpones unresolved issues.

Steve (p2)
Steve: So if you have sex you release your tension and everything is fine again but then that's kind of short-term; because there might be little bits in there, in your brain and, you know, that you are still pissed off about so I think, like, the gradual, a bit of kissing a bit of hugging and talking as well, that just sort of tentative and shows that you care without going for the full on "lets have sex" kind of thing (21-year-old, heterosexual male).

By adopting a step-by-step approach to re-establishing physical contact, partners can have more control over the situation as they are enabled to carefully judge their partner's reactions and proceed accordingly.
Basic theme: 'Sex can strengthen feelings of togetherness and security'

This basic theme emerged through participant discussions over the beneficial effects of sex after an argument. The extracts that follow showed that sexual contact following conflict could strengthen partners’ feelings of security and togetherness; consequently sex can reassure them that the argument did not weaken their partner’s intimate feelings towards them.

In the following extract Ellie, stressed the importance of retaining her possessive feelings. She explained that sex is a way of strengthening her feelings of togetherness as it can confirm that her partner 'is still hers'. Furthermore, it seems that the content of the argument can have an effect on the essentiality of post-conflict sex. Ellie, stressed that when the argument is about a rival then her feelings of possessiveness can be intensified through sexual contact.

Ellie (p3)
Ellie: yeah, yeah; it depends as well if it is over someone else and you have sex with him (boyfriend) as well I suppose in a way you are thinking, “he is still mine anyway because he is still sleeping with me" (21-year-old, heterosexual female).

Sexual contact after an argument appears to play confirmatory role as it can reassure partners that they still have positive feelings about each other. In the following extract, Samantha talked about how she would even provoke an argument intentionally in order to get a ‘passionate’ or ‘fiery’ reaction from her partner because as she explained extreme and emotional reactions are an indication that the her partner cares about her and that they' feel strongly' about her. As she explained, her partner’s willingness to ‘get emotional’ and react passionately could stand as ‘evidence’ that there is a ‘good bond’ between them.

Samantha (p2)
Samantha: Umm, when it escalates vocally, might get loud or whatever, I think we are arguing and its heated you can get really physically into it and we have a shout and I think that kind of ties in with the whole feeling into the other person; you can really see a different side of the person if they are willing to get emotional in front of you and I think that’s a good bond with the other person. I used to, it was when I was younger and I had my first relationships that I, would occasionally spark up, spark up some sort of emotional reaction in someone maybe an argument, just to see how far
you can take someone and see how emotional they will become because I like emotional people (27-year-old, heterosexual female).

A bit further in the interview Samantha justified why she would be willing to 'spark-up' an argument intentionally and why, when conflict was a natural occurrence, she thought that sex 'can bring it all together' and confirm a partner's feelings. In the extract that follows she illustrated how having a passionate argument with a partner who is compatible with you can lead to some form of emotional and physical synchronisation. She explained that it is through this emotional and physical state of equality that her partner and her 'end up' having 'fiery' and 'hot' sex. Sex, as seen in the following extract, can reveal information about a partner's feelings and in specific it can show that 'they still care'. It seems that post-conflict sex can provide and enhance feelings of security and safety between partners, as it helps them to refresh, and fortify the emotional bond between them.

Samantha (p2-3)
When you have this big fight with someone who is as emotional and passionate as you are you can really be in tune with that person and get really worked up and end up having fiery, hot sex and that brings it all together really; the sex I mean, umm it kind off tells you that they still care. The whole process really is about confirming your boyfriend's feelings really; To see them react in a really emotional way, you can think to yourself "they really feel strongly about me or the situation" and it can be a reassurance and you can see the fire in them, it can make you feel a bit horny as well, umm, yeah, kind of makes you want them again, be with them, feel safe and connect with them (27-year-old, heterosexual female).

This emotional bond between partners seems to derive from passionate physical contact. Post-conflict sex can help partners reassure each other. It also acts as a medium in the process of reinstating their feelings of safety, security and connectness. This can be seen in the last few lines of the extract where Samantha provided the reasons for engaging in sexual activities after an argument. It is apparent from this extract that partners are concentrating their intense emotions, which accumulated during the argument, and they are channelling them into passionate sexual contact.

Basic themes: 'Verbal/Physical affection provides reassurance and security' and Verbal/physical affection is a need.
In this theme participants talked about the use and the effects of affection, in post-conflict situations. In specific, participants discussed why affection plays
a significant role in calming partners down and comforting them. Affection, whether verbal or physical, was seen as a necessary component in post-conflict situations because it increases partners' feelings of security and safety and because it alleviates negative emotions and stress that accumulate during conflict. In the extract that follows, Sue, described what she feels when her partner hugs her after an argument. She explained that hugging reassures her that everything is 'ok' because she can feel her partner's 'strength' again. The use of the word 'strength' here refers to her descriptions of feeling 'protected' and 'safe' (see Appendix B, Interview with Sue).

Sue (p1-2)
Sue: And we are quite huggy, well I am quite a huggy person I like to; umm, it like comforts me, not comforts me but I like to feel his strength and his kind of like "ok, its ok" and this that and the other (24-year-old, heterosexual female).

Another participant, Steve, made references to security and safety. As seen in the following extract, Steve talked about reinstating his partner's sense of safety within the relationship by using physical affection. Conflict between intimate partners is usually associated with negative emotions, emotional distance and fear about the outcome of the conflict. So it is logical to think that partners often lose part of their sense of safety. Steve outlined the importance of reinstating that sense of safety or security and stressed that by hugging and kissing his partner he could make her feel 'good' again and comfort her.

Steve (p1-2)
Steve: yeah, once we start talking about it its all calmer so yeah but I wouldn't try anything like that at the time of the initial argument I wouldn't; but as you start to settle things down and calm it, because you have to eventually don't you? And once you get to that stage, yeah, give her a hug or a kiss, yeah definitely. Interviewer: and why do you think you want to do that?
Steve: it sort of, well I just want to comfort her to make her feel a bit more secure, so she feels secure again, yeah; you take it away when you have an argument, that is the security, and then you've got to replace it at some stage, because that's what relationships are all about isn't it? Interviewer: and that's your way of doing that right? (21-year-old, heterosexual male).

In the first four lines he also outlined the importance of 'good timing'. The appropriateness or suitability of affectionate expressions depend upon the situation as it stands at a specific point in time. Steve admitted that he would wait until 'things' have 'settled down' before making any efforts to make his partner feel more 'secure'. The extract above revealed that affection is not only a necessity in post-conflict situations but that it can also part of
someone's responsibility. In the last two lines, Steve used the expression 'you have got to replace it', while referring to reinstating his partner's feelings of security. It seems like partners accept that it was their involvement in the argument that 'took the security away' so it should be their active involvement after the argument to repair the damage done.

In the next extract Gemma talked about her experience of hugging after an argument. She talked about having a special place on her partner's body where she finds safety and protection. She explained that whenever she wants to feel protected and safe she hugs her partner.

Gemma (p3)
Gemma: I don't know, hugging, umm, when you are with someone you get to know their body and you have a little space for your head and its fits there perfectly when you hug and that special space on them makes you feel protected and safe and you just go and hug them when you want to feel that way; umm, I am a snuggler and I like to really hug him and feel good (21-year-old, heterosexual female).

Affection can provide partners with positive feelings like security and safety in non-conflict situations. However, it seems that after an argument these positive effects are intensified. During an argument partners may lose part of their confidence or part of their sense of security which may lead them to feeling insecure about their relationship as a whole. Therefore, it would be logical to assume that when either of the two partners expresses their affectionate feelings, these insecurities are relieved. In the next extract Clare described her fears and emotions and provided a rationale for being affectionate to her partner after an argument.

Clare (p3)
Clare: I think its better to fix it there and then rather than having it on your mind all day and worry about it; umm, maybe its an insecurity thing, maybe you think that if you leave them too long they'll just wont come back, you know what I mean, they'll find some better offer or something; maybe that's why I try to hug and kiss her or whatever because its that sort of thing that, you know, creates that kind of "yes I am here" yeah you know, if you are going to make her feel good again physically and emotionally then she wont go anywhere; physical contact is the first, well the strongest sort of thing that will immediately make her focus on you otherwise they can shut out of what you are saying; (19-year-old, homosexual female).

In the first four lines Clare outlined the importance of being affectionate towards her partner after an argument. Clare's main fear was that if she didn't act affectionately after an argument towards her partner they might leave the relationship. It seems that the driving force behind affectionate expressions is
the insecurity of losing a partner or damaging the bond between the partners. In this case, Clare's fear of 'they'll find a better offer' and 'they won't come back' motivated her to act affectionately towards her partner but also provided a strong justification for her actions. She also argued that affection could provide her partner with some reassurance about the status of their relationship. It is evident in the last two lines that affection can be a used as a 'back-up' method of re-building the bond between partners as verbal reassurances are not always successful and they may lead to misunderstandings or further conflict. Affectionate expressions have obvious psychological and physical benefits, namely they can strengthen partners' feelings of security and safety within the relationship, but they can also serve another purpose. Affectionate expressions appear to work as way of communicating emotions in a clear-cut, direct manner that is free of misunderstandings and confusion.

To summarise, it is evident from these extracts that partners have a need for affection after a conflict episode because it makes them feel safe again as individuals and as part of an intimate relationship.

ORGANISING THEME: AVOIDING FURTHER CONFLICT

Basic theme: 'Sex can be used to avoid further conflict'

Sex was talked about in terms of its function as a convenient getaway when partners want to avoid discussing the issue further. Further discussion of the matter may provoke a new argument or bring to the surface unresolved issues. Ellie, a 21-year old female participant explained why she would engage in sexual activities with her partner after an argument. She argued that especially if the argument is repetitive or if the couple has frequent conflicts, it is better to 'just avoid talking about it' and have sex. She stressed that if you continue discussing the issue then you would have to apologise or express your love for your partner even if you do not necessarily feel like that at the time. Sexual contact appears to serve a purpose here; it can provide the individual with a sense of security and it can aid them in avoiding further conflict, embarrassment and false admissions.
Ellie: ...if we were arguing all the time I would rather do the sex bit because I don't know I suppose you can just avoid talking about it more whereas if you say I love you and I am sorry and all that then you have to say why; and then if you are really, really sorry yourself then you just end up getting back to an argument because there have been loads of times when I've said sorry and not meant it just for the shake of avoiding another argument, so if you do end up talking about it you just end up arguing more so
Interviewer: so you'd just rather have sex?
Ellie: yeah, and just wait for the next one (argument) (laughing); because some blokes never see your point of view so its just easier, its probably just easier if it is going to end in an argument so its probably just easier [to have sex]; (21-year old heterosexual female).

As Gemma noted it in the next extract, her partner and her sometimes get tired and fed up with arguing so they want to avoid any further arguments and 'calm down'. It appears that sex serves the purpose of a 'getaway' or a way to avoid further arguments and achieve some form of closure. It is also evident that partners may use sex as a preventative measure of worsening the situation.

Gemma (p2-3)
G: do you know what I mean like, umm, we have a huge argument because I don't know, we had some kind of communication breakdown or something and then well, we both apologise and stuff and by that point we are so tired arguing we just want to calm down and yeah, make up and have sex, because you know what I mean, we've had enough and just want to avoid making it worse really.

Moreover, post-conflict sex can be seen as a form of non-verbal communication. By engaging in sexual activities partners avoid any further confrontations. Marie, in the extract below expressed her views on having sex after an argument. She noted that she preferred in a way to 'store it all up', meaning her emotions and feelings, and channel everything that is stored up into physical contact. She added that sex would be her way of conveying her messages or making her point non-verbally. In this specific extract, it appears that Marie may have certain expectations in terms of any possible benefits of engaging in post-conflict sex. In the last line of the extract, she used the word 'dissipate' to describe what happens to all the stored-up emotions and feelings after sexual contact. The use of the word dissipate here, reveals her expectation or possibly hope that post-conflict sex will remove or delete all the negative emotions and issues relating to the argument.

Marie (p2)
I: and if they backed down or whatever and it got to that point that things are kind of ok would you have sex with them or would you do anything like that?
M: probably, yeah (laughing); I wouldn't do that with someone that didn't mean much to me, only in a relationship or something; just trying to make a point non-verbally, as non-confrontational as possible. Just store it all up and then let it dissipate, what a good word!

Basic theme: 'Affection can be used to avoid further conflict'
Participants discussed how affectionate expressions can be used as a method to avoid further arguments. In the extract that follows Paul noted that because he is not 'fond of arguments' he tends to use affectionate expressions as a way of preventing further arguments from occurring or terminating existing arguments. He also expressed his tendency to deliberately agree or disagree with his partner with the sole purpose of stopping an argument. It is interesting to see affection being used intentionally in order to achieve a certain goal, in this case avoid further conflict. By establishing some form of affectionate physical contact Paul usually attempts to stabilise the situation and calm things down.

Paul (p1-2)
P: I wouldn't say a hug, that's quite a big thing, emotional thing. It's like a definite sort thing; maybe just a little touch or something or a grab of the hand because I am definitely not fond of arguments and by touching, or touching her hand of something I kind of stop it you know. I think that is down to because I am from a, well, my parents divorced and I sort of grew up with a fair bit of arguments and stuff that make me whenever I hear an argument or have one to more like agree rather than disagree, that would be it for me;

Furthermore, Alex provided the rationale behind the intentional use of affection with the purpose of terminating an argument or preventing one from happening. He explained that when his partner and he get trapped in an endless conflict he tries to 'give her a good hug' because he wants to avoid having going back into the argument. Alex described conflict as an unpleasant experience so when his partner and him fail to reach agreement or when the situation begins to feel tense again he uses affectionate expressions in an attempt to 'save them the trouble' of experiencing another argument.

Alex (p.1)
Umm, its not only that though, I mean yeah I think with the hugs and the kisses and all that you can make her feel safe and good again and stuff but I think sometimes, umm, when I see that the argument goes on and on and on and we can't get
anywhere with it I'll sort of try to give her a good hug and try to be nice cos I just want to stop going back to shouting and stuff. umm, I mean arguing is not nice and it feels horrible and I hate it when we have argument after argument because we can't agree and stop so umm, yeah in that case I'd probably be affectionate just to save us the trouble really, just to stop it happening again and again.

***Basic theme: 'Isolation/distancing can be used to avoid further conflict'***

In the same manner as affection, participants talked about their tendency to isolate themselves or walk away in order to avoid re-entering an argument. In the extract that follows Steve admits walking away from the argument in order to avoid saying spiteful things that he may regret later. Steve appears to use distancing as a way of avoiding further conflict but also as a chance for reflection. As he admits 'having a little think' enables him to return to his partner and resume discussions in a calmer manner.

**Steve (p1)**

S: If it is a really bad argument, yeah, I would normally like walk off because I get, I wouldn't want to get too angry; so I wouldn't want to say something I regret, so I'd normally say “right leave me alone” or I'll go “right I am off”, and I'd just walk off and stay away for a little while to just calm down and maybe afterwards; once I've calmed down and had a little think about it then maybe then I might talk about it a bit more calmly

I: so you go back?

S: yeah then I go back and try to chat about it and get it all sorted, finished done and dusted, you know.

; once I've, because otherwise you just say something nasty and you get yourself in more trouble (laughing). You just go like “oh for god's shake ra ra ra” because I have quite a bad temper and all and then that's a whole new argument you've got to deal with because you've said something.

Distancing oneself from the argument appears to serve an important purpose. It enables partners to reflect upon what was said or done, calm down and review the situation. This way, further arguments can be avoided because partners avoid acting on impulse and letting their emotions rule the proceedings. Avoiding having an extreme emotional reaction may be the key to resolving an argument and reaching closure. As seen in the next extract Ellie chooses to walk away and deal with her emotions and anger in a non-confrontational manner. She does seem to direct her anger towards her partner but as this is done remotely (via text message) it reduces the chances of an intense and emotional confrontation that may lead to further conflict.

**Ellie (p1)**
E: no if I was in a relationship and the argument was about him seeing another girl or something like that then I would ignore him and I would go out with my friends, get really drunk and I would probably abuse him (laughing) send a text message kind of thing; but if I felt that I was involved a bit I would be more likely to apologise, I would go away for a bit and then come back and probably apologise probably.

Basic theme: 'Apology can be used to avoid further conflict'

Moreover, participants discussed issues surrounding the use of apologies in post-conflict situations. In specific, participants talked about how they would intentionally use apology as a method of avoiding further conflict or reaching some form of closure. In the first extract Clare discussed the issue of apologising after an argument and stressed the importance of avoiding re-occurring arguments. In the first four lines, Clare described her usual actions in a post-conflict situation. She noted that she would try to stabilise the situation by giving her partner time to calm down, using humour and as she puts it by grovelling.

Clare (p1)

C: I don't know, umm, I don't like arguments, I don't see the point; because I think everyone is entitled to have an opinion on most of things; but yeah, probably they would storm off and I'd either give it a bit of time or try to make a joke about it or I would just go "oh...I am sorry" (making a face), you know, kiss ass (laughing), grovel. Because, you know, I would just want to avoid arguing again and again about the same thing, umm, it is not worth it is it? Sometimes I think I wasn't even in the wrong and thought what the hell say you are sorry and end this now because I hate arguments, I get tired trying to make a point you know what I mean (19-year-old, homosexual female).

The description in the first four lines reveals Clare’s willingness to do anything in order to create a calmer environment and it appears that the driving force behind this willingness is based on her dislike of conflict in general. In the last few lines she proceeds by saying that she often apologises just because she wants to avoid any further arguments. Furthermore, she also admitted to apologising even when the argument was not her fault. The same theme came up in the next extract where Susanna admitted that she has used apologies in order to avoid the hassle of conflict. In the first few lines she described apologising as a difficult task that makes her feel uncomfortable. Nevertheless, she explained that she has apologised in the past even in situations that there was no need to do so. Her reasoning for apologising just to avoid an argument appears to stem from her desire to maintain her relationship. Susanna also added that she did not see ‘the point in arguing’
repeatedly and that an apology aided her in her efforts to avoid arguing with her partner.

Susanna (p. 4)

Yeah I think it is hard to accept that you've done something wrong and sometimes it feels very uncomfortable when you apologise but only with my most recent ex I would do that. You know, now that I think of it I just didn't want to lose him I guess and I was so sick of arguing because of the previous bastards that I've been out with. So yeah, I did apologise a lot with Mark even when I didn't have to really. I couldn't bear having fight after fight; it's silly there's no point so why argue when u can just say you're sorry? (36-year-old Heterosexual female)

Basic theme: 'Apology has to be mutual/reciprocal'

Participants outlined the importance of mutuality in apologising as conflict can be avoided only when both partners appear to be apologetic and regretful. The notion of mutuality appears to extend to other parts of the post-conflict process such as the balance of power and reactions to affectionate expressions. The latter is apparent in the first extract where Paul stressed that apology can be an effective conflict avoidance method and a step stone for parts of the normalisation process like affection, only when both partners are willing to apologise and make an effort for reaching closure.

Paul (p2-3)
I: you said that's too much or whatever because I said hugging and you said that's too big or too much
P: mm, if we both come to a sort of say a conclusion and we sort of both really apologised then fair enough we would hug and stuff; but if it was one of those inconclusive things where nobody wants to back down but still get over it then I don't know probably not affection no.

Paul explained that mutually apologising and reaching some kind of conclusion, are both prerequisites of the normalisation process. Paul explained how he would not proceed with affectionate expressions unless his partner provided an equal or similar apology. The reactions that partners receive appear to play a significant role as well. In the next extract Ellie specifically stressed that if her partner returns or matches her apology then she is more likely to make further efforts towards restoring the situation. So an apologetic partner has to receive the same kind of positive reaction before proceeding with affectionate expressions and the normalisation process.

Ellie (p1)
E: yeah if I felt it was more their fault and if I said things I didn’t mean I would probably go back and say sorry and say “oh I love you and that” and I probably hug them, umm; it depends on how they reacted as well, if they were like “oh yeah I am sorry too” and they weren’t mardy or anything then yes I would try to hug them and stuff;

Mutually positive reactions to apologetic attempts relate to partners’ sense of balance in the relationship. As Susanna explained, both partners need to make an equal amount of effort to improve the situation after an argument. If only one of the two partners apologises and makes an effort to ‘make up’ then there is a lack of balance in that particular interaction. Reverting back to what Susanna said earlier, an apology can be a difficult task because it requires the partner’s willingness to admit they were wrong. It is for this reason why it is so important for partners to have a sense of equality or balance at this critical post-conflict stage. Otherwise, as Susanna explained in the last three lines, a partner may feel that they are the only ones making an effort and the only ones investing their time and energy into the ‘making-up’ process. One sided efforts to repair the damage done can leave a partner feeling alone in the relationship as they are giving and not receiving.

Susanna (p4)

it's all about power and balance and it was kind of if one person's doing all the apologising like I was and all the work to make things right and the other person is just saying ok then, whatever, yes this is what's wrong. It's not like that romantic notion of you have an argument, you both apologise, you make up and have great sex and it's wonderful. Because it has to be an equal effort on both sides to make that apology mutual, and if it's not then for one person it's still gonna feel like you're not getting anything back because you're the one that's doing all the apologising and making the effort.

Basic theme: ‘Humour can be used to avoid further conflict’

In this theme, participants talked about the use of humour in post-conflict situations. In specific, they discussed how humour can be used in order to avoid further conflict and prepare the ground for the normalisation process. It appears that humour can diffuse or lighten-up the situation and that partner’s often use a joke as way to ‘test’ the status of the situation after an argument. This is evident in the first extract, where Paul admitted making a joke with the sole purpose of ‘breaking the ice’ and ‘lightening things up’. So humour
appear to have great importance at this stage as it can help partners put the argument behind them.

Paul (p1)
P: I'll: so you can keep your cool while, well, during the argument?
P: yeah definitely; umm, I probably might crack a joke to like break the ice; oh well, maybe not break the ice but just to lighten things a little bit;

Participants also argued that the reaction a humoristic remark receives is a very useful indicator of mood and acceptability. In the extract that follows, Clare clearly asserts 'once you made them laugh that's it'. It is evident from this quote that a successful humoristic remark and the reaction it receives can take away the burden of the 'heavy' and negative environment after an argument. Clare added that a positive reception of the humoristic remark can indicate that a partner has put the argument behind them already or at least that they are willing to do so.

Clare (p.4)
C: well once you've made them laugh that's it, you know what I mean, you are back to normal again if they can laugh about the argument or something else then that's sort of going back to normal; it means that they are feeling that they are not bothered, well not not-bothered but they kind of got over the argument or what was said; and then you can give them a little kiss

So a successful joke can be a quite useful tool in post-conflict situations as it can reveal information about a partner's mood and willingness to finish the argument and reach some form of closure. Gemma confirmed that jokes can be used as mood indicators by saying that she would not laugh her partner's joke up until she felt that 'he got the message', effectively up until she felt that the have dealt with all issues within the argument. In the last six lines of the extract Gemma provided an explanation as to why she would intentionally reject her partner's jokes.

Gemma (p1)
P: Paul would just make a joke of it because even if he knew he was in the wrong, he would make a joke out of it and he knew that if I was stroppy enough he wouldn't be able to get around me anyway, so after I had my strop and my space to get over it, he would make a joke out of it and I would laugh at the joke when I thought he got the message; if it like a big argument, like sometimes, Paul if he'd made a joke I would be more pissed off because I want to prove my point and I am only angry for a reason probably a good reason so I would stop him doing that because I don't want him to make a joke of it, I want to keep it, I don't want him to think that he can get out of it easily so I would walk out and slam the door and expect him to run after me and I would expect him to make the effort to fix it again
She stressed that she did not want her partner to feel that he can 'get away with it' just by making a joke. Thus, the willingness to accept a humoristic remark plays a significant role here as it gives the partner at the receiving end of the joke the power to pick the specific time that the normalisation process can begin. So it appears that partners have knowledge of the power of a good joke and that they intentionally use that power in order to achieve certain goals, in this case avoid further arguing and reaching some form of closure. However, the suitability of jokes in post-conflict situations appears to depend upon correct timing and correct judgement of the general mood. Humorous remarks at the 'wrong time' or humorous remarks that may offend a partner can have negative effects. As Clare explained her jokes sometimes made her partner feel angrier because they were made at inappropriate times or were of inappropriate content.

Clare (p1)
With Nat it was always what would happen was, we would have argument and I would try to make a joke about it and she'd get even madder and then I would end up having to grovel; maybe I have to lose that 'making a joke out of it' approach because it ends with me grovelling.
I: making you are making the joke at the wrong moment kind of thing (laughing)
C: yeah (laughing). Usually it goes down to the level of, if I think it's going to start getting into a mega, mega argument then I'll start mimicking her
I: mimicking her?
C: yeah like “bla bla bla, mu, mu” (making faces pretending to be her partner talking). Yeah I don't see the point of having massive arguments, I don't know whether they are necessary.
I: yeah but if you mimic somebody while they are angry they might get even angrier aren't they?
C: yeah over the last few years, umm, yeah they usually get angrier (laughing) ok maybe I should rethink my approach! Maybe yeah!

ORGANISING THEME: GAINING CONTROL

BASIC THEMES: ISOLATION, DISTANCING, SEX

Basic theme: 'Distancing or walking away can provide a chance for reflection
In this theme, participants discussed issues relating to a common reaction to conflict situations. They argued that walking away, from the scene and their partners, could provide them with the time needed to reflect upon the situation and review what has been said. Geographical distance between partners appears to be very important after conflict episodes. Firstly, it ensures that
further conflict won't occur and secondly it gives partners the opportunity to calm down and consider all possible perspectives. The latter is evident in the following extract where Sue provided her reasons for choosing to walk away after an argument. Moreover, having time to reflect and calm down appears to help partners behave in a conciliatory manner when they face each other again. Sue explained in line two that reflection helps her partner and her to realise that the argument is not more important than their relationship. Consequently reflection can reinforce one's motivation to express their affection to their partner as a way of reaching closure and reconciling.

Sue (p2)
S: well we have a bit of time away from each other just to calm it and reflect, just to know that we've both been stupid sort of thing, and then we come together and we have some affection and then it goes round and develops to more stuff like sexual stuff. And that's it kind of thing then we are normal again.

Steven provided his reasons for walking away from his partner after an argument. In the first few lines he explained that he usually 'walks away' because he wants to avoid saying or doing things just because he is angry. Taking time to reflect upon the situation appears to have helped Steven avoid regretful angry outbursts and consequently further arguments. Again, it is evident that distancing can help partners to reconsider their actions and behaviours and prepare themselves for a calmer discussion and motivate themselves to intensify their efforts to reach some form of closure.

Steven (p.3)
S: If it is a really bad argument, yeah, I would normally like walk off because I get, I wouldn't want to get too angry; so I wouldn't want to say something I regret, so I'd normally say "right leave me alone" or I'll go "right I am off", and I'd just walk off and stay away for a little while to just calm down and maybe afterwards; once I've calmed down and had a little think about it then maybe then I might talk about it a bit more calmly
I: so you go back?
S: yeah then I go back and try to chat about it and get it all sorted, finished done and dusted, you know.

Basic theme: 'Isolation can be used as a control factor'
Participants in this theme discussed issues surrounding the uses of distancing oneself or walking away from a partner after an argument. Walking away from a partner after an argument can give a partner a chance to reflect as we have seen in the previous theme, but also it can give them the chance to control the timing, sequence and type of events that may follow after they reunite.
themselves with their partners. The partner that chooses to walk away can have an instant advantage because they can control the time spend apart and return to their partner if and when they are ready. This can be seen in the extract below, where Gemma described how and why she chooses to walk away from her partner.

Gemma (p2)
G: if it's like a big argument... I would walk out and slam the door and expect him to run after me and I would expect him to make the effort to fix it again; but you need to know your limits to do that because otherwise you might end up running down the street like an idiot without having him coming after you; you've got to be a bit careful not to take it too far because this one time I took it too far and I ended up having to apologising, you get away with it kind of thing; maybe that's my way of controlling them, I don't know.

In the first few lines we see that by walking away Gemma passes the responsibility of making an effort to make up to her partner. She said that she usually walks away in a dramatic manner and expects her partner to run after her and attempt to resolve the issue. The shift of responsibility between partners appears to be occurring intentionally in this case. Gemma verbalised her thoughts on the issue of 'walking away' like it is a well-thought technique or procedure. Her intent shows in lines three, four and five, where she provided a warning about 'how far' one could go with this approach. She also admitted that her intentional distancing may be her method of controlling her partner and the situation.

Sue (p1)
S: well immediately after (an argument) I would say that we, David and I would generally go in isolation for a little while because we are quite stubborn the two of us and either of us is good at backing down so I would probably think I am right and he would probably think he is right which in itself causes conflict; so to begin with definitely we have isolation just to calm down I think

Basic theme: 'Sex can be perceived as a manipulative act'

This basic theme emerged from discussions relating to the suitability of post-conflict sex. Some participants argued that sex after an argument can be initiated intentionally in order to achieve a certain goal. Participants argued that sometimes sex could be perceived as a manipulative act so they either choose to refrain from taking part in it or initiating it. As seen in the extract that follows, partners can have a variety of emotions after an argument and the
situation may be quite sensitive. A direct sexual advance may be perceived the ‘wrong way’ and seen as a manipulative act. As Clare argued, a partner may reject a sexual advance on the basis that they think it is inappropriate which may provoke negative reactions and therefore jeopardise the normalisation process.

Clare (p2)
I: if you go like straight in for the kill and go for sexual stuff, pure sex then
C: they might, yeah they might just think “oh you just made up with me, just to have sex” so it might be a bit of a manipulative kind of thing; you know what I mean, like people are sometimes quite emotional after an argument and they can be a bit touchy-feely so if you go straight in and try to have sex with them they might take it the wrong way and then you can lose everything, I mean all the energy you put in to make it right again is gone for good.

Samantha appeared to have a similar view on post-conflict sex. She argued that sex may leave ‘unresolved issues’ between partners as it is a good method for avoiding further conflict but at the same time it may block further discussions as well. She also stressed those sexual advances after an argument may make a partner feel that their partner only made an effort to resolve the argument for the sole purpose of having sex with them. This is evident in the last two lines where Samantha stressed that a sexual advance may be an indication that the relationship has a strong physical basis and a weak emotional or communication basis.

Samantha (p.4)
its either the one or the other, you've got affection and feeling romantic and sweet and cuddly or you've got this like full on, having sex, and then, you know, but sometimes that can lead to being pissed off as well because personally I really like to have sex if I am feeling relaxed in someone's company and secure and if you have this huge heated argument, sometimes it makes you feel insecure so to have the sex then you feel “oh hang on, have we actually resolved the argument at the end of it” and you feel this kind of resentment at the end of it perhaps and then maybe this thing will happen, you know, the isolation and wanting them to piss off. Because they just want to have sex with you, yeah it makes you feel that that's all they want from you sex, not being with you and sorting it out.

Paul examined the issue of post-conflict sex further and argued that sex is his partner’s way of taking control of the situation. In the first few lines he stressed that his partner uses sex as a means to taking advantage of him. He explained that he is usually ‘open’ and ‘vulnerable’ after sexual contact. He argued that his partner uses this knowledge and purposefully initiates sexual contact in order to achieve a desired outcome. Paul sustained that women's
intentional use of sexual advances put them in an advantageous position as they gain control of the situation through sex. Paul appears to be convinced that sex is a 'part of the argument' in that it functions as a 'tactic' used to avoid further confrontations as well as gain more control. Paul supported this argument by saying that males are less likely than females to reject a sexual advance and that it is this knowledge that can aid women in their efforts to reach personally beneficial closure.

Paul (p3)
P: but then I think, that's why the women take advantage of the situation; well, from my point of view, say we've had an argument and it get not forgotten but passed, swept under the carpet and then we have sex, its been numerous times that arguments were brought up thinking that they can take advantage of me because we had sex and I'll be like “yeah whatever you can buy a new pair of shoes I don't care” kind of thing because they know I am vulnerable after sex; I think it's a tactic, definitely a woman's tactic, it is. Because if it is like 4 o'clock in the morning you don't want to listen to anything really, so yeah I think it's a tactic. I think they probably use the sex as part of it (the argument) actually, its different, I think for a bloke sex is different to, umm, I don't know I think women will use sex more than men would as a way round things; possibly I don't know.
I: so do you think they use sex in a manipulative kind of way?
P: yeah correct, absolutely that's the word I was looking for, manipulative, yes, mm. Definitely women use sex as a manipulative way of controlling men, because they can say 'yes' or 'no' really, well the bloke can as well but its not the same for men its not as easy to say no; but they seem to have a lot of control because it's a physical thing and men find it really hard to say no or hide your desire to have sex so its quite easy for women from that respect to just say yes or no really.
CHAPTER 10
METHOD
STUDY 2B

Overview
This study involved collecting quantitative data from a sample of 139 participants. The study was questionnaire based and aimed at exploring possible links between conflict outcomes (positive and negative), post-conflict conciliatory acts and relationship satisfaction.

Participants
The sample comprised of 139 individuals (100 female, 39 male) from the East Midlands and South Yorkshire area. Of the 139 participants 80% responded to the questionnaire in regards to a current relationship and 20% in regards to a previous partnership. There were 30% married participants, 31% who were cohabiting with their partners, and 40% that were dating. The average relationship length was 7.6 years (minimum 1 month, maximum 40 years) and the average age 32 years old (minimum 17 maximum 59 years old). 87% were referring to opposite sex relationships and 13% to same sex ones. The majority of participants were professionals (76% professionals, 24% students). There were 80% White British participants, 12% White non-British, 5% Black or Black British and 4% Asian or Asian British.

Questionnaires were distributed to students and professionals using a variety of methods. Students and members of staff at Nottingham Trent University were sent an email kindly requesting their participation. The email had the questionnaire attached as a word file. In order to ensure participant anonymity participants were asked to post their responses in boxes specifically designed for the purposes of this study which were positioned in two different places on the
Clifton part of the University campus. Participants outside of Nottingham Trent University were contacted in person by the researcher and were given pre-paid envelopes to return their responses. A sustained effort was made to gain access to a large sample that would be representative of the population in the East Midlands and South Yorkshire areas. However, the time of the year during which data collection took place hindered the researcher’s efforts to achieve that. The combined total of questionnaires sent out via email and in hard copies was 500. The researcher received 141 questionnaires back; out of these 2 were completely blank (email collection) and one was partially filled in with all the questions blank apart from the demographics section. The total number of questionnaires that were used in the analysis was 139. The response rate was 28.2%.

**Measures**

The questionnaire consisted of 3 measures with a total of 44 items excluding demographic information (see Appendix A). In section A of the questionnaire The Relationship Assessment Scale was used to measure relationship satisfaction (Hendrick, Dicke, and Hendrick, 1998). In section B a 17 item scale was used to measure positive and negative conflict outcomes (created by the author). In section C a 20 item scale was used to measure conciliatory acts in post-conflict situations (created by the author). Details of all three measures including justification for use and questionnaire development are included below.

**The Relationship Assessment Scale**

This scale was chosen because it is suitable for use by people in different relationship statuses (married, cohabiting, dating). Furthermore it has been shown to have strong predictive validity with dating couples (Vaughn, and Baier, 1999).

**Constructive and Destructive Conflict Outcomes**

This scale was developed by the researcher as a means of measuring participants’ positive and negative conflict outcomes. This was created based on
Bach and Wyden's original work on the positive and negative effects of arguments. Bach and Wyden originally created categories of behaviours and feelings with corresponding positive and negative outcomes (see p.79 of the thesis for more information). They claimed that participants that argue 'fairly' and constructively will have more positive than negative outcomes after conflict (Bach and Wyden, 1968). The 17-item scale that was created directly corresponds to the initial categories.

The aim was to test whether participants adopt constructive or destructive patterns and link their responses to relationship satisfaction. The main expectation was that relationship satisfaction will be higher for participants that adopt a constructive conflict pattern.

**Post-Conflict Conciliatory acts**
This scale comprised of 20 items aimed at exploring the use and frequency of 5 post-conflict conciliation acts. The five acts that were examined were Affection, Humour, Sex, Apology and Distance. This scale was developed in order to investigate further the use of the above strategies. It was based on the results of a previous investigation that revealed the existence and function of various post-conflict strategies used by partners in order to achieve certain desired outcomes after an argument. Participants were asked to report the frequency of use for each of the strategies (Affection, Humour, Sex, Apology and Distance) according to four possible motivating factors. These were: a) Avoiding further conflict, b) re-establishing a sense of security and safety, c) gaining control of the situation, and d) achieving normality.

**Ethical considerations**
This study adhered to BPS Ethical guidelines. Participants were asked to sign a consent form before participating in the study. Every questionnaire included a
brief description of the study as well as information regarding their right to withdraw their answers. The purposes and content of the study were explained and no deception was used. Participants were also assured that all information given is strictly confidential and anonymous. Participants were thanked for their participation.
Overview
All the study variables were initially explored using descriptive statistics. Principal component factor analysis was carried out to check the validity of the measures used. Scale reliability was also checked the results can be seen below.

In terms of statistical analysis, two sets of Pearson's correlations were carried out. The first correlated the variables, Relationship Satisfaction, Conflict Outcomes Feelings, Conflict Outcomes Intentions, and the four post-conflict motivating factors (Avoiding further Conflict, Security/Safety, Control, Normality). The second set of correlations focused on the links between Relationship Satisfaction and the individual Conciliatory Acts (Affection, Humour, Sex, Apology and Distance). Stepwise Multiple Regressions were also carried out between the study variables.

Validity
Principal component factor analysis with orthogonal rotation was carried out on all scales in the questionnaire. The Relationship Assessment scale had one factor with an eigenvalue above 1. The Post-Conflict Conciliatory scale revealed four factors, one for each of its sub-sections (a, b, c, d). Factor analysis for the Conflict Outcomes scale indicated that there were 2 factors with an eigenvalue above 1 (component 1: 7.514, component 2: 3.483). Examination of the rotated component matrix revealed that the scale had to be split into two parts for all consequent analysis. Items 1, 2, 3, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17 from the Conflict Outcomes scale loaded on the first component, and items 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 14 on the second component. Careful consideration revealed that items which loaded on the first component related to 'Feelings' and items which loaded on the
second component related to ‘Beliefs’. As a result the Conflict outcomes variable was used to create two variables named Conflict Outcomes Feelings and Conflict Outcomes Beliefs respectively. Table 11 below summarises the two components and the items that loaded in each.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CONFLICT OUTCOMES ITEMS AND SCALE COMPONENTS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COMPONENT 1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CONFLICT OUTCOMES FEELINGS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) Less hurt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Less Vulnerable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Less Offended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11) Better about myself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12) More confident about the relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13) That there is less tension between us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15) Closer to my partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16) More attracted to my partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17) Affectionate towards my partner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reliability

All measures yielded high reliability scores. In specific, the Relationship Assessment Scale had an Alpha score of .904; the Conflict Outcomes Feelings scale had an alpha of .918 and the Conflict Outcomes Beliefs scale an alpha of .912. The Post-Conflict Conciliatory Acts scale yielded a reliability score of .794.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MEANS, SD’S &amp; ALPHA RELIABILITY SCORES</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MEANS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CONFLICT OUTCOMES FEELINGS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CONFLICT OUTCOMES INTENTIONS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>POST-CONFLICT CONCILIATORY ACTS</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The study variables, Relationship satisfaction, Conflict Outcomes Feelings, Conflict Outcomes Beliefs, Avoiding Conflict, Security/Safety, Control and Normality, were analysed using Pearson’s correlations and Stepwise Multiple Regression.

The results revealed highly significant positive correlations of various sizes (see Table 13). In specific there was a strong positive correlation between Relationship satisfaction and Conflict Outcomes Beliefs (r=.726; p<0.01) and Conflict Outcomes Feelings (r=.436; p<0.01); relationship satisfaction also correlated with Avoiding Conflict (r=.245; p<0.01), Security/Safety (r=.248; p<0.01), and Normality (r=.232; p<0.01). Conflict Outcomes Beliefs yielded a strong positive correlation with Conflict Intentions (r=.527; p<0.01) and medium strength correlations with Avoiding further Conflict (r=.319; p<0.01) and Security/Safety (r=.308; p<0.01).

### Table 13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Relationship Satisfaction</th>
<th>Conflict Outcomes Feelings</th>
<th>Conflict Outcomes Beliefs</th>
<th>Avoiding Further Conflict</th>
<th>Security/Safety</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Normality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Satisfaction</td>
<td><strong>.436</strong></td>
<td><strong>.726</strong></td>
<td><strong>.245</strong></td>
<td><strong>.248</strong></td>
<td>-.095</td>
<td>.232**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict Outcomes Feelings</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>.527</strong></td>
<td><strong>.319</strong></td>
<td><strong>.308</strong></td>
<td>-.102</td>
<td>.221**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict Outcomes Beliefs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>.351</strong></td>
<td><strong>.284</strong></td>
<td>-.097</td>
<td>.321**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding Further Conflict</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>.645</strong></td>
<td>.330**</td>
<td>.606**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security/Safety</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>.432</strong></td>
<td>.607**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.506**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** significant at the 0.01 level.

Conflict Outcomes Beliefs correlated with Avoiding further Conflict (r=.351; p<0.01), Security/Safety (r=.284; p<0.01) and Normality (r=.321; p<0.01). Avoiding further Conflict yielded strong correlations with Security/Safety (r=.645; p<0.01) and Normality (r=.606; p<0.01) and a medium strength correlation with
Control (r=.330; p<0.01). Strong correlations were found between Normality and Security/Safety (r=.607; p<0.01) and Normality and Control (r=.506; p<0.01). Security/Safety was found to correlate with Control (r=.432; p<0.01).

Pearson's correlations were also carried out between specific Post-conflict Conciliatory Acts (Affection, Humour, Sex, Apology and Distance) and Relationship Satisfaction (see Table 14).

Relationship Satisfaction yielded highly significant correlations with Affection as a way of Avoiding further conflict (r=.384; p<0.01), Affection as a way of reinstating a sense of Security/Safety (r=.495; p<0.01), and as a way of achieving Normality (r=.380; p<0.01). Humour was found to correlate with Relationship Satisfaction as a way of Avoiding further Conflict (r=.196; p<0.05) and as a way of achieving Normality (r=.249; p<0.01).

**TABLE 14**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION</th>
<th>RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION</th>
<th>RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION</th>
<th>RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION</th>
<th>RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFFECTION</td>
<td>HUMOUR</td>
<td>SEX</td>
<td>APOLOGY</td>
<td>DISTANCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.384**</td>
<td>.166*</td>
<td>.034</td>
<td>.284**</td>
<td>-.257**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVOIDING CONFLICT</td>
<td>AVOIDING CONFLICT</td>
<td>AVOIDING CONFLICT</td>
<td>AVOIDING CONFLICT</td>
<td>AVOIDING CONFLICT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.196*</td>
<td>.034</td>
<td>.284**</td>
<td>-.257**</td>
<td>-.280**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFFECTION</td>
<td>SECURITY/SAFETY</td>
<td>SEX</td>
<td>APOLOGY</td>
<td>DISTANCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.495**</td>
<td>.060</td>
<td>.154</td>
<td>.213*</td>
<td>-.280**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVOIDING CONFLICT</td>
<td>SECURITY/SAFETY</td>
<td>APOLOGY SAFETY</td>
<td>DISTANCE SAFETY</td>
<td>.213*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.203**</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>.280**</td>
<td>.221**</td>
<td>.302**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVOIDING CONFLICT</td>
<td>SECURITY/SAFETY</td>
<td>APOLOGY SAFETY</td>
<td>DISTANCE SAFETY</td>
<td>.302**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.380**</td>
<td>.249**</td>
<td>.114</td>
<td>.244**</td>
<td>-.302**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVOIDING CONFLICT</td>
<td>SECURITY/SAFETY</td>
<td>APOLOGY SAFETY</td>
<td>DISTANCE SAFETY</td>
<td>.302**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.249**</td>
<td>.114</td>
<td>.244**</td>
<td>-.302**</td>
<td>.302**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**significant at the 0.01 level. * significant at the 0.05 level.**

Relationship satisfaction and Sex yielded a small negative correlation which was significant at the 0.05 level (r= -.203; p<0.01). This was between Sex as a way of
gaining Control and Relationship satisfaction indicating that not using Sex as a means of gaining control after an argument would mean higher relationship satisfaction. Apology as a way of Avoiding further Conflict, reinstating Security/Safety, and achieving Normality yielded small positive correlations with Relationship Satisfaction ($r = .284; p<0.01$. $r = .213; p<0.05$. $r = .244; p<0.01$). The last variable to be examined was Distance. Distancing oneself from a partner after an argument does not seem to correlate positively with Relationship Satisfaction. Rather, Distance yielded small to medium size negative correlations with Relationship Satisfaction across all strategies (Avoiding Conflict, $r = -.257$; Security/Safety, $r = -.280$; Control, $r = -.221$; and Normality, $r = -.302$; all significant at the 0.01 level).

A stepwise multiple regression identified that only one variable had a statistically significant predictive relationship with the total scores for Relationship Satisfaction. The predictive value of Conflict Outcomes Beliefs was confirmed by an R-square value of .536 which was statistically significant at the 0.01 level ($p=.000$). Beta score was .732 which showed a positive relationship between the 2 variables. The R-square revealed that 53.6% of the variance can be explained by this variable (Conflict Outcomes Beliefs).
CHAPTER 12
DISCUSSION
STUDY 2 (A, B)

STUDY 2A: AIMS AND SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The aim of this study was to explore possible reconciliation strategies used by intimate partners after conflict. The results revealed that partners reach 'Perceived Closure' through four possible pathways (called 'organising themes' in the analysis); a) Avoiding further conflict, b) Gaining control of the situation, c) Providing/receiving assurances, d) Achieving normality (see network diagram). The exact processes involved in these pathways were found to be defined by nineteen basic themes which can only be summarised and explained within the boundaries of the organising theme they belong to.

The organising theme 'Avoiding further conflict' consisted of five basic themes which will be described individually. Partners reported using five different strategies in order to avoid re-entering an argument; these were: Affection, Sex, Apology, Distancing, and Humour. The use of sex and apology as a means of avoiding further conflict was found to be restricted by two conditions. Participants reported that the suitability of post-conflict sex depends on timing and situation. These two factors refer to one's readiness to engage in sexual activities after an argument. In a similar manner, an apology was found to be effective in avoiding further conflict only when both parties were mutually apologetic.

The organising theme 'Gaining control of the situation' consisted of three basic themes: Isolation, Distancing and Sex. The results revealed that intimate partners attempt to gain control of the situation by isolating or distancing themselves and by engaging in sexual activities. It is important to note that isolation and distancing were found to encompass different meanings. Distancing was
described as a strategy used when one wants to calm down and reflect upon the situation, whereas isolation as a way to control the post-conflict process by choosing when to reunite, how and in what way.

The organising theme 'Providing/Receiving assurances' comprised of three themes: Sex, Verbal Affection and Physical Affection. Participants reported engaging in sexual activities after conflict in order to reassure their partner that the intimate bond between them is still intact. Sex was reported to serve the purpose of reinstating feelings of safety, security and connectness. Affection, both in verbal and physical forms was also found to have certain functions after an argument. Participants saw affection as a need in post-conflict situations and emphasised the importance of being affectionate to a partner after an argument. Affection was seen as having two main functions; first participants reported using affection to reassure their partner and to strengthen their own, as well as their partner's, feelings of security and safety within the relationship; and second, it was found that affection can communicate emotions in a direct, powerful and unquestionable manner.

The last organising theme that emerged for the data was 'Achieving normality'. The results showed that partners try to achieve normality (i.e. 'go back' to how they were before the argument) through three possible routes; these were: sex, affection and humour. Participants reported engaging in sexual activities after conflict as a way of bringing back normality. They also reported using humour in order to alleviate negative feelings and stabilise the situation. Affection was found to play a more significant role than sex in the normalisation process; it was seen as a safer, more gradual and effective way of reinstating the bond between partners.

To summarise, the results have shown that intimate partners attempt to resolve conflict and to reach closure by avoiding further conflict, gaining control of the situation, providing emotional assurances, and achieving normality; Affection was
found to be used as a way to: 1) avoid further conflict, 2) provide assurances and increase feelings of security, 3) bring back normality, 4) achieve normality in a safe and gradual manner. Sex was seen as a way to: 1) avoid further conflict, 2) strengthen feelings of security and belongingness, 3) bring back normality, and 4) gain control of the situation. Distancing was found to be used as a way to: 1) avoid further conflict, and 2) gain control of the situation. Apology was seen as a way to 1) avoid further conflict and start the normalisation process when, 2) both partners are mutually apologetic. Humour was found to perform two functions, 1) as a way of avoiding further conflict and 2) as a way of stabilising the situation and bringing back normality (see Network Diagram; p.133).

**STUDY 2B: AIMS AND SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

This study was conducted to explore further the links found in Study 2a. As seen in the previous study affection, humour, sex, apology and distance can be used in a post-conflict situation to achieve certain 'goals'. Participants were found to use these four methods in order to a) avoid further conflict, b) Reinstate a sense of security or safety, c) gain control of the situation, and d) achieve normality. After careful examination the author felt that the role and function of these variables needed to be explored further. In specific, it was felt that it would be appropriate and very useful to examine these variables’ links to relationship satisfaction. In addition, the author wanted to explore links between constructive and destructive patterns in conflict and whether a constructive or positive pattern would have an effect on relationship satisfaction. The main expectation was that relationship satisfaction will be higher for participants that adopt a constructive conflict pattern. It was also predicted that higher use of the post-conflict conciliatory acts would yield a higher score in relationship satisfaction. These aims were explored quantitatively after designing and carrying out a study to address them. The results are summarised below. Following the summary each variable will be interpreted, explained, and linked to relevant theory and research. The two studies and all their variables will be discussed together in order to gain a holistic view and draw the relevant conclusions.
The relationships between four variables were examined; these were Relationship Satisfaction, Conflict Outcomes Feelings, Conflict Outcomes Beliefs, and Post-conflict Conciliatory acts (Affection, Humour, Sex, Apology, Distance) with its four motivating factors (Avoiding further Conflict, Security/Safety, Control, and Normality). The results revealed a number of highly significant correlations of medium to high strength.

The results indicated that an increase in Conflict Outcomes Feelings may predict an increase in Conflict Outcomes Beliefs showing that both components are needed to achieve an overall positive conflict outcome pattern. It was also shown that participants who scored highly on Conflict Outcomes Feelings (indicating a positive conflict pattern) were more likely to use post-conflict conciliatory acts as a means of Avoiding further Conflict, and reinstating a sense of Security/Safety. A similar finding was evident for Conflict Outcomes Beliefs. A high score in this variable, and thus a positive conflict pattern, meant that participants were more likely to use Conciliatory Acts to Avoid further Conflict, reinstate a sense of Security and achieve Normality.

In terms of Relationship Satisfaction a strong positive correlation was found with Conflict Outcomes Beliefs indicating that participants who have positive conflict outcomes in terms of their Beliefs after an argument appear to be more satisfied in their relationships. A strong relationship was discovered between the second factor of that scale, Conflict Outcomes Feelings, and Relationship Satisfaction; this indicated that an overall positive score in terms of post-conflict feelings may increase relationship satisfaction. Another finding was that Relationship Satisfaction may increase for participants who use affection, humour, sex, apology and distancing as a way of Avoiding Conflict, reinstating Security/Safety and Achieving Normality.

This analysis also produced evidence of significant relationships *between* the four Conciliatory acts. Participants who used conciliatory acts as a way of avoiding further conflict were also more likely to use the same acts in order to reassure
their partners (Security/Safety), return to how they were before the argument (Normality), and gain control of the situation (Control). In the same manner, Normality was linked to Security/Safety and Control indicating that attempts to reassure a partner or to control the situation after an argument may help in the normalisation process.

Initial exploration of these findings raised further questions in regards with the exact nature and role of Conciliatory Acts and their motivators. The analysis that produced the above results was focused on the possible post-conflict goals or motivators (Avoiding Conflict, Security/Safety, Control, Normality). For example it examined whether participants use conciliatory acts in order to achieve certain goals (i.e. avoid conflict) and also how this motivation to say ‘avoid conflict’ related to other key aspects such as relationship satisfaction. However, the author soon realised that additional analysis was needed in order to examine how specific conciliatory acts (affection, humour, sex, apology and distance) related to relationship satisfaction. As a result a separate set of correlations indicated the existence of relationships between individual Post-Conflict Conciliatory acts and Relationship satisfaction. These are summarised below.

Strong relationships between Affection and Relationship Satisfaction indicated that using this conciliatory act as a way of Avoiding Conflict, reinstating feelings of Security/Safety, and achieving normality, may increase levels of satisfaction. Humour was found to correlate with Relationship satisfaction when used to Avoid further Conflict and achieve Normality. Sex was found to reduce Relationship Satisfaction when used to gain Control of the situation because it yielded a negative correlation. Participants who used the conciliatory act of Apology as a way of Avoiding Conflict, reinstating Security/Safety and achieving Normality scored higher in Relationship Satisfaction. Lastly, distancing oneself from a partner after an argument did not yield any positive correlations with Relationship Satisfaction. It appears that Distance when used to Avoid Conflict, increase feelings of Security/Safety, Control the situation, and achieve Normality may
reduce Relationship Satisfaction as negative correlations were evident amongst all variables.

After briefly summarising the main findings of both the studies an attempt will be made to explain the themes that emerged from the data by looking at existing literature. This discussion will be organised as follows: The findings of both studies will be discussed together in an attempt to synthesise both qualitative and quantitative results in order to view their overall effects or functions in post-conflict situations and avoid unnecessary repetition. The paragraphs to follow will always start with findings from Study 2a as it was the first of the two to be conducted and as such the inspiration for Study 2b. The reader will be guided through the text and regular references to Study 2a and 2b will be made to avoid confusion. For study 2a each tactic used (i.e. affection, sex, distancing, humour and apology) will be examined individually and discussed in relation to theory. Relevant variables from study 2b will naturally follow the above. Variables that did not feature in the qualitative study will be examined separately.

**Affection**

Findings from both studies supported the notion that affection can be used in order to achieve certain 'goals'. In Study 2a participants discussed the role that affectionate behaviour plays in post-conflict situations. Overall, the data revealed that affection can serve five purposes.

First, affection was seen as a good way to either terminate existing conflict or prevent further conflict from occurring. This finding is very interesting as it shows that affection can be used beliefally in situations where partners are unable to reach agreement and are trapped in an 'endless argument'. Participants described conflict as a highly unpleasant experience which justifies their desire to resolve it as quickly and effectively as possible. Results from the quantitative study (Study 2b) also supported the notion that Affection can help partners achieve certain goals after conflict. Affection as a way of avoiding further conflict correlated highly with relationship satisfaction. This indicates that using affection
in this manner (avoid conflict) may help partners replace the negative feelings experienced during conflict with positive feelings. Therefore, it is not surprising to see that affectionate acts after an argument can increase levels of relationship satisfaction.

This is in line with previous findings which showed that intimate partners experience a wide range of negative emotions during conflict (Marshall, 1994). Therefore, the willingness to avoid further conflict appears to be motivated by a need to avoid psychological or physical pain. In the negative and tense period that follows an argument participants are motivated to reach closure in order to start repairing the damage inflicted by conflict. Closure cannot be reached when partners fail to agree on a solution and when they continuously re-enter the argument. However, by being affectionate towards their partner, participants can bring the argument to an end. This was shown in the interview with Alex; he said, “I mean arguing is not nice and it feels horrible and I hate it when we have argument after argument because we can’t agree and stop so umm, yeah in that case I'd probably be affectionate just to save us the trouble really, just to stop it happening again and again” (p.1)

Affection is seen as performing this really important function here (avoiding further conflict and reaching closure), because it can convey clear and very positive messages which can counteract the negative messages conveyed through conflict. Previous research can support this contention as affection has been shown to convey and reinforce positive feelings between partners (Baxter and Dindia, 1990; Buck and Dreyer, 1983). Another explanation for this finding may be found by revisiting the work of Jones and Yarbrough (1985) on the meanings of tactile behaviour and in specific on control touches. Control touches were found to communicate feelings and attitudes that are intended to influence another person’s behaviour, feelings or attitudes. By touching a partner after an argument one can convey messages such as, ‘I have had enough’, ‘lets stop arguing’, in an attempt to persuade him/her to terminate hostile discussions and start the peacemaking process (for example, see interview with Paul: “maybe just a little touch or something or a grab of the hand because I am definitely not fond
of arguments and by touching, or touching her hand of something I kind of stop it you know; p.2).

Affection was found to perform another function. Qualitative data from study 2a indicated that it can increase the sense of security between partners after an argument. Results from study 2b confirmed this finding and revealed that affection used to reinstate feelings of security may also increase levels of relationship satisfaction. As seen previously, affection can convey positive feelings between partners in non-conflict situations (Baxter and Dindia, 1990; Buck and Dreyer, 1983). The results of the present study revealed that the positive effects of affection are intensified in post-conflict situations as during an argument partners may lose part of their confidence in the relationship which can be reinstated by the expression of affectionate feelings. Fears and insecurities that accumulate during the argument were found to be alleviated through physical and verbal affection. The use of affection as a way of providing assurances about one's feelings and the status of the relationship can be explained by looking at support and inclusion touches and their respective meanings. Support touches, communicate affectionate feelings with the Belief of providing reassurance and support (Jones and Yarbrough, 1985). Participants reported using tactile affection in this manner in order to reassure themselves and their partners that the argument did not change their feelings and that the relationship is safe. (i.e. see interview with Steve, “I just want to comfort her to make her feel a bit more secure, so she feels secure again, you take it away [security] when you have an argument, and then you’ve got to replace it at some stage; p.1-2). Moreover, through affectionate expression partners appear to achieve another goal; according to Jones and Yarbrough (1985) such affectionate expressions can increase a couple's sense of togetherness and belongingness which in turn may affect relationship satisfaction. They termed this kind of tactile affection 'inclusion touches'; because by using them partners confirm their psychological closeness. In the period of relative uncertainty that follows an argument, assurances about the strength of the bond between partners are very important as they can bridge
the emotional and psychological gap that conflict has created. Indeed, findings by Dainton et al (1994) revealed that affection (physical and verbal) can reduce uncertainty in relationships and strengthen the sense of security and unity between partners.

Two factors appeared to motivate the provision of assurances in the form of affectionate expressions; a) feeling responsible towards a partner and b) fear of losing a partner. A sense of responsibility was shown to justify and motivate affectionate expressions as participants thought that they have to reinstate their partner's trust and security in the relationship (i.e. see Steve's extract above). This is in agreement with Bach and Wyden's work on the positive and negative effects of conflict. Among other things, positive effects include a reduction of fear that the argument will affect the relationship, an increase of trust in the partner's Beliefs and an increase of affection and attraction (Bach and Wyden, 1968). These 'Beliefs' were measured in study 2b and it was revealed that a partner's Belief to undo any harm done and make an effort to make 'up was linked to relationship satisfaction. Bach and Wyden's concept of 'fair-fighting' requires partners to genuinely care about each other enough to try and undo the harm done through conflict. Reducing fear of loss and insecurity may explain the increase in relationship satisfaction as it demonstrates a willingness to stay united and promotes a sense of togetherness. This can be seen by going to back to the qualitative study where participants reported that they felt they had to repair the psychological damage done through conflict by reassuring their partners that the relationship is still strong. They attributed their willingness to express their affectionate feelings after an argument to internal fears and insecurities relating to the status of the relationship. Relationship uncertainty can increase after conflict (Emmers and Canary, 1996) and as seen from the results of the qualitative study, affectionate expression may help reduce it. This was seen in an extract by Clare where she reported being affectionate towards her partner in order to ensure that she will stay in the relationship ("maybe its an insecurity thing, maybe you think that if you leave them too long they'll just wont..."
come back, you know what I mean, they'll find some better offer or something; maybe that's why I try to hug and kiss her or whatever because it's that sort of thing that, you know, creates that kind of "yes I am here" yeah you know, if you are going to make her feel good again physically and emotionally then she won't go anywhere"; p.3).

The third finding relating to the use of affection in post-conflict situations was that affection can be used to 'normalise' or stabilise the situation between partners. This was verified by both studies; the results of the qualitative study indicated that partners may use affectionate acts such as hugging, kissing and touching to bring back a sense of normality (i.e. go back to how they were before the argument occurred). It appears that participants perceive affection to be an important aspect of the peacemaking process as it helps them put the argument behind them and 'move on'. Quantitative findings confirmed that partners use affection as a post-conflict conciliatory act and produced evidence that use of affection in this manner may increase feelings of relationship satisfaction.

Affection was reported to be used Beliefally in order to encourage both parties to start behaving as they usually do. Affection seems to be an integral part of a couple's everyday interactions (Prager, 1995), and it is absent during conflict, so reinstating it after conflict serves the purpose of giving partners a sense of normality. This function may be explained by looking at the positive effects of affectionate expression. Through verbal and physical affection partners can communicate positive messages that have been shown to increase the quality of intimate interactions and the overall sense of satisfaction (Mackey and Deiner, 2000). These positive messages have been shown to offer benefits such as instant validation of the relationship, and an increased sense of well being (Ries and Shaver, 1988; Prager, 1995; Dainton, 1991). By being affectionate after an argument one can make his/her partner to feel valued and cared for, thus, taking an important step forward and getting closer to reaching closure. The reason why partners may choose to use affection in this manner can be found in the next finding.
Affection was seen as a gradual and safe way to achieve normality. Participants reported that affection conveys intense and very direct messages without overwhelming a partner. The emotional distance created through conflict cannot be bridged immediately or too brusquely as it may provoke a negative reaction (Christensen and Jacobson, 2000). Given that conflict creates intense negative feelings, a partner may not be ready to accept more zealous attempts to reinstate closeness (i.e. a sexual advance). The results showed that a gradual or softer approach is more appropriate after an argument as it allows a partner to readjust, reflect upon the situation and then decide whether he/she is willing to respond positively and attempt to reach closure. This was confirmed through the study 2b where it was clear that affection as a normalisation process can increase closeness and relationship satisfaction whereas sex failed to be linked with both normality and relationship satisfaction. Both studies seem to confirm that re-establishing physical contact is a step-by-step process during which partners carefully judge the situation before attempting to express their affection. Participants appeared to appreciate that their partner may be emotionally weakened and fragile after an argument so a delicate and gradual approach to reaching closure was preferred. Affection seems to enable partners to attempt normalising the situation slowly and cautiously at the same time as conveying clear, unambiguous messages of love and support.

Lastly, affection was seen as a necessity in post-conflict situations. Participants felt that some of affectionate expression is needed after an argument in order to reinstate feelings of security and safety in the relationship. This finding is very interesting as no other variable in this study (sex, apology, humour, distancing) was seen as a necessary component of the peacemaking process. Participants asserted that they have to either verbalise or physically show their affection in order to reassure themselves and their partners that the relationship is safe. The participant's contention that affection is a need is supported by previous research. As seen previously, (Rotter et al., 1972; Fineberg and Lowman, 1975;
Rogers, 1959), affectionate expression between partners was seen as a basic human need and as a predictor of psychological adjustment and growth within the relationship. Further support for this finding can be found in the work of Dainton (1991) and Dainton and Stafford, (1993) who asserted that affection can strengthen the sense of security and unity in a relationship and consequently help maintain it.

Sex
In Study 2a Sex was found to perform four functions in post-conflict situations; Participants reported engaging in sexual activities to, avoid further conflict, strengthen feelings of security and togetherness, achieve normality and gain control of the situation. In the quantitative study, sex yielded only one statistically significant correlation. Sex as a post-conflict conciliatory act was found to be used as a way of gaining control of the situation. In terms of relationship satisfaction sex was shown to reduce levels of satisfaction as it yielded a negative correlation. According to the qualitative study sex was seen as a viable way to achieve a number of post-conflict goals but the data from study 2b indicate that these goals may not necessarily benefit the couple at least in terms of relationship satisfaction. The interpretation that follows frequently points to the notion that although sex may help partners reach some form of ‘closure’ over the argument it may not necessarily be the most effective and beneficial method. Rather, as seen in the paragraphs that follow, the notion that sex can relieve tension or help partners make up in a passionate manner may only be a misperception reinforced by popular media representations. If this contention is true then it may help explain why sex used as a conciliatory act does not increase relationship satisfaction. On the other hand, the lack of statistical support for the functions of sex as a conciliatory act may be the result of the difference of method in each study. In the qualitative study participants were able to discuss in depth their views on the use of sex after conflict and even explain the conditions under which sex may be appropriate as a way of reaching closure. Participants in the quantitative study did not have the same opportunity as the study was
questionnaire based and participants could only choose from the options available to them. Therefore, the method of data collection may have affected the results in regards with this specific conciliatory act.

Participants in the qualitative study reported engaging in sex after an argument in order to avoid re-entering an existing argument. They argued that sex is a convenient getaway when both parties feel that they do not wish to continue discussions. Patterns in the data revealed that sex was seen as a way to release the tension that accumulated during the argument; as a preventive measure (avoiding saying something that may worsen the situation); and as a way to avoid the painful process of resolution (admitting faults, apologising etc). In all reported cases, there was the perception that sex may somehow delete or erase negative emotions and resolve the issues that emerged during the argument. There is no research evidence to support this perception; however, one explanation may be that popular media images that depict fiery arguments followed by passionate sexual scenes, may affect people’s perceptions. This is mere speculation though as such it and cannot be offered as a valid explanation for the participants’ belief that sex after an argument is passionate and that it can resolve an argument. The data also revealed that participants recognised the fact that sex may not always be appropriate after an argument. They acknowledged that sexual advances may not always be welcomed after an argument as a partner may not feel ready to accept them. Sex was found to be appropriate in situations where partners are unable to end the argument via another route and are therefore trapped in an endless argument; or in situations where both partners are willing to express their frustrations in a passionate way. Discussion about the suitability of post-conflict sex led to the finding that a sexual advance may be perceived as an attempt to gain control of the situation.

Participants reported that sex after an argument can be initiated Beliefally in order to achieve a certain objective. It enables the person who is initiating it to terminate the argument when they want to thus, giving him/her the power to control when and how issues are discussed. This way perceived closure is
reached but as participants asserted, sex may leave issues unresolved and thus create arguments in the future. This will be examined further at a later stage as it was a central issue within the ‘achieving normality’ theme.

Up until now we saw sex as an instrumental act (used to avoid conflict and gain control of the situation); however, the next finding did not describe sex in that capacity. Rather, participants talked about the benefits of post-conflict sex and in specific, they reported that it can strengthen their feelings of security within the relationship and boost their sense of togetherness. This is in line with previous findings on the role of sex in relationships. Blumstein and Schwartz (1983) found that sex is a crucial relational experience as it can reinforce feelings of closeness and belongingness between partners and epitomise their relationship. This process was described by participants as being dominated by passion and the expression of intense emotions which are channelled into the sexual experience. Therefore, negative emotions and insecurities that accumulated during conflict appear to be transformed into a positive experience through the medium of sexual intimacy. The result of this shift from one emotional extreme to the other appears to intensify the bond between partners and strengthen their sense of security within the relationship. Previous findings support the confirmatory role of sexual contact in relationships (Lawrence and Byers, 1995) and indicate that sexual intimacy enables partners to feel close to each other and confirm their feelings for each other thus, reinforcing their feelings of security and safety within the relationship.

As seen previously, sex is an important aspect of intimate couples’ lives and although disagreement exists on how frequently people engage in it, there is general agreement that sex is a regular occurrence in couples’ lives (Hockenbury and Hockenbury, 2005). Perceiving sex as a ‘normal’ aspect of a relationship may help explain the finding that sex after conflict is part of the normalisation process and a way to reach closure over an argument. The positive nature of the sexual experience can be argued to counterbalance the negativity induced by conflict. This is in agreement with Gottman’s concept of the ‘marital bank account’ where negative experiences instigated by conflict can be compensated by
positive ones through sexual contact (Gottman, 1976). Participants in the present study acknowledged the beneficial role of sex after an argument and asserted that it can help them revert to normality through the closeness and positive affect that the sexual experience can bring. Sex as a way of reverting back to normality was seen to have several beneficial properties. Participants talked about how sex can function as a channel through which frustrations and negative emotions can be alleviated thus, enabling partners to start the normalisation process and consequently to reach closure. The physical closeness that sexual contact brings can create the impression that the argument has not affected the bond between partners and reduce or erase the meaning of hurtful exchanges. Deep rooted in this contention was participant belief that the sheer closeness required in sexual intimacy can almost guarantee that a partner is genuinely regretful about his/her actions and that he/she truly desires to go back to ‘normal’. The intensity of the emotional closeness experienced after a sexually intimate act reinforces the belief that one is open, genuine and sincere in their motivation to leave the argument behind and move on. Sex can create an intimate atmosphere that allows the open and uninhibited expression of emotion. Research on conflict supports this notion; according to Bach and Wyden (1968) and Brehm et al (2001), a 'fair fight' can increase levels of attraction and help partners “grow in strength and intimacy” (Brehm et al., 2001; p.352). This was seen in one of the interviews where Joy asserted that sex after an argument “brings you closer...even more than before the argument” (Joy, 22 year old homosexual female; p.3). Nevertheless, the process of going back to normal through sexual intimacy is not straightforward or free from problems. The results revealed that although sex enables couples to 'delete' what was said and done during the argument, the sheer speed and intensity with which it happens can result in leaving some issues unresolved. Participants argued that sex can bring instant relief from the unpleasantness of the argument but sometimes acting on the spur of the moment and in the heat of passion only postpones and does not resolve problems. As seen earlier, a gradual or softer approach of reaching closure may be more effective as it allows partners to re-establish physical contact whilst
continuing discussions. The data did not show that sex after conflict is inappropriate; rather, there are indications that sex is an important part of the normalisation process. Sex can be an effective method of achieving normality after an argument but, as participants asserted, its effectiveness can increase if other factors such as affection and humour precede sexual intimacy.

Distancing
In Study 2a participants reported distancing themselves from their partners as a way of avoiding further conflict. Walking away from the argument does not necessarily mean that a couple can reach closure. However, distance between partners who fail to reach agreement or partners who are trapped in a highly emotional and volatile argument, may help efforts to avoid further arguing and thus, increase the chances of reaching closure. Support for this finding can be found in the work of Christensen and Jacobson (2000) who argued that a well-timed and mutually desired beak from conflict can help partners deal with their problems more effectively. Central to this idea is the fact that by abstaining from conflict partners are less likely to react in the heat of the moment and say or do things they may regret later. A prolonged argument may tire partners and make them oversensitive and emotional. A highly strung and reactive attitude in turn can do nothing but inhibit conflict resolution efforts; distancing and emotional detachment can help partners gain perspective on the situation and view it from a different angle. The results also revealed that distancing can help partners to calm down and reflect on what has been said during the argument. This function was seen under the 'gaining control of the situation' theme; participants described how walking away from conflict can help them reflect on the situation and avoid letting their emotions control the proceedings. By walking away a partner can analyse the situation in a calm and collected manner and thus, gain control of how and when the issue is resolved. Although, Christensen and Jacobson (2000) agree that distancing can be beneficial in that it can reduce the risk of angry comebacks and reactive exchanges, they warn that withdrawal from the argument must be mutually desired as otherwise it may be perceived negatively
and consequently cause further problems. This contention is in agreement with the present study's findings as participants reported Beliefally distancing themselves with the sole purpose of controlling the post-conflict process and not as a chance to reflect upon the situation and collect their thoughts in order to reach closure. Evidence from study 2b confirmed that participants use distancing as a conciliatory act. Results revealed that participants used distance to avoid further conflict, reinstate security/safety, gain control of the situation, and aid the normalisation process. However, this variable failed to yield positive correlations with relationship satisfaction indicating that walking away after an argument (regardless of the motivation behind it) may reduce overall relationship satisfaction. This finding is in line with past research that suggests that partners who mutually withdraw from conflict situations tend to be more dissatisfied with their relationships (Noller et al., 1994; Canary and Cupach, 2000).

Humour
Study 2a revealed that humour seems to perform two functions; participants reported using humour to avoid further conflict and to achieve normality. This was confirmed by study 2b; the results of the quantitative study revealed that both humour as a way to avoid conflict and humour as a normalisation tactic correlate with relationship satisfaction. These two findings were interesting as the careful and well-timed use of a humorous remark can help partners put the unpleasantness of the argument behind them and start the peacemaking process. Humour was shown to be used as a way to test the situation or a partner's mood. Participants admitted using humour after conflict as way of figuring out whether their partner is ready to stop arguing. At the same time, the person who is attempting to be humorous is communicating his/her willingness to start the peacemaking process. A joke that is received positively after an argument can therefore provide vital clues about the status of the situation; in specific, it can be a useful indicator of a partner's mood and his or hers willingness to reach closure over the argument. A comment by a participant
It illustrates this point, “once you made them laugh that’s it” (Clare, 19 year old, homosexual female). Therefore, the successful use of humour can prevent further arguing and stabilise the situation by relieving the tensions that accumulated during conflict, encouraging a positive mood, and sending out signals that one is ready to start the peace-making process. Humour was found to play a central role in attempts to achieve normality as it can ‘clear the air’ and prepare a partner for more direct forms of conciliation such as the expression of affectionate feelings and the re-establishment of physical contact. It must be noted however that the positive effects of humour after an argument depend on factors such as timing (i.e. a badly-timed joke after an argument may be disastrous) and the recipient’s readiness to accept a remark as humorous. Christensen and Jacobson (2000), stressed the importance of avoiding making humorous remarks too sarcastic, because instead of providing much needed relief they can be misinterpreted as criticism and thus hinder one’s making-up efforts. Nevertheless, it appears that humour, if used correctly, can help partners in their effort to reach closure over an argument by preventing further arguing and by enabling them to stabilise the situation through playfulness and teasing. An explanation for the use of humour in post-conflict situations may be found by looking at the relief theory of humour which sees humour as the result of a desire to release tension (Paton, Powell and Wagg, 1996). It can be argued that partners, after going through the negative and emotionally draining experience of conflict are in need of relieving themselves of their tension and starting to feel good again; both objectives can be achieved through humour and contribute towards higher satisfaction levels within the relationship.

Apology

Apology was seen as an effective way to avoid further conflict in the qualitative study, while results from study 2b indicated that apology can increase relationship satisfaction when used as a way avoiding further conflict, reinstating security and safety or as a normalisation tactic. Participants in the first study (2a) reported using this technique as a way of stopping an argument and starting
efforts to reach closure. Participants asserted that an apology is a simple yet very effective method to avoid further conflict as by taking responsibility for their behaviour they are sending clear signals to their partners that they are ready to put the argument behind them. This is in agreement with previous research which suggested that apologising is a key factor in conflict resolution as it enables partners to de-escalate an argument and reduce the level of negative emotion between them such as anger and resentment (Frantz and Bennigson, 2004). Significant reductions in levels of negative emotion may be the reason why apology was found to increase levels of relationship satisfaction. Evidence from past research also suggests that an apology can be really effective and beneficial as it promotes the perception that opinions are being heard and respected (Adams and Jones, 1999). Levels of relationship satisfaction therefore, may well increase if a partner perceives that his or her opinion is heard and respected and that the argument was fair in its conclusion. Nevertheless, the findings also revealed that an apology is not always effective and that its effectiveness depends on whether an apology is accepted and reciprocated. Participants outlined the importance of mutuality in apologising and argued that further conflict can only be avoided when both partners show genuine remorse and regret about their behaviour. The notion of mutuality appears to influence other aspects of the post-conflict process as a positive reaction to an apology was found to determine how an affectionate expression will be received. Participants asserted that an apology can help partners avoid further conflict and start the peacemaking process because it is a vital step towards closure. Accepting or offering an apology shows a genuine expression of regret and readiness to start making-up. Another issue surrounding apology effectiveness was in regards to apology sincerity. Participants reported being wary of apologies that come ‘too quickly’ or ‘too eagerly’ as these may not be truthful and sincere. Research has shown that an apology can be effective only when the receiver perceives it to be a true and sincere expression of regret (Scher and Darley, 1997).
However, conflict avoidance can not be guaranteed even when an apology is mutual and is perceived as a true and sincere reflection of a person's feelings because other factors appear to influence its effectiveness. These factors were not explicitly outlined by participants but there were subtle indications that suitable timing and recipient readiness can influence apology effectiveness. A few participants recognised that a badly-timed apology can sometimes worsen the situation and create further arguments. Previous findings support this contention as timing has been shown to play a significant role in how an apology is perceived. Researchers have previously argued that if the person at the receiving end of an apology is not ready or 'ripe' to accept an apology then negative feelings may increase resulting in the continuation and not termination of conflict (Darby and Schlenker, 1989; Frantz and Bennigson, 2004).

Conflicts Outcomes (Feelings and Beliefs)
This variable was designed to measure whether participants' conflict outcomes and whether these were positive or negative in nature. The factorial structure of this variable indicated that it was measuring two factors, conflict outcomes that referred to feelings and those that referred to Beliefs. All subsequent analyses were carried out with this in mind. The results were quite interesting. High scores in the Conflict Outcomes scale reflected a positive conflict style with a variety of positive feelings and beliefs experienced after an argument. On the other hand, low scores meant that participants experienced negative outcomes that included negative feelings and beliefs. Both components were correlated with relationship satisfaction and the four conciliatory act motivators (Avoiding Conflict, Security/Safety, Control, and Normality). The results showed that a positive score in Conflict outcomes (Feelings and Beliefs) meant a high score in relationship satisfaction as well as in the four conciliatory act motivators.

In specific, participants who had positive conflict outcomes in terms of their feelings after an argument (feeling less hurt, more confident, closer to their partners etc) reported higher levels of relationship satisfaction. An increase in relationship satisfaction was also evident in terms of participants' beliefs after an
argument (a belief that the issue can be resolved, a belief to make up, a belief to undo any harm done etc). This is in agreement with Bach and Wyden's initial theorising and their notion of a 'fair fight' that leaves participants with a set of positive conflict outcomes and a sense of closeness and increased intimacy after an argument (Bach and Wyden, 1968). Feelings of increased intimacy may help explain why conflict outcomes (feelings and beliefs) were strongly linked to relationship satisfaction. Further support for this notion may be found in Brehm et al's assertions that arguments can have numerous positive effects on a relationship if they are managed constructively (Brehm, et al., 2000). According to these views a 'fair fight' can allow a relationship to grow and develop, and increase the likelihood of higher levels of satisfaction.
A high score in conflict positive outcomes was found to increase the likelihood that a participant may use a conciliatory act after conflict. Participants were more likely to use affection, humour, sex, apology and distance in order to avoid further conflict, reinstate security, and normalise the situation, if they had good intentions and an overall positive emotional outlook after an argument. The only conciliation motivator that did not yield any statistical support was control. This was not surprising as using conciliatory tactics in order to gain control may be perceived as a negative or manipulating act and therefore not compatible with a constructive conflict style.

STUDY 2A: Limitations
This study has several limitations; an attempt will be made to address them here and to make suggestions for future investigations.
The present study and the conclusions drawn from it relied on qualitative data that were collected using semi-structured interviews. The analysis of the data involved coding, analysing and interpreting textual data with the purpose of discovering patterns and themes. A conscious attempt was made to allow the data to 'speak for themselves' by adopting a methodical, clear, impassive and systematic method of analysis and by focusing on detecting and depicting themes or patterns. The themes and patterns within the data emerged directly
from what participants said and subsequent coding and interpretations were performed with as much sensitivity and objectivity as possible. However, the author recognises the fact that personal characteristics, beliefs; or aspirations may have influenced the data or how she described and analysed the data. Preventive measures were taken to ensure the reliability and validity of the coding system and the themes that emerged from the data. Nevertheless, the code and themes were only scrutinised by the author as it was not possible to employ the services of a second rater for financial reasons. In future investigations the author will endeavour to make the results more credible by employing a second rater to verify the clarity of the analytic process and thus, ensure that the interpretations made are not idiosyncratic in nature.

Moreover, researcher effects may have had an influence on participant responses. The interviewer's mere presence or indeed her personal characteristics (demeanour, accent, and gender) may have affected how participants responded to questions. Efforts were made to minimise such effects by having the same interviewer conduct all the interviews in a friendly, professional, yet relaxed atmosphere that aimed to make participants feel comfortable. In addition, the interviews were carried out in a non-threatening manner as the aim was to encourage participants to engage in friendly discussion about their relationships. Non-alcoholic refreshments and some food were provided in an effort to create this friendly atmosphere.

Lastly, the results were based on a small sample of students and professionals in the East Midlands area. Financial and time constraints made it impossible to interview a large number of people that would be representative of the culturally diverse community in the East Midlands. Therefore, the results of the present study cannot be generalised nor can they be applied to populations that don't have the same or very similar characteristics to this study's sample. In future investigations the author aims to carefully consider the effects of these limitations and attempt to take measures to prevent them.
STUDY 2B: LIMITATIONS
This study had some limitations; the author will try to address them in the following paragraphs and suggest improvements for future research.

The results of this study and the interpretations made from them were based on correlational data, thus, inferences regarding causality cannot be made. Despite the fact that the relationships between the variables examined were highly significant and in most cases strong, the author cannot content that one directly 'causes' the other. Another source of problems was the time of year that data collection took place. Questionnaires were given to participants during a popular holiday period for students and professionals. This seriously affected the response rate and hindered the author's efforts to obtain data from a large sample. Therefore, the results of the present study, and the conclusions drawn from them, cannot be used to make interpretations or generalisations about the general population. In future investigations the author will endeavour to consider these limitations and attempt to take measures to prevent them.

Limitations Studies 2a and 2b
A source of concern with both studies may be related to the topic under investigation. Participants were asked to disclose information about their behaviour during and after conflict and as some of this information was on sensitive issues (sexual practices, negative emotions etc) the sincerity of responses cannot be guaranteed. Measures were taken to ensure that participants felt comfortable to discuss such matters in an interview (during study 2a) but as with all self-report measures, one cannot be absolutely certain that the information provided is accurate and truthful. As seen in chapter one, problems with self-report measures include the self-serving bias and the social desirability effect. Participant responses therefore may have been affected by these two forms of bias.

In order to address these issues future research should consider using a combination of methods in collecting data. Naturalistic observations of post-conflict behaviour combined with self-report methods such as interviewing and
detailed diaries may reduce the impact of bias and help gain more accurate results. In specific, systematic observations and analysis of couple interactions during and after an argument may help shed light on the processes involved. Concurrent measurement of the variables examined in this study will also be needed. The role of the conciliatory acts discussed in these two studies needs to be examined further. For example, the use of affectionate behaviours in order to achieve certain goals appears to play a specific and beneficial role in post-conflict relating. Therefore, accurate and systematic coding of such behaviour, along with measurement of positive and negative conflict styles may help explain why arguing is so good for some couples and so bad for others.

**Summary and Conclusion**

Despite the limitations mentioned, these two studies have produced interesting results that can make a contribution to the literature. The aim was to shed light to the post-conflict process and examine potential resolution techniques used by intimate partners. Study 2a obtained rich data that enabled the researcher to have an in depth look at the various processes that occur after conflict. The results were entirely data-driven which may add to the validity of the claims made.

This study has enabled the author to have an in-depth look at how partners behave after an argument. The value of the results lies in the fact that post-conflict processes were explored for the first time in a systematic and analytic manner. What is fascinating about this piece of research is that it explored the post-conflict process from a participant perspective. Participants revealed what they do after an argument in order to return to how they were before the argument occurred. We saw how partners attempt to deal with negative emotions, insecurities and hurt feelings and how they attempt to put it all behind them and get on with their relationship. Important aspects of the relationship such as affection, sex, humour and apologies appear to play a significant role in Post-conflict situations as they enable partners to free themselves of the negativity created by the argument. Simple tactics such as a touch on the shoulder, a
humorous comment or the words ‘I am sorry’ and ‘I love you’ help partners communicate a variety of really important messages that can relieve tension, provide security and convince a spouse that the argument has not affected the intimate bond. Reaching closure after an argument is not an easy task, nor is repairing the damage done through conflict. Partners have to deal with their own as well as their partner’s hurt feelings and find a way of ‘feeling good’ again; and it seems that they achieve this objective by adopting a step-by-step approach that involves trying to gain control of their feelings and the situation, avoiding further arguments, reinstating feelings of security and safety and attempting to reinstate a sense of normality. Study 2b made an important contribution to the information known about the processes just mentioned. It was specifically designed to explore study 2a’s findings in a quantitative manner and in relation to relationship satisfaction. The post-conflict process was explored in conjunction with relationship satisfaction in an attempt to investigate whether the outcomes of conflict and the use of conciliatory tactics has an impact on how satisfied or dissatisfied partners are. It was interesting to find that processes which take place after an argument are probably as important as the ones taking place during an argument. Past research showed that the way partners manage conflict can have an effect on reported levels of happiness and satisfaction. This piece of research shed light onto the post-conflict process and indicated that the way partners deal with conflict after it has finished may have an effect on levels of relationship satisfaction.

These two studies have addressed the issue of post-conflict processes and attempted to assess their meanings and functions. Overall, it seems that the post-conflict process and how it is managed, is an important part of a relationship and that there are indications that it may help partners reach higher levels of reported satisfaction.
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APPENDIX A
My name is Maria Kontogianni and this questionnaire is part of my PhD thesis on intimate relationships. It includes three measures, a self-report jealousy scale, a sexual desire scale and a conflict tactics scale. This study is anonymous and your answers will be strictly confidential. The study I am carrying out has two parts. This is the first part and there is going to be another one in 8 weeks time. For the purpose of identifying and matching your answers of this and the next wave please provide an identifying word (in the form of your mother's maiden name), and the date of your birthday (e.g. 30th), only known to you and me.

1) What is your mother's maiden name? 

2) Provide a number representing the date of your birthday (e.g. 30) 

This questionnaire will not take you more than 15 minutes to fill in. If for some reason you do not want to participate in this study you can quit either now or at a later stage. If you have any queries about this study please do not hesitate to contact me on 01509 230133 or e-mail: M.Kontogianni@lboro.ac.uk

Thank you in advance for participating.

Please answer these questions in terms of your main current romantic and/or sexual partner. If you do not have one at present please refer to an imaginary/hypothetical romantic and/or sexual partner.

a) What is/was the status of your relationship?
   1) Married     2) Cohabiting     3) Going out/Dating

b) Is/was s/he 1) Female 2) Male

c) Are you 1) Female 2) Male

d) What is/was the length of your relationship _______Years _______Months

e) What is his/her age? _______

f) What is your age? _______

Please tick this box only if you are referring to a current partner while completing this questionnaire

g) Occupation: 1) Student 2) Other (please specify) _______

h) Ethnicity: 1) White British 2) Other (please specify) _______

i) Date of completion: ___/___/___

Thank you for the information you provided. Please proceed to complete all the questions of the questionnaire in the sections that follow.
SECTION A

Listed below there are several statements that reflect your emotions and/or opinions about you and your partner’s behaviour. Please read carefully and circle one option for each question.

1= Very pleased
2= Fairly pleased
3= Somewhat pleased
4= Neutral
5= Somewhat bothered
6= Fairly bothered
7= Very bothered

1) Your partner spends increasingly more time in outside activities and hobbies in which you are not included.
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7
    Very pleased Very bothered

2) Your partner goes to a bar several evenings without you.
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7
    Very pleased Very bothered

3) Someone flirts with your partner.
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7
    Very pleased Very bothered

4) Your partner has sexual relations with someone else.
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7
    Very pleased Very bothered

5) Your partner flirts with someone else.
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7
    Very pleased Very bothered

6) Your partner expresses the desire that you both develop other romantic relationships.
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7
    Very pleased Very bothered

7) At a party, your partner hugs someone other than you.
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7
    Very pleased Very bothered

8) Your partner spends increasingly more time at university/work with a fellow student/co-worker you feel could be sexually attractive to your partner.
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7
    Very pleased Very bothered

9) Your partner suddenly shows an interest in going to a party when he or she finds out that someone will be there with whom he or she has been romantically involved with previously.
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7
    Very pleased Very bothered

10) At a party, your partner kisses someone you do not know.
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7
    Very pleased Very bothered

11) Your boss, with whom you have had a good working relationship in the past, now seems to be more interested in the work of a co-worker.
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7
    Very pleased Very bothered

12) Your partner recently received a promotion, and the new position requires a great deal of travel, business dinners, and parties, most of which you are not invited to attend.
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7
    Very pleased Very bothered
13) At a party, your partner dances with someone you do not know.
   
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Very pleased Very bothered

14) You and a co-worker worked very hard on an extremely important project. However, your boss gave your co-worker full credit for it.
   
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Very pleased Very bothered

15) At a party, your partner repeatedly kisses someone you do not know.
   
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Very pleased Very bothered

16) Your partner comment to you on how attractive another person is.
   
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Very pleased Very bothered

17) Your best friend suddenly shows interest in doing things with someone else.
   
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Very pleased Very bothered

18) The group to which you belong appears to be leaving you out of plans, activities, etc.
   
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Very pleased Very bothered

19) While at a social gathering of a group of friends, your partner spends little time talking to you, but engages with others in animated conversation.
   
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Very pleased Very bothered

20) Grandparents visit your family, and they seem to devote most of their attention to a brother or sister instead of you.
   
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Very pleased Very bothered

21) You have just discovered your partner is having an affair with someone else.
   
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Very pleased Very bothered

22) Your brother or sister seems to be receiving more affection and/or attention from your parents.
   
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Very pleased Very bothered

23) You notice your partner repeatedly looking at someone else.
   
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Very pleased Very bothered

SECTION B

This section asks about your level of sexual desire. By desire, we mean interest in or wish for sexual activity. For each item, please circle the number that best shows your thoughts and feelings.

1) During the last month, how often would you have liked to engage in sexual activity with a partner (for example, touching each other's genitals, giving or receiving oral stimulation, intercourse etc.)?
   
   0) Not at all 4) Twice a week
   1) Once a month 5) 3 to 4 times a week
   2) Once every two weeks 6) Once a day
   3) Once a week 7) More than once a day

2) During the last month, how often have you had sexual thoughts involving a partner?
   
   0) Not at all 4) Twice a week
   1) Once a month 5) 3 to 4 times a week
   2) Once every two weeks 6) Once a day
   3) Once a week 7) More than once a day

3) When you have sexual thoughts, how strong is your desire to engage in sexual behaviour with a partner?
4) When you first see an attractive person, how strong is your sexual desire?
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
No desire Strong desire

5) When you spend time with an attractive person (for example at work or university), how strong is your sexual desire?
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
No desire Strong desire

6) When you are in romantic situations (such as a candle-lit dinner, a walk on the beach, etc.), how strong is your sexual desire?
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
No desire Strong desire

7) How strong is your desire to engage in sexual activity with a partner?
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
No desire Strong desire

8) How important is it for you to fulfil your sexual desire through activity with a partner?
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Not at all Extremely important

9) Compared to other people of your age and sex, how would you rate your desire to behave sexually with a partner?
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Much less desire Much more desire

10) During the last month, how often would you have liked to behave sexually by yourself (for example, masturbating, touching your genitals, etc.)?
0) Not at all 4) Twice a week
1) Once a month 5) 3 to 4 times a week
2) Once every two weeks 6) Once a day
3) Once a week 7) More than once a day

11) How strong is your desire to engage in sexual behaviour by yourself?
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
No desire Strong desire

12) How important is it for you to fulfil your desires to behave sexually by yourself?
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Not at all Extremely important

13) Compared to other people of your age and sex, how would you rate your desire to behave sexually by yourself?
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
Much less desire Much more desire

14) How long could you go comfortably without having sexual activity of some kind?
0) Forever 4) A few weeks
1) A year or two 5) A week
2) Several months 6) A few days
3) A month 7) Less than one day

SECTION C
In this section you will be asked questions about the way you and your partner deal with conflict situations.

No matter how well a couple gets along, there are times when they disagree on major decisions, get annoyed about something the other person does, or just have spats or fights because they are in a bad mood or tired or for some other reasons. They also use different ways of trying to settle their differences. Listed below there are a set of things that you and your (spouse/partner) might have done when you had a dispute. Please read carefully and tick the answer that best reflects your opinion. Tick the ones that reflect how often you did it within the past year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How often?</th>
<th>1 2 5 10 +20 never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Discussed the issue calmly.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Got information to back up (your/his/her) side of things.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Brought in or tried to bring in someone to help settle things.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Argued heatedly but short of yelling.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Insulted, yelled, or swore at another one.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often?</td>
<td>1 2 5 10 +20 never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Sulked and/or refused to talk about it.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Stomped out of the room or house.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 x</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Cried.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Did or said something to spite the other one.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Threatened to hit or throw something at the other one.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Threw or smashed or hit or kicked something.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 x</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Threw something at the other one.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Pushed, grabbed, or shoved the other one.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 x</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Slapped the other one.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 x</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Kicked, bit, or hit with a fist.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 x</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. Hit or tried to hit with something.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 x</td>
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<tr>
<td>17. Beat up the other one.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 x</td>
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<tr>
<td>18. Threatened with a knife or weapon.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 x</td>
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<tr>
<td>19. Used a knife or weapon.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 x</td>
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<tr>
<td>20. Other:</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 x</td>
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</table>

SECTION D
This last section concerns the way you feel immediately after conflict situations.

1) I usually have a desire to engage in sexual activities shortly after arguing with my partner.

```
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Strongly agree
Strongly disagree
```
2) Being intimate with my partner after a verbal/physical fight reassures me that s/he loves me.

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3) Sex always seems to be better after a heated argument.

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4) I feel that there is too much tension between us after an argument if we do not engage in any kind of sexual activity.

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5) I wait for the situation to be resolved before I engage in any kind of sexual activity with my partner.

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6) Having sex after conflict situations usually helps to re-establish the relationship.

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7) I feel sex is demeaning immediately after conflict situations.

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8) Sex is more enjoyable after a heated argument.

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9) I feel that being intimate with my partner after a heated argument reduces the tension between us.

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10) Sometimes being intimate immediately after conflict can worsen the situation.

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11) My partner usually treats me better after being intimate following a heated argument.

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12) I feel that we bond more deeply if we engage in sexual activities after conflict.

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13) I would feel degraded if my partner wanted to have sex after an argument.

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14) I feel that I must be intimate with him/her as a means of reconciliation.

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15) Sometimes, after conflict situations, I only have sex with my partner to make sure that I won't loose him/her.

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</table>
My name is Maria Kontogianni and this questionnaire is part of my research on intimate relationships. It includes three measures on relationship processes. This questionnaire will take you approximately 10 minutes to fill in.

If you have any queries about this study please do not hesitate to contact me on 0115 8483552 or e-mail: maria.kontogianni@ntu.ac.uk. Alternatively you can write to: Maria Kontogianni, Lecturer in Psychology, Nottingham Trent University, Lionel Robbins Building, NG11 8NS.

If for some reason you do not want to participate in this study you can withdraw now or at a later stage. If you agree to participate please tick the box below and proceed with filling in your answers.

This study is anonymous and your answers will be strictly confidential. You have the right to withdraw your responses at any point.

Please answer all of the questions in terms of your main current romantic and/or sexual partner. If you do not have one at present please refer to previous/ideal romantic and/or sexual partner.

What kind of relationship are you referring to? 1) Current 2) Previous 3) Ideal

a) What is/was the status of your relationship? 1) Married 2) Cohabiting 3) Going out/Dating

b) What is/was the length of your relationship ______ Years ______ Months

c) Is/was s/he 1) Female 2) Male

d) Are you 1) Female 2) Male

e) What is his/her age? _______

f) What is your age? _______

g) Occupation: 1) Student 2) Other (please specify) _______

h) Ethnicity: _______

SECTION A

This section relates to how you feel about your relationship. Please circle your preferred response. (Please refer to the final part of a previous relationship if you do not have a current partner).
1) How well does s/he meet your needs? ........................................

2) In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship? ............... Unsatisfied Average Very satisfied

3) How good is your relationship compared to most? .......................... Poor Average Excellent

4) How often do you wish you hadn’t got into this relationship .......... Never Average Very often

5) To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations Hardly at all Average Completely

6) How much do you care for her/him? ........................................ Very much Average Very few

7) How many problems are there in your relationship? ...................... Very many Average Very few

SECTION B

This section relates to how you feel after an argument. Please circle your preferred response.

D= Disagree  
DK=Don’t Know  
A= Agree  
SA=Strongly Agree  
SD=Strongly Disagree

After an argument I feel:  

1) Less hurt  

2) Less Vulnerable  

3) Less Offended  

4) That we can resolve the issue  

5) That we are going to argue again  

6) That my partner had/has an intention to hurt me  

7) I can trust my partner  

8) That my partner and I are vengeful  

9) I want to undo any harm done  

10) I want to make an effort to make up  

11) Better about myself  

12) More confident about the relationship  

13) That there is less tension between us  

14) As aggressive as I was before/during the argument  

15) Closer to my partner  

16) More attracted to my partner  

17) Affectionate towards my partner 1 2 3 4 5

**SECTION C**

This section relates to your behaviour after you had an argument with your partner. Please tick the option that applies to you the most in each case.

After a conflict situation or a heated argument I usually use the following to **avoid further conflict:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1)</td>
<td>Affection (Kissing, hugging, telling them I love them)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2)</td>
<td>Humour (Making a joke, trying to make them laugh)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3)</td>
<td>Sex (Engaging in sexual activities)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4)</td>
<td>Apology (Apologising, regretting actions)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5)</td>
<td>Distance (Walking away, distancing myself)</td>
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After a conflict situation or a heated argument I usually use the following to **reassure my partner and re-establish a sense of security and safety within the relationship:**

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<th></th>
<th>Always</th>
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</table>

After a conflict situation or a heated argument I usually use the following to **gain control of the situation:**

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<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>Rarely</th>
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</table>
5) Distance
(Walking away, distancing myself)  

After a conflict situation or a heated argument I usually use the following to achieve normality (go back to how we were before the argument):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Often</th>
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Thank you very much for taking part in this study
Extracts according to theme

SEX

APPROPRIATENESS / TIMING / SUITABILITY

Ellie (p2)
E: umm, if I was in a relationship where it was just argument after argument after argument it probably would be it probably would be good at the time but then it is just like “oh it just ends up leading nowhere”, it just like get here, have an argument, make up with me, have sex with me, then have an argument, make up with me again, have sex with me and you end up not resolving anything; I generally found that it leaves issues unresolved in a way; so it feels good at the time but it doesn’t clear anything in the long-term or anything really; and it kind of like makes you think that’s the reason why you are together if it happens all the time so yeah; and if that happened all the time I’d probably be more likely to just do that than just say “oh I love you and everything”

Clare (p2)
C: (...) usually if I have an argument and it’s a massive one, you know what I mean, then usually it doesn’t because we just end up talking; we only fell out a couple of times and it was over massive things each time, umm, it was all on big stuff like other people and things so it wasn’t the sort of argument that you would do sexual stuff afterwards; it was the sort of thing that have to sit down and talk about it afterwards even after you’ve had the argument anyway so there was no place for it really.

Samantha (p4)
S: because I talked about different kinds of arguments with different people and I can separate it out into different types of arguments and what they lead to. Right my example of having a heated argument with someone who is equally as angry as I am and physically fired-up, umm, that can lead to sexual desire and sex (looking at the cards). But also it has the risk of leading to isolation because you get so pissed off in having this argument that you just want to get out of their faces. It can have like two consequences, a negative or a positive so either way that the risk of having a big fight with someone. Or when you’ve got this kind of more productive discussion with someone who is more chilled out and calm you down then you talk a lot more about it. We have verbal affection and hugging and affection, and I think you have more intimacy because you are being a little more constructive. (looking, referring to cards) I think, umm, yeah more kissing is involved in like a topic or argument or person that is a bit more laid back. I don’t really have situations where I have apologies or using humour in argument’ its either the one or the other, you’ve got affection and feeling romantic and sweet and cuddly or you’ve got this like full on, having sex, and then, you know, but sometimes that can lead to being pissed off as well because personally I really like to have sex if I am feeling relaxed in someone’s company and secure and if you have this huge heated argument, sometimes it makes you feel insecure so to have the sex then you feel “oh hang on, have we actually resolved the argument at the
end of it" and you feel this kind of resentment at the end of it perhaps and then maybe this thing will happen, you know, the isolation and wanting them to piss off. Because they just want to have sex with you, yeah it makes you feel that that's all they want from you sex, not being with you and sorting it out.

This one is more constructive, I mean, you have the affection and then you gradually getting the trust and the security back again; maybe that can lead to sex afterwards but you actually got this more progressive getting back together thing that is a bit more, umm, maybe laboured and a bit more gradual and you can both chill out.

Paul (p3)
I: and you said sex clears the air? Brings kind of like normality or anything like that?
P: not necessarily, I wouldn't say it brings normality because sort of, say you have an argument and then you have sex the argument will still be there afterwards, pretty sure but it does relieve the tension; it can bring you back down, calm you down

Steve (p2)
S: yeah, I think its better in a way, because if you just dive into it then you leave issues lying around and yeah, its not really fully cleaned up; so if you have sex you release your tension and everything is fine again but then that's kind of short-term; because there might be little bits in there, in your brain and, you know, that you are still pissed off about so I think, like, the gradual, a bit of kissing a bit of hugging and talking as well, that just sort of tentative and shows that you care without going for the full on "lets have sex" kind of thing.

Nick (p3)
N: it is like to have sex you have to be in the right mood so I am not sure whether that can happen after an argument. Umm, making love is different. If the affection stuff progress into something more then it is different. Because I would like to readdress the situation with some affection
I: readdress the situation with affection you said?
N: yeah...its kind of like testing the situation. Some affection and then that would tell me where I draw the line

AVOID FURTHER CONFLICT

Ellie (p2)
if we were arguing all the time I would rather do the sex bit because I don't know I suppose you can just avoid talking about it more whereas if you say I love you and I am sorry and all that then you have to say why; and then if you are really, really sorry yourself then you just end up getting back to an argument because there have been loads of times when I've said sorry and not meant it just for the shake of avoiding another argument, so if you do end up talking about it you just end up arguing more so
I: so you'd just rather have sex?
E: yeah, and just wait for the next one (argument) (laughing); because some blokes never see your point of view so its just easier, its probably just easier if it is going to end in an argument so its probably just easier;

Gemma (p2-3)
G: do you know what I mean like, umm, we have a huge argument because I don't know, we had some kind of communication breakdown or something and then well, we both apologise and stuff and by that point we are so tired arguing we just want to calm down and yeah, make up and have sex, because you know what I mean, we've had enough and just want to avoid making it worse really.

Marie (p2)
I: and if they backed down or whatever and it got to that point that things are kind of ok would you have sex with them or would you do anything like that?
M: probably, yeah (laughing); I wouldn't do that with someone that didn't mean much to me, only in a relationship or something; just trying to make a point non-verbally, as non-confrontational as possible. Just store it all up and then let it dissipate, what a good word!

SECURITY.
Ellie (p3)
E: yeah, yeah; it depends as well if it is over someone else and you have sex with him (boyfriend) as well I suppose in a way you are thinking “he is still mine anyway because he is still sleeping with me” so maybe I don’t know

Gemma (p4)
yeah, and then I think we have sex for the same sort of reasons; because I am quite an insecure person and it just feels good that’s all.

Samantha (p2)
Umm, when it escalates vocally, might get loud or whatever, I think we are arguing and its heated you can get really physically into it and we have a shout and I think that kind of ties in with the whole feeling into the other person; you can really see a different side of the person if they are willing to get emotional in front of you and I think that’s a good bond with the other person. I used to, it was when I was younger and I had my first relationships that I, would occasionally spark up, spark up some sort of emotional reaction in someone maybe an argument, just to see how far you can take someone and see how emotional they will become because I like emotional people.

Samantha (p2-3)
When you have this big fight with someone who is as emotional and passionate as you are you can really be in tune with that person and get really worked up and end up having fiery, hot sex and that brings it all together really; the sex I mean, umm it kind off tells you that they still care. The whole process really is about confirming your boyfriend’s feelings really; To see them react in a really emotional way, you can think to yourself “they really feel strongly about me or the situation” and it can be a reassurance and you can see the fire in them, it can make you feel a bit horny as well, umm, yeah, kind of makes you want them again, be with them, feel safe and connect with them.

Samantha (p3)
I can imagine fighting a lot more with someone who is as passionate and emotional as I was, that would probably be a waste of energy but I think it does also lead to more sex in that respect. I: with a passionate person? S: yeah, because you have these fights and you’re in tune with someone emotionally and physically and you get really worked up and into something and to see someone that emotional and reacting so strongly against you or with you can be a real turn-on.

NORMALITY

Alex (p2)
but I mean, if the argument is not that serious then definitely have sex afterwards rather than walk away I: umm, and does that work the same way as the affection bit, like does it bring normality? A: yeah, yeah, I think that it just shows that you are over the argument and that you are back to normal; I think sex is always more passionate after an argument, umm, there probably more feeling to it that all, I don’t know that’s just my opinion I: why do you think that is? A: I don’t know maybe its because you’ve got more adrenalin going and everything so you are more pumped up; I don’t know maybe just the tension thing, like getting rid of tension, yeah, definitively getting rid of your tension and, umm, I mean usually when you have sex after an argument it is more intimate, romantic and that kind of thing I: why do you think that would be a bit more romantic or intimate after like an argument in terms of like sexual stuff? A: don’t know, umm, feeling guilty? Yeah I think that is true yeah; I think you have to really understand whether you started the argument or whether they started it and whether you actually believe that you are right or whether you are right and, umm, I suppose if I started the argument and I was wrong to start it, made an accusation or something, umm, then I’d be more intimate and try and make her understand that I do actually care about her and that, you know, I was wrong to have done that, and I’d apologise and be more intimate and make her understand that I am sorry for what I said and about the argument; and yeah (laughing) if all fails, with the intimacy and stuff, I don’t know I would send her like 12 red roses next day and try to do it that way (laughing).

Gemma (p2-3)
G: do you know what I mean like, umm, we have a huge argument because I don’t know, we had some kind of communication breakdown or something and then well, we both apologise and stuff and by that point we are so tired arguing we just want to calm down and yeah, make up and and have sex, because you know what I mean, we’ve had enough and just want to avoid making it worse really, umm, afterwards you are just lying there and you say ‘I am really sorry you know’ and maybe you mean it more then because you’re just vulnerable and open after sex and you connect with them emotionally and physically during sex so its like you know that they are saying ‘I am sorry’ and that really, umm means a lot you know; it means they thought about it and really mean it and stuff. I: why do you think you have sex after an argument? Why so you think you do it?
G: umm, don’t know; umm its like, its passion isn’t it? I mean passion, having sex and making love is something really, really really, personal and you’re there with somebody and you are as close as you can be, umm, and probably during the argument you get distant and stuff and say things that hurt sort of thing but, umm, yeah, making love afterwards is kind of making up and being close to each other again and maybe going back to normal. Umm, I don’t know, I think that if you have an argument and you don’t have sex you might think it’s unresolved, that the argument is unresolved; because say we have the argument and then we don’t have sex I’ll be like ‘oh so what’s on your mind’ kind of thing
I: because you usually do kind of thing?
G: yeah
I: does it mean anything emotionally to you kind of thing?
G: what sex?
I: the whole thing, I mean, in the context of after an argument and so on; how do you feel right afterwards
G: if I have an argument I get so bored of arguing and stuff that I just want to get it all sorted, sorted out have sex and then immediately after sex I probably think about it more; well because I think maybe we just patched things over. Because you do, you do think more when you are lying there naked and you probably talk a lot more after sex don’t you?

Gemma (p3)
G: I say it all depends really; I wouldn’t even say it depends on how long you’ve been with your partner or anything; maybe if the argument it’s a recurring argument then it’s a different story; but it depends on who you are with at the time really, if are more self-conscious and stuff. I think sex on its own can leave things open, and umm, maybe you don’t address the issues properly but you just have sex to release your tension, I don’t know, umm it depends, umm I think what is best is to talk after sex really, as I said, yeah talk again after sex, with a clear head and no emotional tension

SEX AS TENSION RELEASE

Sue
S: In a way because if he wasn’t bothered about some of the things we argue over then I don’t want a blaze person that is really not fussed about things but David is bothered about things and, so yeah we often say that we love each other and then definitely affection and that would often lead to quite a good...sexual bit yeah (laughing) so there is some truth in the fact that sex after an argument is quite heated isn’t it?
I: umm,
S: and a lot more intimate in some ways, I don’t know why what causes it to be more intimate but probably because you release so much tension between each other that its kind of a, its just the end of it its just fired up. I would say that how it goes in my kind of situation.

Gemma (p2)
G: there probably be like quite a lot of just hugging, I wouldn’t say it is like a wham-bam, maybe sex after an argument as well, it wouldn’t be like mad, rampant or
anything like that, it would probably be quite sensitive, like making love kind of thing. Because I think there is a big difference between making love and fucking or shagging; after an argument it's more tender and stuff because you feel like you've reached an understanding; umm, you have an argument, get it all out, say things sometimes in the heat of things, you think 'fuck, I shouldn't have said that' and you its all out in the open and you fucking let everything out and then you like hug for a bit and then you start kissing and it means you are on a, more of a level because you've been completely honest with each other and got it all out.

Gemma

G: I say it all depends really; I wouldn't even say it depends on how long you've been with your partner or anything; maybe if the argument it's a recurring argument then it's a different story; but it depends on who you are with at the time really, if are more self-conscious and stuff. I think sex on its own can leave things open, and umm, maybe you don't address the issues properly but you just have sex to release your tension, I don't know, umm it depends, umm I think what is best is to talk after sex really, as I said, yeah talk again after sex, with a clear head and no emotional tension.

Paul (p3)

P: I think sex could be a good thing, yeah, it could clear the air; like if you have an argument I think probably the best sex I've had was after an argument, passions are a bit high and we are both fired-up and all.

I: do you see that as different from affection? I mean, is it like you kind of start hugging and kissing and then you have sex kind of thing, so is it making love or just having sex

P: I don't know, umm that's a difficult question, umm, I would say sex is different though isn't it? I can be quite a touchy person, but when it comes to arguments and stuff I wouldn't involve (....) at all; sex is different though isn't it? I am sure a lot of people would say that sex is better after an argument, I mean passions are high and stuff.

I: and you said sex clears the air? Brings kind of like normality or anything like that?

P: not necessarily, I wouldn't say it brings normality because sort of, say you have an argument and then you have sex the argument will still be there afterwards, pretty sure but it does relieve the tension; it can bring you back down, calm you down.

I: and then you ca start not arguing but maybe talking on a different level maybe?

P: but then I think , that's why the women take advantage of the situation; well, form my point of view, say we've had an argument and it get not forgotten but passed, swept under the carpet and then we have sex, its been numerous times that arguments were brought up thinking that they can take advantage of me because we had sex and I'll be like “yeah whatever you can buy a new pair of shoes I don't care” kind of thing because they know I am vulnerable after sex; I think it's a tactic, definitely a woman's tactic, it is. Because if it is like 4 o'clock in the morning you don't want to listen to anything really, so yeah I think it's a tactic. I think they probably use the sex as part of it (the argument) actually, its different, I think for a bloke sex is different to, umm, I don't know I think women will use sex more than men would as a way round things; possibly I don't know.

I: so do you think they use sex in a manipulative kind of way?

P: yeah correct, absolutely that's the word I was looking for, manipulative, yes, mm. Definitely women use sex as a manipulative way of controlling men, because they can say ‘yes’ or ‘no’ really, well the bloke can as well but its not the same for men its not
as easy to say no; but they seem to have a lot of control because it's a physical thing and men find it really hard to say no or hide your desire to have sex so its quite easy for women from that respect to just say yes or no really.

SEX AS A MANIPULATIVE ACT

Paul (p3)
P: but then I think , that's why the women take advantage of the situation; well, form my point of view, say we've had an argument and it get not forgotten but passed, swept under the carpet and then we have sex, its been numerous times that arguments were brought up thinking that they can take advantage of me because we had sex and I'll be like “yeah whatever you can buy a new pair of shoes I don’t care” kind of thing because they know I am vulnerable after sex; I think it’s a tactic, definitely a woman’s tactic, it is. Because if it is like 4 o’clock in the morning you don’t want to listen to anything really, so yeah I think it’s a tactic. I think they probably use the sex as part of it (the argument) actually, its different, I think for a bloke sex is different to, umm, I don’t know I think women will use sex more than men would as a way round things; possibly I don’t know.

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Clare (p2)
I: if you go like straight in for the kill and go for sexual stuff, pure sex then
C: they might, yeah they might just think “oh you just made up with me, just to have sex” so it might be a bit of a manipulative kind of thing; you know what I mean, like people are sometimes quite emotional after an argument and they can be a bit touchy-feely so if you go straight in and try to have sex with them they might take it the wrong way and then you can lose everything, I mean all the energy you put in to make it right again is gone for good.

POSSESSIVENESS

Ellie (p3)
E: yeah, yeah; it depends as well if it is over someone else and you have sex with him (boyfriend) as well I suppose in a way you are thinking “he is still mine anyway because he is still sleeping with me” so maybe I don’t know

HUMOUR
CONFLICT AVOIDANCE

Gemma (p1)
G: yeah I reckon; I think that that is women’s weapon it’s a power and control thing; but then I can only say that in terms of my last relationship, because Paul would just make a joke of it because even if he knew he was in the wrong, he would make a joke out of it and he knew that if I was stroppy enough he wouldn’t be able to get around me anyway, so after I had my strop and my space to get over it, he would make a joke out of it and I would laugh at the joke when I thought he got the message;

Clare (p1)
I'll just start laughing because I think its so rude or whatever; because I can’t argue, usually I’d just either shut up or just agree (laughing)
I: why?
C: I don’t know, umm, I don’t like arguments, I don’t see the point; because I think everyone is entitled to have an opinion on most of things; but yeah, probably they would storm off and I’d either give it a bit of time or try to make a joke about it or I would just go “oh...I am sorry” (making a face), you know, kiss ass (laughing), grovel. With Nat it was always what would happen was, we would have argument and I would try to make a joke about it and she’d get even madder and then I would end up having to grovel; maybe I have to lose that ‘making a joke out of it’ approach because it ends with me grovelling.
I: making you are making the joke at the wrong moment kind of thing (laughing)
C: yeah (laughing). Usually it goes down to the level of, if I think it’s going to start getting into a mega, mega argument then I’ll start mimicking her
I: mimicking her?
C: yeah like “bla bla bla, mu, mu” (making faces pretending to be her partner talking). Yeah I don’t see the point of having massive arguments, I don’t know whether they are necessary.
I: yeah but if you mimic somebody while they are angry they might get even angrier aren’t they?
C: yeah over the last few years, umm, yeah they usually get angrier (laughing) ok maybe I should rethink my approach! Maybe yeah!!

Paul (p1)
I: so you can keep your cool while, well, during the argument?
P: yeah definitely; umm, I probably might crack a joke to like break the ice; oh well, maybe not break the ice but just to lighten things a little bit; but then if the argument wasn’t mine, I mean if she started the argument, umm, I would get fairly defensive and umm, I don’t think I would apologise

Gemma (p2)
G: if it like a big argument, like sometimes, Paul if he’d made a joke I would be more pissed off because I want to prove my point and I am only angry for a reason probably a good reason so I would stop him doing that because I don’t want him to make a joke of it, I want to keep it, I don’t want him to think that he can get out of it easily so I would walk out and slam the door and expect him to run after me and I would expect him to make the effort to fix it again
NORMALITY

Clare (p4)
I: you use humour before the affection bit, why do you think you do that?
C: well once you’ve made them laugh that’s it, you know what I mean, you are back
to normal again if they can laugh about the argument or something else then that’s
sort of going back to normal; it means that they are feeling that they are not bothered,
well not not-bothered but they kind of got over the argument or what was said; and
then you can give them a little kiss

SUITABILITY / APPROPRIATENESS / TIMING

Alex (p1)
I suppose, depending on the seriousness of the argument, if it wasn’t a serious
argument, hugging is probably the thing, you might as well just hug it off and kiss it
off; but if it was a more serious argument, umm, I have actually walked away and I
don’t know, I think you use humour, make a joke, I suppose you do it in a right time
really, I have done that quite a bit
I: so would you leave them a bit of time in between?
A: yeah, yeah, I wouldn’t make a joke, you know while they were fuming (laughing);
although you could do that if you wanted to piss them off even more;

APOLOGY

AVOIDING FURTHER CONFLICT

Clare (p1)
C: I don’t know, umm, I don’t like arguments, I don’t see the point; because I think
everyone is entitled to have an opinion on most of things; but yeah, probably they
would storm off and I’d either give it a bit of time or try to make a joke about it or I
would just go “oh...I am sorry” (making a face), you know, kiss ass (laughing),
grovel. Because, you know, I would just want to avoid arguing again and again about
the same thing, umm, it is not worth it is it? Sometimes I think I wasn’t even in the
wrong and thought what the hell say you are sorry and end this now because I hate
arguments, I get tired trying to make a point you know what I mean.

Gemma (p2)
you’ve got to be a bit careful not to take it too far because this one time I took it too
far and I ended up having to apologising, you know what I mean? I don’t want them
to think that I am a push-over and that they can get away with it kind of thing; maybe
that’s my way of controlling them, I don’t know.

RECIPROCAL / MUTUAL
Paul (p2-3)
I: you said that’s too much or whatever because I said hugging and you said that’s too big or too much
P: mm, if we both come to a sort of say a conclusion and we sort of both really apologised then fair enough we would hug and stuff; but if it was one of those inconclusive things where nobody wants to back down but still get over it then I don’t know probably not affection no.

Ellie (p1)
E: yeah if I felt it was more their fault and if I said things I didn’t mean I would probably go back and say sorry and say “oh I love you and that” and I probably hug them, umm; it depends on how they reacted as well, if they were like “oh yeah I am sorry too” and they weren’t mardy or anything then yes I would try to hug them and stuff;

Suzanna (p4)
it’s all about power and balance and it was kind of if one person’s doing all the apologising like I was and all the work to make things right and the other person is just saying ok then, whatever, yes this is what’s wrong. Its not like that romantic notion of you have an argument, you both apologise, you make up and have great sex and it’s wonderful, Because it has to be an equal effort on both sides to make that apology mutual, and if it’s not then for one person it’s still gonna feel like you’re not getting anything back because you’re the one that’s doing all the apologising and making the effort.

AFFECTION

NORMALITY

Sue (p1-2)
But if we were to kind of like apologise, I am not very good at saying am wrong and he is, he would probably be the one that would apologise first, more times than me because I am just a stubborn cow. Umm, that would be probably how it would go. And we are quite huggy, well I am quite a huggy person I like to, umm, it like comforts me, not comforts me but I like to feel his strength and his kind of like “ok, its ok” and this that and the other,
I: something like am here kind of thing?
S: yeah, I am still here and its not changed us as a couple, its not leading to an end, we just argued over something that is really not important and now we can go back to normal, umm, that kind of scenario would go back to us being quite normal with each other. But it depends, its sometimes quick and its sometimes takes a good couple of hours to kind of admit defeat.

Clare (p2)
C: I’d use them all; (affection, kissing etc) there are two rules sort of in that funny period after an argument, and then, so you sort of use them to sort of get back to how you were, I mean like you would still do them normally but you are using them this time sort of making up going back to normal kind of thing.
Steve (p1-2)
S: yeah, “sorry, lets forget about it lets move on”; and that’s what the hugging and kissing bit does it shows that you can move on and be together again normally.

Nick (p1-2)
N: Yeah, I would try to hold him, and I would apologise, say I am sorry for what happened and
I: umm,
N: may be try to win him back
I: would you express yourself verbally or physically or, I mean would you..
N: I would try to physically hold him, hug him, kiss him and tell him how much I love him and I want him and I would want to continue it
I: how would he respond to that?
N: How
I: how would he respond to that like hugging kissing, I love you, I want to keep you
N: He would try to avoid me and put a end on it and that’s all. Once he ran away and left the house but it was really funny that, well, every time he left my house I would be standing at the window waving at him and he would look back and wave as well. So even that night that he was really upset he kept looking back and was waving at me, so didn’t really look upset.
I: Although you just had a big argument?
N: Yeah it was really serious, I mean, our secret relations would be revealed if he stayed with me. They would be revealed to very close, close person of his. So it was really, a very difficult situation for him.
I: umm
N: so it was very ambivalent situation
I: In terms of what you said before about you trying to hug him and kiss him and hold him back, and tell him you love him and that kind of thing, umm why would you do that? Why do you think you would do that?
N: I think because I wouldn’t want to lose him
I: and would that be the way to keep him? I mean if you think about it as a function, how would it serve your the relationship?
N: just to express to show my emotions and how important he is for me, how difficult it would be for me to be away from him.
I: Oh do you think that doing that affection thing would somehow bring normality back or, I don’t know, in your mind you would think “ yeah if I do that its like we are ok, yeah”
N: yeah it would be like a way to bring things back to normal and show that we can continue that all, no matter what happened or how difficult it is

Alex (p. 1)
umm generally, I would definitely give an apology if I thought I was in the wrong and definitely I would show them affection and I would hug them and tell them I love them kind of thing

I: why do you think you do that?
A: umm, why? Umm, don’t know, I guess, umm, yeah I guess I just sit there and think this is too much and it, kind hurts, you know, when you are in a bad argument, and you want it to finish, I mean if you still love her and stuff you just want to make it right again and feel good again. I don’t know if I do that, umm, do it on purpose kind
off thing but usually I just seem to wait for a good moment and get in there and kiss her, give her a hug, you know, make us both feel good again, make us safe, umm, and kind of take away all the nasty stuff; yeah I think you kind of do it consciously after an argument just to sort of get a bit of normality back into your relationship and really just, I don’t know it’s a way of demonstrating that you’ve forgiven them, forgive and forget everything

AFFECTION AS GRADUAL PHYSICAL CONTACT

Clare (p1)
Maybe yeah! (Looking at the theme cards) umm, I would probably throw those two out of the window
I: no sex and sexual desire you mean?
C: no, kissing like affection I’d say more than sexual stuff. Kissing and stuff that’s a bit more personal without being completely in their personal space, do you know what I mean, its sort of, you’ve got the physical contact of like being with them but if you just had a massive argument then it is still a bit, you are on dodgy ground, you know what I mean?

Sue (p1)
so yeah we often say that we love each other and then definitely affection and that would often lead to quite a good...sexual bit yeah

Clare (p2)
emotional yeah but not passionate; she’d try and distance herself which I would make it harder for her anyway, like because with the physical contact you have to sort of, you couldn’t just go straight in for the kill kind of thing, so it has to be done bit by bit

Steve (p2)
S: I haven’t in relationships, it hasn’t worked that way, but hey I wouldn’t mind having sex to make up (laughing); for instance in my last relationship she said, she was like (mimicking her voice) “no I don’t want to have sex with you, it doesn’t work like that! You don’t have an argument and then have sex afterwards” I think she just hated that so I couldn’t really do anything about it. I wouldn’t mind having sex after an argument though, it was more her not wanting it. I think she just saw it as wrong she’ll be like “ you just told me this, you’ve just said that, or you’ve done this and now you want to have sex with me? No! I am angry with you I can’t switch off just like that” was her general angle; I’ve tried that once or twice and then I never done that again; it made her think that I got a bit of a cheek really; but, yeah, I do know that sex works for some people, some people love having argument and then having sex afterwards but no, I didn’t, unfortunately I didn’t, in my last relationship I didn’t.
I: do you think that is better? I mean that way it’s a bit more gradual, well maybe you’ll have sex later or maybe next day; what do you think?
S: yeah, I think its better in a way, because if you just dive into it then you leave issues lying around and yeah, its not really fully cleaned up; so if you have sex you release your tension and everything is fine again but then that’s kind of short-term; because there might be little bits in there, in your brain and, you know, that you are still pissed off about so I think, like, the gradual, a bit of kissing a bit of hugging and
talking as well, that just sort of tentative and shows that you care without going for the full on “lets have sex” kind of thing.

SECURITY
Sue (p1)
we’d definitely use verbal affection so we tell each other how much we love each other and how stupid an argument was and at the end of the day it matters not, they are never important arguments that we have anyway, only really stupid things and that’s what we are saying, you know, these things often just confirm how much we love each other, because we get so het-up about things

I: oh so you say that there is a confirmation that, you know,

S: In a way because if he wasn’t bothered about some of the things we argue over then I don’t want a blaze person that is really not fussed about things but David is bothered about things and, so yeah we often say that we love each other and then definitely affection

Steve (p1-2)
I: would you try to approach her and like try to hug her and kiss her and stuff?
S: yeah, once we start talking about it its all calmer so yeah but I wouldn’t try anything like that at the time of the initial argument I wouldn’t; but as you start to settle things down and calm it, because you have to eventually don’t you? And once you get to that stage, yeah, give her a hug or a kiss, yeah definitely.
I: and why do you think you want to do that?
S: it sort of, well I just want to comfort her to make her feel a bit more secure, so she feels secure again, yeah; you take it away when you have an argument, that is the security, and then you’ve got to replace it at some stage, because that’s what relationships are all about isn’t it?
I: and that’s your way of doing that right?

Sue (p1-2)
And we are quite huggy, well I am quite a huggy person I like to, umm, it like comforts me, not comforts me but I like to feel his strength and his kind of like “ok, its ok” and this that and the other,

Gemma (p3)
G: see I think I am a hugger; and I think there is different people, you are either a hugger or a kisser maybe its not as clear cut as that but there is a definite distinction; I don’t know, hugging, umm, when you are with someone you get to know their body and you have a little space for your head and its fits there perfectly when you hug and that special space on them makes you feel protected and safe and you just go and hug them when you want to feel that way; umm, I am a snuggler and I like to really hug him and feel good

Clare (p3)
I think it's better to fix it there and then rather than having it on your mind all day and worry about it; umm, maybe it's an insecurity thing, maybe you think that if you leave them too long they'll just won't come back, you know what I mean, they'll find some better offer or something; maybe that's why I try to hug and kiss her or whatever because it's that sort of thing that, you know, creates that kind of "yes I am here" yeah you know, if you are going to make her feel good again physically and emotionally then she won't go anywhere; physical contact is the first, well the strongest sort of thing that will immediately make her focus on you otherwise they can shut out of what you are saying but I think it depends on who you are with because if there is too much distance then it kind of doesn't seem appropriate.

Nick (p2)
N: yeah I think it is also, there is also an issue of insecurity
I: in what kind of way insecurity?
N: it would be really easy to admit that it doesn't work out so "lets give it up", I mean that would be a rational reaction and the insecurity of losing him would make me act like that [be affectionate]

AVOID FURTHER CONFLICT

Paul (p1-2)
P: I wouldn't say a hug, that's quite a big think, emotional thing. Its like a definite sort thing; maybe just a little touch or something or a grab of the hand because I am definitely not fond of arguments and by touching, or touching her hand of something I kind of stop it you know. I think that is down to because I am from a, well, my parents divorced and I sort of grew up with a fair bit of arguments and stuff that make me whenever I hear an argument or have one to more like agree rather than disagree, that would be it for me;

Alex (p.1)
Umm, its not only that though, I mean yeah I think with the hugs and the kisses and all that you can make her feel safe and good again and stuff but I think sometimes, umm, when I see that the argument goes on and on and on and we can't get anywhere with it I'll sort of try to give her a good hug and try to be nice cos I just want to stop going back to shouting and stuff. umm, I mean arguing is not nice and it feels horrible and I hate it when we have argument after argument because we can't agree and stop so umm, yeah in that case I'd probably be affectionate just to save us the trouble really, just to stop it happening again and again.

ISOLATION

GAINING CONTROL OF THE SITUATION

Gemma (p2)
G: if it like a big argument, like sometimes, Paul if he'd made a joke I would be more pissed off because I want to prove my point and I am only angry for a reason probably a good reason so I would stop him doing that because I don't want him to make a joke.
of it, I want to keep it, I don’t want him to think that he can get out of it easily so I would walk out and slam the door and expect him to run after me and I would expect him to make the effort to fix it again; but you need to know your limits to do that because otherwise you might end up running down the street like an idiot without having him coming after you; you’ve got to be a bit careful not to take it too far because this one time I took it too far and I ended up having to apologising, you know what I mean? I don’t want them to think that I am a push-over and that they can get away with it kind of thing; maybe that’s my way of controlling them, I don’t know.

Sue (p1)
S: well immediately after (an argument) I would say that we, David and I would generally go in isolation for a little while because we are quite stubborn the two of us and either of us is good at backing down so I would probably think I am right and he would probably think he is right which in itself causes conflict; so to begin with definitely we have isolation just to calm down I think

REFLECTION

Sue (p2)
S: well we have a bit of time away from each other just to calm it and reflect, just to know that we’ve both been stupid sort of thing, and then we come together and we have some affection and then it goes round and develops to more stuff like sexual stuff. And that’s it kind of thing then we are normal again.

Paul (p2)
I would use that time to reflect on what I said and probably try to patch things up but not at that kind of apology level or anything because that would probably give her too much power too much, umm, she would have won

Nick (p3-4)
N: I think I would try isolation and indifference
I: on your part?
N: mm, but again, maybe more in situations like with close mates more than with relationships. With very close mates after trying to fix the situation and failing I think I would stay alone or, umm isolated for a week or two or maybe more
I: but you have never done with partners?
N: in fact we did with Peter once, where we didn’t communicate for a whole week nearly but I don’t think it’s the same. When I apply this strategy with mates and I am blank and distant on my part, the situation is getting too much, it can work. With Peter it was like “lets try to be apart for a week and see how things go”
I: and how where things after that?
N: a bit better,
I: so you went back to normality, did you?
N: yeah because we had the time and the space to re-consider some stuff, stay alone to avoid confrontation and then we came to a more balanced situation than before
I: umm,
N: ok distance doesn’t solve the problem but, keeps it away (laughter)
I: umm,
N: yeah in fact, in fact it depends I mean with Peter distance was good although I missed him.
Steve (p.1)
S: If it is a really bad argument, yeah, I would normally like walk off because I get, I wouldn’t want to get too angry; so I wouldn’t want to say something I regret, so I’d normally say “right leave me alone” or I’ll go “right I am off”, and I’d just walk off and stay away for a little while to just calm down and maybe afterwards; once I’ve calmed down and had a little think about it then maybe then I might talk about it a bit more calmly.

I: so you go back?

S: yeah then I go back and try to chat about it and get it all sorted, finished done and dusted, you know; once I’ve, because otherwise you just say something nasty and you get yourself in more trouble (laughing). You just go like “oh for god’s shake ra ra ra” because I have quite a bad temper and all and then that’s a whole new argument you’ve got to deal with because you’ve said something.

Avoid Further Conflict

Ellie (pl)
E: no if I was in a relationship and the argument was about him seeing another girl or something like that then I would ignore him and I would go out with my friends, get really drunk and I would probably abuse him (laughing) send a text message kind of thing; but if I felt that I was involved a bit I would be more likely to apologise, I would go away for a bit and then come back and probably apologise probably.

Couple: 20 year old female, 20 year old male
I=Investigator
G=George
H= Ellen

I: Right. I think you could start by telling me, like, how long you have been together.
G Ehmm...a year and...four five months? Right? (to his girlfriend)
E Yeah...
I: Well you have read the scenario already
E: Right Yeah.
I: Um, well imagine you had a huge, huge argument, so if you want to start telling me what happens afterwards.
E: Yeah, what happens afterwards?
I: Yeah, for example its that phase of something will happen or nothing will happen or whatever, more or less what are your actions, behaviours etc
E: Yeah...ummm, I think that I would act quite quickly, umm, I wouldn’t want it sort of like drag on, and you know just sort of disappear and leave it for a long time
I: oh, so wouldn’t stay alone?
E: No.
I: Oh,
E: I think I ’d try and approach the situation, you know, quickly, straight away I ’d want to get in and....
I: Oh, fix it you mean?
E: Yeah I would want to fix it
I: Oh right
E: Yeah
I: How would you do that?
E: Emm, Probably just through talking or I think I just...
G: Make me [non audible word]
E: Yeah, I sort off push him, yeah maybe will push him in the corner and just.....(long pause) convince him either that it is not worth arguing or that...I was right? (laughter)
G: (Laughter)
E: Yeah, I would probably go along with that, umm, I 'd probably would be more quite, try to ignore her. Maybe a bit more than she would, umm...
E: Yeah you ‘d want to have a bit of time to think about it whereas I would probably think we should just.....talk
G: Umm...I would try and get out
E: yeah, but I don’t think you would storm off
G: Ahh, no, not storm off but
I: Would you be more likely to kind off stay alone or isolated or whatever?
G: Yeah maybe. Umm, either blocking myself away mentally from everything else or...
E: But you wouldn’t ignore me
G: Oh no. If you, if you, if you said something then I ‘d umm reply and I wouldn’t, umm, ignore you or blank you...I ‘d just probably wouldn’t, umm, make the first move straight away.
E: Yeah...
I: And you would? (To Ellen).
E: Yeah I probably would more yeah
G: but then I suppose in the end, pr..., well it seems to end up that we both end up apologising
E: Yeah, in terms of who apologises it is generally,
G: yeah going in circles
E: It would be the case err, where I don’t think it would be a case of one of us would be apologising and the other would be like ‘I am not’...
G: No, neither of us is like that, not even in the relationship or just other friendship
E: Yeah
I: In terms of kind off like making the situation better? How would you..?
E: Umm,
I: I mean, I mean, I mean obviously you have an argument or whatever...
E: Yeah
I: and you are at the point of apologising or..
E: Yeah maybe things like even just using a bit of humour I think and I ‘d probably try and sort of make it into a big joke maybe and
G: yeah
I:
G: Yeah, even then or a couple of days later sort of bring it up and
E: yeah
G: in a ‘joking’ fashion
E: yeah, yeah, true. Yeah you definitely can sort of use the fact that an argument occurred to almost stop it from happening again in a relationship
I: Umm
E: Yeah, if it did start happening again well, ‘remember when it happened before’
G: Yeah
I: So its kind of like diffusing the...
E: yeah
I: ..situation
G: yeah
E: err
G: err (looking at the theme cards), maybe a bit of physical expression of emotion
I: yeah..
E+G: (laughing)
E: umm..
G: you know sort of kissing and stuff
E: yeah I think that would help
G: sort of in that apologising phase
E: yep, perhaps, perhaps not straight away, even...you would find it easier, even if you were doing it or the other way, it would seems like...it would mix things up. If you didn’t have anything to say then ok.
I: So would you wait for it kind of thing?
E: Yeah..
I: What would you feel, kind of like, if somebody tried to be affectionate or even more, they tried, you know, try it on really or something like that? Would you feel they try to patronise you or something?
E: yeah that’s why I am think yeah it would be a bit [patronising]
I: but if, if time passes by then, err would that be any good or?
G: Umm, I don’t think its ever been the case that err an argument has instigated good sex or anything like that
E: Yeah
G: or, sex anyway! (laughing)
E: yeah (laughing)
G: I don’t think its been like that
E: No.
G: so...normally because arguments diffuse quite quickly
E: and maybe because the (....) were, it is just not appropriate
G: laughing
E: laughing
I: Yeah, so yeah but err, in terms of , you mentioned that, you know, the affection thing happens
E: yeah, I think sometimes you sort of even just a touch in the arm or something just like try to say oh ‘well look I am here’
G: umm
I: umm
E: and listen to me kind of thing
I: So is it like more reassuring or
E: Yeah. Be more reassuring than
G: yeah
E: sort of provoking or
G: sexual or
E: yeah
G: umm, physical. Just, just, being there
E: yeah
I: How about verbally, err, ‘I love you’, ‘you love me’ kind of thing
G: yeah maybe
E: yeah
G: along with the physical stuff at the same time
E: its not something you would do straight away, it would be...
G: no
E: oh well, ....it doesn’t matter I still love you, but (laughter)
G: yeah
E but yeah after you said the things you want to say it is going to help kind of...
G: brings things back to normal?
E: yeah calm things down
G: (Laughing) I thought it is a bonus anyway
E: (laughing)
G: err
E: err
I: Is there anything else you would like to add?
E: umm,...no. How about you anything or?
G: no I think that’s it
I: I guess that’s it then, thank you very much.
E: thank you.
END OF TAPE

Alex, Heterosexual Male, 22 years old (11mins)
A: Alex
I: Interviewer

I: so yeah you have a heated argument or you have, you know, you fall out kid off thing. So this is about what you usually do or what she usually does

A: I think it is quite different depending on the argument, but I agree with most of these (pointing at the theme cards), most of them have been relevant in an argument, which we had; I suppose, depending on the seriousness of the argument, if it wasn’t a serious argument, hugging is probably the thing, you might as well just hug it off and kiss it off; but if it was a more serious argument, umm, I have actually walked away and I don’t know, I think you use humour, make a joke, I suppose you do it in a right time really, I have done that quite a bit

I: so would you leave them a bit of time in between?

A: yeah, yeah, I wouldn’t make a joke, you know while they were fuming (laughing); although you could do that if you wanted to piss them off even more; umm generally, I would definitely give an apology if I thought I was in the wrong and definitely I would show them affection and I would hug them and tell them I love them kind of thing

I: why do you think you do that?
A: umm, why? Umm, don’t know, I guess, umm, yeah I guess I just sit there and think this is too much and it, kind hurts, you know, when you are in a bad argument, and you want it to finish, I mean if you still love her and stuff you just want to make it right again and feel good again. I don’t know if I do that, umm, do it on purpose kind of thing but usually I just seem to wait for a good moment and get in there and kiss her, give her a hug, you know, make us both feel good again, make us safe, umm, and kind of take away all the nasty stuff; yeah I think you kind of do it consciously after an argument just to sort of get a bit of normality back into your relationship and really, I don’t know it’s a way of demonstrating that you’ve forgiven them, forgive and forget everything

I: and you go back to normal?

A: yeah, that’s what I think

I: Umm,

A: Umm, its not only that though, I mean yeah I think with the hugs and the kisses and all that you can make her feel safe and good again and stuff but I think sometimes, umm, when I see that the argument goes on and on and on and we can’t get anywhere with it I’ll sort of try to give her a good hug and try to be nice cos I just want to stop going back to shouting and stuff. umm, I mean arguing is not nice and it feels horrible and I hate it when we have argument after argument because we can’t agree and stop so umm, yeah in that case I’d probably be affectionate just to save us the trouble really, just to stop it happening again and again.

I: and would you go as far as sex or whatever?

A: what after an argument?

I: yeah

A: well I have, yeah; I think it does really depend on the seriousness of your argument; like with me, umm, I said that in serious arguments I have actually just walked away rather than, you know, jus; because in an argument you could just bottle stuff up and if you stay in the argument you could just tell them everything and you could totally destroy the relationship because in the heat of the moment you could say a lot of stuff which you’ve thought about and you’ve kept in the back of your mind but its really unfair, its all different, its probably different to what the argument is about but you just say it on the heat of the moment, “oh you’ve been doing this to me and you been doing that, remember that time that you did that” so you probably could destroy the relationship by bringing past stuff in the argument so I think sometimes its is best just to walk away; but I mean, if the argument is not that serious then definitely have sex afterwards rather than walk away

I: umm, and does that work the same way as the affection bit, like does it bring normality?
A: yeah, yeah, I think that it just shows that you are over the argument and that you are back to normal; I think sex is always more passionate after an argument, umm, there probably more feeling to it that all, I don’t know that’s just my opinion.

I: why do you think that is?

A: I don’t know maybe its because you’ve got more adrenalin going and everything so you are more pumped up; I don’t know maybe just the tension thing, like getting rid of tension, yeah, definitely getting rid of your tension and, umm, I mean usually when you have sex after an argument it is more intimate, romantic and that kind of thing.

I: why do you think that would be a bit more romantic or intimate after like an argument in terms of like sexual stuff?

A: don’t know, umm, feeling guilty? Yeah I think that is true yeah; I think you have to really understand whether you started the argument or whether they started it and whether you actually believe that you are right or whether you are right and, umm, I suppose if I started the argument and I was wrong to start it, made an accusation or something, umm, then I’d be more intimate and try and make her understand that I do actually care about her and that, you know, I was wrong to have done that, and I’d apologise and be more intimate and make her understand that I am sorry for what I said and about the argument; and yeah (laughing) if all fails, with the intimacy and stuff, I don’t know I would send her like 12 red roses next day and try to do it that way (laughing).

I: yep that’s a good one I guess (laughing)

(long pause)

A: umm, is that alright?

I: yeah if you are done that’s it I guess.

END
Gay male, 26 years old

I=Interviewer
N=Nick

I: The only thing we have to do is...well first of all you can read the scenario
N: umm (reading)
I: Apart from the scenario there are a few theme cards in front of you. You can start talking about how you deal with an argument and what happens after an argument with your partner. If you want to use any of these cards feel free to but you don’t have to; there are there to help you really.
N: umm, they would run away
I: they would run away?
N: yeah, and I would try to hold him and keep him. He said that was the last time
I: what that he runs away?
N: and then he would call me again
I: and that was the end of that argument kind off thing?
N: yeah
I: umm
N: after that though we kind off said “we only have a few moments together and they are really precious” so we need to make the most of them. Because we didn’t have an everyday relationship, you see. But there were a few occasions that we were debating whether we should keep it or not.
I: And in that case that you have an argument about whether you should stay together or break it up or whatever, umm, what would it be likely to happen afterwards, you said he storms off, so would you chase him?
N: Yeah, I would try to hold him, and I would apologise, say I am sorry for what happened and
I: umm,
N: maybe try to win him back
I: would you express yourself verbally or physically or, I mean would you..
N: I would try to physically hold him, hug him, kiss him and tell him how much I love him and I want him and I would want to continue it
I: how would he respond to that?
N: How
I: how would he respond to that like hugging kissing, I love you, I want to keep you
N: He would try to avoid me and put a end on it and that’s all. Once he ran away and left the house but it was really funny that, well, every time he left my house I would be standing at the window waving at him and he would look back and wave as well. So even that night that he was really upset he kept looking back and was waving at me, so didn’t really look upset.
I: Although you just had a big argument?
N: Yeah it was really serious, I mean, our secret relations would be revealed if he stayed with me. They would be revealed to very close, close person of his. So it was really, a very difficult situation for him.
I: umm
N: so it was very ambivalent situation
I: In terms of what you said before about you trying to hug him and kiss him and hold him back, and tell him you love him and that kind of thing, umm why would you do that? Why do you think you would do that?
I think because I wouldn’t want to lose him
I: and would that be the way to keep him? I mean if you think about it as a function, how would it serve your relationship?
N: just to express to show my emotions and how important he is for me, how difficult it would be for me to be away from him.
I: Oh do you think that doing that affection thing would somehow bring normality back or, I don’t know, in your mind you would think “yeah if I do that its like we are ok, yeah”
N: yeah it would be like a way to bring things back to normal and show that we can continue that all, no matter what happened or how difficult it is
I: continue with the relationship?
N: there is feeling, we both like each other, we shouldn’t give it up.
I: By doing that in a tense moment it is like saying “hey look, I am here, its good to stay together”
N: yeah I think it is also, there is also an issue of insecurity
I: in what kind of way insecurity?
N: it would be really easy to admit that it doesn’t work out so “lets give it up”, I mean that would be a rational reaction and the insecurity of losing him would make me act like that [be affectionate]
I: umm,
[tape stopped]
I: generally in the past, or now or whatever, have you ever, umm, had an argument and then, sort of, engaged in sexual activities or anything like that?
N: not immediately no
I: you just do the affection stuff?
N: Yeah, holding, kissing
I: how would you feel if your partner turned around and made a pass or tried it on with you?
N: I think I would attempt that, give in (giggling). If my previous partner did that after an argument yeah definitely! But he wouldn’t, he wouldn’t like that.
I: oh so did you try that at all with your previous partner?
N: yeah a few times, but I am not sure it would be a complete sexual thing. I would be like cuddling and kissing and touching and then more like making love really, that kind of thing.
I: do you think that either of you would feel offended or even patronised by such an advance? Or would you welcome such an advance?
N: umm, I am not really sure, I mean I am not sure about the limits after an argument, how far I am ‘allowed’ or he is ‘allowed’ to go.
I: umm, limits?
N: it is like to have sex you have to be in the right mood so I am not sure whether that can happen after an argument. Umm, making love is different. If the affection stuff progress into something more
then it is different. Because I would like to readdress the situation with some affection.

I: readdress the situation with affection you said?
N: yeah... its kind of like testing the situation. Some affection and then that would tell me where I draw the line
I: how far you would go kind of thing?
N: yeah, I think it would be more emotional, like lots of kissing and hugging, and crying maybe
I: crying, umm
N: I think I would try isolation and indifference
I: on your part?
N: mm, but again, maybe more in situations like with close mates more than with relationships. With very close mates after trying to fix the situation and failing I think I would stay alone or, umm isolated for a week or two or maybe more
I: but you have never done with partners?
N: in fact we did with Peter once, where we didn’t communicate for a whole week nearly but I don’t think it’s the same. When I apply this strategy with mates and I am blank and distant on my part, the situation is getting too much, it can work. With Peter it was like “lets try to be apart for a week and see how things go”
I: and how where things after that?
N: a bit better,
I: so you went back to normality, did you?
N: yeah because we had the time and the space to re-consider some stuff, stay alone to avoid confrontation and then we came to a more balanced situation than before
I: umm,
N: ok distance doesn’t solve the problem but, keeps it away (laughter)
I: umm,
N: yeah in fact, in fact it depends I mean with Peter distance was good although I missed him.
I: umm
N: anything else?
I: no, I mean its up to you, what you want to say
N: I think that’s it then
I: thank you very much
N: thank you and all the best.

Sue, Heterosexual 24 years old in a 3-year relationship
(6.5 min)
S: Sue
I: Interviewer
S: well immediately after (an argument) I would say that we, David and I would generally go in isolation for a little while because we are quite stubborn the two of us and either of us is good at backing down so I would probably think I am right and he would probably think he is right which in itself causes conflict; so to begin with definitely we have isolation just to calm down I think. He is the one that would leave the situation he'd probably walk off and go home because he doesn't like to cause more of an argument, he thinks, he often thinks that if he stays he'll just keep going on and on and on; neither of us is often willing to back down, he would go away and then there is a little bit of a while, a pause, and then one of us would often contact the other; following that we would have an apology between one of us and then definitely it would then go from there to, err, I wouldn’t say we use humour as such, umm, but we'd definitely use verbal affection so we tell each other how much we love each other and how stupid an argument was and at the end of the day it matters not, they are never important arguments that we have anyway, only really stupid things and that's what we are saying, you know, these things often just confirm how much we love each other, because we get so het-up about things.

I: oh so you say that there is a confirmation that, you know,

S: In a way because if he wasn’t bothered about some of the things we argue over then I don’t want a blaze person that is really not fussed about things but David is bothered about things and, so yeah we often say that we love each other and then definitely affection and that would often lead to quite a good... sexual bit yeah (laughing) so there is some truth in the fact that sex after an argument is quite heated isn’t it?

I: umm,

S: and a lot more intimate in some ways, I don’t know why what causes it to be more intimate but probably because you release so much tension between each other that its kind of, its just the end of it its just fired up. I would say that how it goes in my kind of situation. But if we were to kind of like apologise, I am not very good at saying am wrong and he is, he would probably be the one that would apologise first, more times than me because I am just a stubborn cow. Umm, that would be probably how it would go. And we are quite huggy, well I am quite a huggy person I like to, umm, it like comforts me, not comforts me but I like to feel his strength and his kind of like “ok, its ok” and this that and the other,

I: something like am here kind of thing?

S: yeah, I am still here and its not changed us as a couple, its not leading to an end, we just argued over something that is really not important and now we can go back to normal, umm, that kind of scenario would go back to us being quite normal with each other. But it depends, its sometimes quick and its sometimes takes a good couple of hours to kind of admit defeat.

I: defeat? Is it about winning then or?

S: yeah, I mean because he is very competitive and I am very competitive that can often cause a problem but we acknowledge that with each other and that’s a good thing. He knows that he is a stubborn sod and I know that I am, and that’s how we deal with it. If you can admit that you are like that then you know how to work with
each other I think, and I know that he just needs a bit of time to calm down and we are back on the normal track again. So is that enough then or?

I: yeah unless you want to add anything

S: well we have a bit of time away from each other just to calm it and reflect, just to know that we’ve both been stupid sort of thing, and then we come together and we have some affection and then it goes round and develops to more stuff like sexual stuff. And that’s it kind of thing then we are normal again. (laughing). That’s sums it up really.

Claire, Female, Homosexual, 19 years old (25mins)

C=Clare
I: Interviewer

C: well usually the people I go out with, umm, well I am a chaser; I mean they usually storm off, that’s the type of person I usually go out with; and it depends on how bad it was (the argument) and depends on what I thought of it as well because sometimes I’ll just start laughing because I think its so rude or whatever; because I can’t argue, usually I’d just either shut up or just agree (laughing)

I: why?

C: I don’t know, umm, I don’t like arguments, I don’t see the point; because I think everyone is entitled to have an opinion on most of things; but yeah, probably they would storm off and I’d either give it a bit of time or try to make a joke about it or I would just go “oh…I am sorry” (making a face), you know, kiss ass (laughing), grovel. Because, you know, I would just want to avoid arguing again and again about the same thing, umm, it is not worth it is it? Sometimes I think I wasn’t even in the wrong and thought what the hell say you are sorry and end this now because I hate arguments, I get tired trying to make a point you know what I mean. With Nat it was always what would happen was, we would have argument and I would try to make a joke about it and she’d get even madder and then I would end up having to grovel; maybe I have to lose that ‘making a joke out of it’ approach because it ends with me grovelling.

I: making you are making the joke at the wrong moment kind of thing (laughing)

C: yeah (laughing). Usually it goes down to the level of, if I think it’s going to start getting into a mega, mega argument then I’ll start mimicking her

I: mimicking her?

C: yeah like “bla bla bla, mu, mu” (making faces pretending to be her partner talking). Yeah I don’t see the point of having massive arguments, I don’t know whether they are necessary.

I: yeah but if you mimic somebody while they are angry they might get even angrier aren’t they?
C: yeah over the last few years, umm, yeah they usually get angrier (laughing) ok maybe I should rethink my approach! Maybe yeah! (Looking at the theme cards) umm, I would probably throw those two out of the window

I: no sex and sexual desire you mean?

C: no, kissing like affection I’d say more than sexual stuff. Kissing and stuff that’s a bit more personal without being completely in their personal space, do you know what I mean, its sort of, you’ve got the physical contact of like being with them but if you just had a massive argument then it is still a bit, you are on dodgy ground, you know what I mean?

I: so you don’t want to offend them or anything?
C: no
I: if you go like straight in for the kill and go for sexual stuff, pure sex then
C: they might, yeah they might just think “oh you just made up with me, just to have sex” so it might be a bit of a manipulative kind of thing; you know what I mean, like people are sometimes quite emotional after an argument and they can be a bit touchy-feely so if you go straight in and try to have sex with them they might take it the wrong way and then you can lose everything, I mean all the energy you put in to make it right again is gone for good. Kissing and hugging, I don’t know you still got intimacy but without sort of being over the top; yeah like without sort of invading them, but, you know what I mean, leave a bit of time. I mean me and Nat had massive arguments and we needed a bit of time afterwards to sort of re-adjust and think about what’ve said to each other and then do all the hugging and kissing stuff. I don’t know if it was like a proper heated argument then you always say things you don’t mean and it feels weird afterwards. And then kind of say stuff like “I am sorry, I still love you, didn’t mean what I said” “nothing has changed” and joke about it if you can.

I: do you see that as a step or anything like that or as a way of you being normal with them again?
C: with verbal affection?
I: not just verbal affection, I mean all of them, you picked kissing, and you picked humour, and affection
C: I’d use them all; (affection, kissing etc) there are two rules sort of in that funny period after an argument, and then, so you sort of use them to sort of get back to how you were, I mean like you would still do them normally but you are using them this time sort of making up going back to normal kind of thing.

I: you said you start kissing and whatever after that will you go as far as making love not sex necessarily, making love, I don't know whether you think there is a difference or something; do you think making love is different than having sex?
C: umm, yeah could be I don’t know how because (silent bit), usually if I have an argument and it’s a massive one, you know what I mean, then usually it doesn’t because we just end up talking; we only fell out a couple of times and it was over
massive things each time, umm, it was all on big stuff like other people and things so it wasn’t the sort of argument that you would do sexual stuff afterwards; it was the sort of thing that have to sit down and talk about it afterwards even after you’ve had the argument anyway so there was no place for it really. Umm, I can imagine being with other people it would work that way we would probably end up in bed, but I think that’s just the personality that we had (with Nat); because I was sort of the chaser and quite relatively laid back, had to say a few white lies every so often can cope with that (laughing).

I: would she get emotional or passionate about it?

C: emotional yeah but not passionate; she’d try and distance herself which I would make it harder for her anyway, like because with the physical contact you have to sort of, you couldn’t just go straight in for the kill kind of thing, so it has to be done bit by bit

I: why do you think we do that? I mean try and fix it there and then and grovel and do anything just to make it ok again?

C: I don’t like being on bad terms with people that I care about, it plays on my mind; and I would like to send just stupid stuff if we fall out, I would send her a text maybe and I like to be able to tell her stuff, you know what I mean? I think its better to fix it there and then rather than having it on your mind all day and worry about it; umm, maybe its an insecurity thing, maybe you think that if you leave them too long they’ll just wont come back, you know what I mean, they’ll find some better offer or something; maybe that’s why I try to hug and kiss her or whatever because its that sort of thing that, you know, creates that kind of “yes I am here” yeah you know, if you are going to make her feel good again physically and emotionally then she wont go anywhere; physical contact is the first, well the strongest sort of thing that will immediately make her focus on you otherwise they can shut out of what you are saying but I think it depends on who you are with because if there is too much distance then it kind of doesn’t seem appropriate

I: but you would still do it?

C: umm, I would speak to her first and then physical contact afterwards

I: umm, would you apologise or anything like that?

C: yeah, I would apologise even if I wasn’t in the wrong (laughing) just because its easy just because I don’t like, I think when you are with someone you should be honest all the time, which is a complete lie (laughing) but you should be, you should tell them you are pissed off; but sometimes its better and get it all over and done with and just go back to normal

I: yeah but does that leave any leftovers in you kind of thing?

C: not really; I am relatively laid back about most things; there is certain things that I would never ever back down on, like other people, if there is someone else involved then that’s like completely out of order; there was one time when the issue was about
someone she was with before and we had an argument about it and that’s something I wouldn’t back down on because it’s a territory thing; I think that’s an insecurity thing as well

(...)

C: umm, because I told her as soon as I had been with someone else and like, other people were being like “oh just don’t tell her she doesn’t want to know that you been doing that, just leave it being” but I don’t know, she has the right to know I think; I would tell her everything like “oh that’s a fit girl” or whatever, I tried to keep it honest, and had no secrets and then she would hurt and stuff

I: its not like that, I think they are going to hurt either way, you know what I mean, it’s a relationship for god’s shake, its going to make your life great for like a really limited amount of time and then its gonna make it hell for both of you; so that’s what I am thinking if you are going to sleep with someone else or snog someone else just tell them because there is no point in finding out later or something because its going to hurt her more if she found out from someone else or something; that’s what I think as well

C: umm, I am just thinking I’ve turned in a bit of a knobhead

I: why?

C: because that’s one thing that I hate more than anything, like infidelity; see I was with Anna for what a week or two weeks and then ended up snogging someone else

I: yeah but you weren’t really together together

C: oh nevermind; I usually just go out and make myself drunk and make a fool out myself and do anything; now definitely after an argument when I am drunk I would have sex and its good sex, because I don’t know

I: you see it as a physical thing that you cant control then or?

C: yeah when you are drunk all the inhibitions are lifted or whatever so sex is good.

I: anything else you want to say? Umm, last question, do you think of an argument as in a kind of a timeline?

C: a timeline? Chronological order or something?

I: yeah

C: yeah, well not a structured one but there is probably an order of events that you go through if that makes sense; like talking, then verbal affection, tell them you love them kind of thing and just speaking to each other and then probably use humour and then physical sort of hugging and kissing and stuff and the apology would probably be intermitted into all of those (laughing), “I am sorry, bla-bla-bla, I love you, I am sorry, kiss-kiss-kiss, I am sorry, ha-ha-ha, I love you” (laughing).

I: you use humour before the affection bit, why do you think you do that?
C: well once you've made them laugh that's it, you know what I mean, you are back to normal again if they can laugh about the argument or something else then that's sort of going back to normal; it means that they are feeling that they are not bothered, well not not-bothered but they kind of got over the argument or what was said; and then you can give them a little kiss

I: okey-dokey
C: okey dokey
END

Ellie, Heterosexual Female, 21 years old (15mins)

E=Ellie
I: Interviewer

I: umm, it depends on what the argument is about; probably if it was involving someone else then I would be likely to just ignore him

I: someone else do you mean in a friendship kind of thing?

E: no if I was in a relationship and the argument was about him seeing another girl or something like that then I would ignore him and I would go out with my friends, get really drunk and I would probably abuse him (laughing) send a text message kind of thing; but if I felt that I was involved a bit I would be more likely to apologise, I would go away for a bit and then come back and probably apologise probably

I: and you would expect them to do the same thing?

E: yeah if I felt it was more their fault and if I said things I didn’t mean I would probably go back and say sorry and say “oh I love you and that” and I probably hug them, umm; it depends on how they reacted as well, if they were like “oh yeah I am sorry too” and they weren’t mardy or anything then yes I would try to hug them and stuff; I remember I had an argument once with an ex boyfriend in a shopping centre and I though it was my fault I was a bit harsh, so I had to go to his car and wait for him and then I was saying I am sorry and everything but usually it is just me storming off and getting drunk and wait for him to make the first move; in the meantime I would probably slag them off to a friend and my friend would probably just agree with me (laughing)

I: would you use a joke about it or use humour to kind of lighten up the situation?

E: if it was an argument about a silly thing probably I would, I would go back and thing “oh that was a bit stupid really” but if I thought it was really serious and it really upset me I probably wouldn’t

I: how do you make up with them kind of thing what do you do?

E: umm, maybe buy them something, if I felt really bad, I’d just say sorry, maybe I would talk to his mates say “oh we had an argument and I was a bit horrible to him”
and if things go ok and he is ok with me and I am ok with him kind of thing I would probably try to kiss him and do that kind of lovey-dovey thing; umm, affection does this mean like if he says he is sorry and stuff I would be very affectionate towards him?

I: affection is anything, well hugging and kissing is part of affection, umm a bit of a touch stuff like that really

E: yeah, umm, yeah then I would be affectionate in that case if I felt it was my fault I would do, yeah. Well my ex boyfriend for example, his mum died and he was always like we would had an argument and then he would sort of make out it was an excuse because his mum died not long ago and he would make me feel sorry for him a bit so I’d be affectionate towards him then; I suppose in situations like that I would do but if he was really mardy and you tried to be affectionate to them and they were just like, just blank you and would make you more mad probably;

I: and would they try to be affectionate to you maybe?

E: oh, if I felt that I was alright with it then I would be affectionate back but if I was really pissed off then I’d probably just walk off; because it is not that nice when someone is all over you when you are really pissed off with them; and I wouldn’t ignore them because everyone hates being ignored, it pisses people off

I: you said you wouldn’t ignore them but you would walk off?

E: no, I would ignore them if they did my head in, I’d ignore them for a bit but if they didn’t get back to me then I would just go out with my friends and get drunk again (laughing), yeah get drunk and swear at him and see what happens, well then it would probably end with me saying sorry

I: would you go as far as sex or sexual stuff?

E: yeah I would, yeah if, obviously if I thought that he does fell really bad especially if it worked out and we were alright with each other then yeah, its probably more right than any other time yeah

I: umm, would it make you feel better, I mean sex or whatever, do you think it kind of clears the air or you know relieves tension?

E: umm, if I was in a relationship where it was just argument after argument after argument it probably would be it probably would be good at the time but then it is just like “oh it just ends up leading nowhere”, it just like get here, have an argument, make up with me, have sex with me, then have an argument, make up with me again, have sex with me and you end up not resolving anything; I generally found that it leaves issues unresolved in a way; so it feels good at the time but it doesn’t clear anything in the long-term or anything really; and it kind of like makes you think that’s the reason why you are together if it happens all the time so yeah; and if that happened all the time I’d probably be more likely to just do that than just say “oh I love you and everything” if we were arguing all the time I would rather do the sex bit because I don’t know I suppose you can just avoid talking about it more whereas if you say I
love you and I am sorry and all that then you have to say why; and then if you are 
really, really sorry yourself then you just end up getting back to an argument because 
there have been loads of times when I've said sorry and not meant it just for the shake 
of avoiding another argument, so if you do end up talking about it you just end up 
arguing more so

I: so you’d just rather have sex?

E: yeah, and just wait for the next one (argument) (laughing); because some blokes 
ever see your point of view so its just easier, its probably just easier if it is going to 
end in an argument so its probably just easier;
I: blokes never say no to sex do they?

E: no, no they don’t;

I: so you know you are winning if you do that in a way?

E: yeah, yeah; it depends as well if it is over someone else and you have sex with him 
(boyfriend) as well I suppose in a way you are thinking “he is still mine anyway 
because he is still sleeping with me” so maybe I don’t know

I: so if it is like you are jealous of another woman who hits on them or whatever

E: yeah

I: and then you have sex with your boyfriend and then you think well he is mine?

E: yeah, yeah most blokes just say they love you all the time anyway so for those that 
do (...) I generally think you can tell when they mean it and when they are just saying 
it, well with boyfriends I went out for quite a while anyway

E: umm, (pointing at theme card ‘isolation/want to stay alone/ ignore them’) does that 
mean that I want to say alone in general or does it mean like that I want to stay away 
from them?

I: either,

E: I never stay alone, I don’t want to usually, I prefer to go out with my friends really; 
when I was seeing my boyfriend over the summer if we had an argument I would go 
away and go to my parents house and there is not a lot you can do in there; it was a lot 
better when I had an argument with him here (student house) because I could just go 
straight out with my friends and say like “oh he is such a dickhead” and swear at him 
and all and my friends would probably go “oh yeah you can do so much better”. So its 
much better here because I can avoid staying alone and depressing myself.

(...)
E: Emily
I: Interviewer

E: (arguments) Usually I try and talk about it, I do say I love him and I try and discuss it but he’s not very good at that, so that’s what I usually try and do, unless I’m really really mad and then I just have to be on my own for a bit and then I’ll go and talk to him if its really bad.

I: Is he initiating that kind of conversation?

E: No, I always initiate it, because he’s very stubborn so he just sulks and just...

I: Goes in a strop kind of thing?

E: Yeah, he doesn’t really do a lot, he just sulks or he’ll just walk off, but then normally after I talk to him he’s normally ok, his way of saying sorry is sex, he’s a man. Then we have another argument because I say that sex isn’t sorry.

I: So he wouldn’t verbally apologise?

E: Erm, not straight away, he takes quite a lot of time because he’s quite stubborn, he’d rather have sex, he’d rather try do that rather than say it but he won’t actually say he’s sorry, he just tries to act like he’s sorry without saying it but it doesn’t work.

I: Would he try to be affectionate?

E: A little bit, yeah. He tries to act like he’s sorry and act like he loves me but he doesn’t say it, he’ll just be stubborn and act it without saying it.

I: And why do you say he acts like he’s sorry, don’t you think he is?

E: Yeah, but he doesn’t say it, (not audible) because I say it, and we talk about it and have a hug or whatever, but he’s just like (noise for not saying anything) and he won’t say it because he’s too stubborn.

I: And do you talk after sex?

E: erm, a bit I suppose, I don’t really know, he thinks it’s ok then, he thinks it fine you’re (he is) forgiven.

I: And you don’t?

E: No, because it’s different, it’s not sorry, it’s sex and it’s different, but he thinks it’s the same.

I: So do you think it leaves issues unresolved?

E: Erm, we usually sort them out in the end because I normally make him and talk to him but most of the time it’s me and it’s not him doing it so he doesn’t talk very
much, well he does but not to say sorry. He does sometimes try to make a joke out of it, that’s only if it’s nothing too serious but that doesn’t work because I’m mad.

I: So you don’t take the joke?

E: No, it’s not going to be successful, I don’t think things are funny.

I: What would you like instead of the sex, what would be your ideal way

E: I would prefer him to apologise if he is wrong, if it’s me then just talk about it and then apologise beforehand because if you’re sorry then it’s ok but you just can’t just do it to say sorry because it’s not the same thing.

I: Do you see it as manipulative at all?

E: A little bit, it’s like he’s getting out of it though by trying to do that so he thinks it’s ok and it clears his conscience up a bit I suppose, he’s just clearing his conscience up by doing it because he thinks it’s ok then.

I: Do you think that that’s his way of avoiding talking further about it or discussing it?

E: Probably, I’ve never really had a boyfriend that talks about things though, I don’t think many do.

I: Do you find yourself feeling angry but kind of a bit umm?

E: Yeah, I don’t normally have any of it so it doesn’t bother me because I’m still mad and I can’t do that if I’m mad so, but he could I think, I don’t think it would really matter to him. He tries to be affectionate by his actions and I try to be affectionate by just saying “I love you” and try and sort it out and apologise and try and just discuss it and make sure it doesn’t happen again but he tries to do it just through affection, like give me a kiss, hug me, without actually saying anything.

I: And you want to sort it out verbally?

E: Yeah, Before...

I: Before you move onto anything else?

E: Yeah, I think that’s the order it should go in but he doesn’t. He’s better than some boyfriends I’ve had. He finds it hard to admit that he’s wrong.

I: So is he the one that goes in a strop usually?

E: He normally just, I’ll be quite angry but then I’ll want to talk about it because then it stops me being angry if I talk about it and sort it out, but when he’s angry he’ll either go in a strop and stays on his own and refuses to talk to me – like a little kid, if you try and talk to him you normally have to leave him alone for a bit and then go back and talk to him Because he just won’t talk to you, rather than discussing it,
which is childish. He didn't talk to me for about half an hour last night, don't know what it was about.

I: And you don't like that?

E: No, I think it's stupid, I think it's childish and you should talk about stuff otherwise you're not gonna sort it out, there is no point in sitting there not speaking because if I did exactly the same as him then we'd just be sat there all night.

I: And do you think that because you do that and issues remain unresolved you have recurring arguments about the same thing?

E: Yeah, we normally sort it out in the end because I talk and he'll end up talking to me in the end but a little bit we do argue about the same things for a little bit and stupid stuff like money and things like that, because we're both skint, I asked him for some rent, well not for rent but because he lives with me I asked him for a little bit of money towards some stuff and he was like “no it's my money, I earn it” even though my money that I earn pays the rent, he didn't think that his money he earned had to help, so we had quite a few arguments about that. You normally have to not tell him he's wrong, but just like not directly tell him he's wrong but just like word it so... But if you directly tell him he's wrong he'll get mad and not talk to you.

I: So you have to be careful?

E: Yeah, But if you actually tell him he's wrong he'll come out and say, “fine I won’t talk to you then”. But if you say perhaps you should have done this or perhaps this isn’t fair because, then he’s like “ah ok”

END

Gemma, Heterosexual, Female, 21 years old, (27mins)

G: shall I say then how am I acting after arguments and how my partner is acting?

I: umm, yeah, yeah

G: umm, yeah, heated arguments, umm let me think, umm, I normally ignore him (pause), until he begs (laughing); I am normally in a right strop and then he makes a joke out of it or something and then I ignore him some more just so he know he is really in trouble and I am not happy at all; and then, normally, he’d make a joke and I would say ‘well, I forgive you, just this once’, (laughing) and then we would end up having good sex, I reckon; and then he’d probably say ‘oh I really do love you, you know’ and I would say ‘yeah I really do love you too, I am sorry’.

I: and does that make you feel ok again?

G: yeah I reckon,

I: why do you think you make him grovel and grovel?

G: umm, because I am always right (laughing); umm, you want to know why?
I: yeah

G: I don’t know, umm to prove my authority, show that I’ve got a bit of control over the relationship; that’s what I do; I know that this is the one situation that I am in power, so I throw a big strop and that’s my way of controlling the situation;

I: so is it a power thing then?

G: yeah I reckon; I think that that is women’s weapon it’s a power and control thing; but then I can only say that in terms of my last relationship, because Paul would just make a joke of it because even if he knew he was in the wrong, he would make a joke out of it and he knew that if I was stroppy enough he wouldn’t be able to get around me anyway, so after I had my strop and my space to get over it, he would make a joke out of it and I would laugh at the joke when I thought he got the message;

I: umm, do you think that if you have a heated argument it is like, a way of showing your emotions to each other?

G: umm, yeah, I think it is good to argue a lot but err, I don’t shout and scream for no reason I would have to have a good reason to do it; umm, I think it is a good way of getting rid of your aggression isn’t it? and your tension and stuff; because normally its like they’ve been building up for a while (arguments) and maybe by having a big one you release all the tension and get rid of all the other underlying little issues as well.

I: umm, you said you have good sex after arguments, umm, do you use affection, does he use affection or whatever afterwards or do you go straight in for the kill kind of thing?

G: there probably be like quite a lot of just hugging, I wouldn’t say it is like a wham-bam, maybe sex after an argument as well, it wouldn’t be like mad, rampant or anything like that, it would probably be quite sensitive, like making love kind of thing. Because I think there is a big difference between making love and fucking or shagging; after an argument it’s more tender and stuff because you feel like you’ve reached an understanding; umm, you have an argument, get it all out, say things sometimes in the heat of things, you think ‘fuck, I shouldn’t have said that’ and you its all out in the open and you fucking let everything out and then you like hug for a bit and then you start kissing and it means you are on a, more of a level because you’ve been completely honest with each other and got it all out.

(Pause)

G: if it like a big argument, like sometimes, Paul if he’d made a joke I would be more pissed off because I want to prove my point and I am only angry for a reason probably a good reason so I would stop him doing that because I don’t want him to make a joke of it, I want to keep it, I don’t want him to think that he can get out of it easily so I would walk out and slam the door and expect him to run after me and I would expect him to make the effort to fix it again; but you need to know your limits to do that because otherwise you might end up running down the street like an idiot without having him coming after you; you’ve got to be a bit careful not to take it too far
because this one time I took it too far and I ended up having to apologising, you know what I mean? I don’t want them to think that I am a push-over and that they can get away with it kind of thing; maybe that’s my way of controlling them, I don’t know.

I: umm, do you usually make the first step or initiate sex or something or is it him that does it?

G: umm, normally him, I think, unless I am really drunk; but normally what happens is we start kissing and hugging and it kind of take it from there, sort of thing

(Pause)

G: do you know what I mean like, umm, we have a huge argument because I don’t know, we had some kind of communication breakdown or something and then well, we both apologise and stuff and by that point we are so tired arguing we just want to calm down and yeah, make up and have sex, because you know what I mean, we’ve had enough and just want to avoid making it worse really, umm, afterwards you are just lying there and you say ‘I am really sorry you know’ and maybe you mean it more then because you’re just vulnerable and open after sex and you connect with them emotionally and physically during sex so it’s like you know that they are saying ‘I am sorry’ and that really, umm means a lot you know; it means they thought about it and really mean it and stuff.

I: why do you think you have sex after an argument? Why so you think you do it?

G: umm, don’t know; umm its like, its passion isn’t it? I mean passion, having sex and making love is something really, really really, personal and you’re there with somebody and you are as close as you can be, umm, and probably during the argument you get distant and stuff and say things that hurt sort of thing but, umm, yeah, making love afterwards is kind of making up and being close to each other again and maybe going back to normal. Umm, I don’t know, I think that if you have an argument and you don’t have sex you might think it’s unresolved, that the argument is unresolved; because say we have the argument and then we don’t have sex I’ll be like ‘oh so what’s on your mind’ kind of thing.

I: because you usually do kind of thing?

G: yeah

I: does it mean anything emotionally to you kind of thing?

G: what sex?

I: the whole thing, I mean, in the context of after an argument and so on; how do you feel right afterwards

G: if I have an argument I get so bored of arguing and stuff that I just want to get it all sorted, sorted out have sex and then immediately after sex I probably think about it more; well because I think maybe we just patched things over. Because you do, you
do think more when you are lying there naked and you probably talk a lot more after sex don’t you?

I: so what is the alternative to that. I mean what do you think it would be better? Meaning without patching it up and without having that feeling afterwards

G: I say it all depends really; I wouldn’t even say it depends on how long you’ve been with your partner or anything; maybe if the argument it’s a recurring argument then it’s a different story; but it depends on who you are with at the time really, if are more self-conscious and stuff. I think sex on its own can leave things open, and umm, maybe you don’t address the issues properly but you just have sex to release your tension, I don’t know, umm it depends, umm I think what is best is to talk after sex really, as I said, yeah talk again after sex, with a clear head and no emotional tension.

(...)

I: umm, you mentioned hugging but you didn’t mentioned it again, I mean why do you think you hug them after an argument

G: umm, think about saying goodbye to your partner in a train station or something do you think you would hug them or kiss them?

I: umm, hug them probably

G: see I think I am a hugger; and I think there is different people, you are either a hugger or a kisser maybe its not as clear cut as that but there is a definite distinction; I don’t know, hugging, umm, when you are with someone you get to know their body and you have a little space for your head and its fits there perfectly when you hug and that special space on them makes you feel protected and safe and you just go and hug them when you want to feel that way; umm, I am a snugger and I like to really hug him and feel good

I: and is that important after an argument?

G: yeah I think so, I think that for me if we have an argument a lot of it will come down to my own self-esteem, umm, not self-esteem but sort of like confidence and stuff like that because like, the argument is usually about him and another girl and stuff like that so normally the argument ends with him trying to reassure me about my own thoughts, so hugging afterwards is like getting in there in your special space and saying like ‘you are mine’ sort of thing

I: so apart from a security thing it might be a territory sort of thing?

G: yeah, I think so;

I: because you’re feeling insecure and your confidence is down or whatever, he hugs you, and you want him to hug you because then that makes you feel that he is yours and stuff, is that right?

G: yeah, and then I think we have sex for the same sort of reasons; because I am quite an insecure person and it just feels good that’s all.
Joy, Female, 22 years old

J=Joy
I=Interviewer

I: Umm, so you read the scenario,
J: Ok...

I: so basically you just, you know, start talking about you and your partner after arguments, I mean more or less what you do afterwards really.
J: After that right. Umm in my experience normally if I argue if it comes to a natural argument I've taken a lot to get that far, whereas I put up, I feel I put up with a fair bit and then that's how I end up within an argument
I: umm..
J: Umm, and then even then I don't really want very much confrontation I just really wanna say 'look you have upset me'...
I: Umm
J: umm, and then past experience, the other person has been just the same as me and there has not really been much confrontation, so we either say it then ignore one another and it's a bit awkward, and then you kind of like do the whole 'lovey thing' after, like some kind of affection, not always sex, well some kind of affection after
I: How do you get that? How...
J: How?
I: Yeah how do you get, because you said you kind of like, you want to stay alone and isolated, you don't want to talk to them you don't want confrontation but then you say you do, after you do the lovey-dovey thing...when after?
J: Umm, recently its normally about five minutes (laughing) it's the stubbornness at the moment where is kind of something new, very unsure and not knowing one another
J: Umm, trying not to wind one another up, umm and not, not, it's not really an argument it's the fact that you don't know, what the other one is thinking so then the other one gets a bit stressed and then I tend to like 'hey don't worry it's cool, relax talk to me' and if you don't want to I am quite happy to turn over and let the other person come and talk to me when they want to talk to me whereas the person at the moment is actually like "god your so damn stubborn" but she's just as stubborn if not worse and then it takes all of five minutes of me just saying ok in your own time and she breaks within five minutes and she'll say what she wants and then its normally lots of loving affection and sex pretty soon after.
I: So does she initiate that or you or?
J: well I really want to, I really want to push for it, as in for the person to talk to me like its always been like that in that relationship so I've always wanted them to talk to me but you can't make somebody talk to you which is why I think I try and take a step back and I look sometimes quite cold because I'm like ok "if you don't want to talk to me you don't want to talk to me" in a relationship I'm like that, with friends I'm different but in a relationship I'm like that well fine ok I take a step back and then
that'll either wind the person up even more or the fact they will take five minutes and then they will come to me and then things are spoken and things happen.

I: Things happen meaning kind of...?
J: Sex. It starts off as like a kiss or a hug and you say I'm sorry I'm sorry and affection and then depending on the time of the day and what you've been doing then fine might have sex.

I: why would you want to do that?
J: I don't know, it's just like a whole bonding, closeness and like the whole... the fact that you're with somebody on a very, very personal level and it's like, well because you are, you are naked with that person as well,

I: umm
J: and you are not showing everybody else because being naked is a very personal thing, so the whole sex thing and lying naked with somebody is a very personal thing and I think it brings you closer together, that's the whole idea

I: it kind of like brings you back to normal?
J: yeah, it brings you even, well your are closer even more than before you had the argument, in my opinion. I think. (laughter).

I: You think?
J: Yeah, well that's the way I see it, I'll try not to, I don't really want to argue in the first place and umm, I avoid it and I would just go “ok then that's fine if you think that then that's cool with me” would probably do the whole, not like have a major argument but have like something like a time out when she'll carry on doing her thing, I carry on doing my thing then within an hour its forgotten, but we never really argued about it and then probably a month later everything has build up and then we have the argument. I has to work that way because otherwise I can't talk about it.

Nothing comes out.

I: Oh, so you need that kind of tension to build up in order to release. You couldn't have an argument, like, about something small

Marie, Homosexual Female, 27 years old (14.5 minutes)

M: Marie
I: Interviewer

M: number one, I don't normally have heated arguments in the first place they are not heated they are kind of normal arguments; if a situation arises were I get really pissed off with something I am more likely just to become quiet rather than actually argue, umm, my partner at the time would get really annoyed that am not saying anything either, I think that's can wind people up but I am more like a quiet kind of try to ignore it type of person. Well this morning I had a bit of an argument with my current partner and basically we've been talking to each other every day for 10 months which is nice and its our only form of communication since as this is a long distance relationship but then mum came up for the weekend and I said “well mum is up and I don't see her much so give me a bit of space instead of talking 3-4 times a day while mum is here, I'll be texting you before bed time but that's it” and then she ended up ringing me five times! So next day we had a little argument, she was saying “oh what's wrong” and I was saying “umm, nothing”. I
just get annoyed “I just said don’t call me during the weekend so why where you calling and texting me all the time?” and then she started getting emotional and saying “yeah but I miss you” and stuff like that and then, well I don’t know how to handle stuff like that, I just listen, I am a good listener but I don’t like doing the talking. It annoys me at the time although we do love each other I am not going to say anything like that at all at the time. It was so annoying and I just listened a lot and then I said “right I don’t want to hear from you now”.

I: so that was your way of stopping it or whatever?

M: I was just a simple little request and she just kind of ignores it, I know she want to hear me and stuff but it is just annoying that she wouldn’t give me the time.

I: on the phone did she want to basically kind of say well “I love you” and she would want to fix it there and then or something?

M: yeah she said that (“I love you”) but I wouldn’t because it would just happen again; every time I go away or need some time to myself she would do the same. And that just bugs me. I speak to her more than I speak to anybody, mum was only up for 48 hours so I thought I want to spend some time with her.

I: how are your arguments in general? Are they like that kind of annoying thing that happens now and then and you have to deal with it or do think that anything good comes out of it or anything bad comes out of it?

M: I think that generally it a way of letting out a lot of steam and if there is something that is bugging you and you don’t really say much and then it just comes out, its not really nice at the time but afterwards you think “phew, yeah, that’s good”. But, umm, its more of a cooling stage because if it that heated I need a bit of time off and I need to think about it and then I think “yeah maybe I’ve been a bit unreasonable” and then I am better in writing than I am in kind of talking like that so then I’ve written her a big email, but it wasn’t kind of saying sorry, well in a way it was, but it was more kind of explaining the situation, it was quite long email. It was kind of an apology but I just wanted her to understand my point of view because she is a talker and she’ll explain her point of view quite extensively; I’ve never been able to talk on the phone so much I am not a talker and that’s all I am doing at the moment and I just need some physical contact that’s what it is, its frustrating; and after maybe if she was here and we had the same argument and then we would just have a hug have a kiss or something but we
can't have that. It's not the same over the phone or email or something. It's much better, easier maybe, hugging and stuff. (..........)

M: Umm, sex (looking at the theme cards);
I: what about it?
M: umm, verbal affection (looking at the theme cards); umm, I am quite, what's word, umm, will hold my ground kind of thing, for example with my first girlfriend we had a bit of a disagreement and I got pissed of with something so I got all the clothes she had in my room put them in a bag and left them outside her room, just left them there, I thought yeah that makes a point doesn't it? that's as good as having an argument and then didn't hear from her for over two days, I wasn't going to make the first move I wasn't going to call first, so she called me and then I cant remember exactly what happened but it was alright in the end; but I wouldn't back down I just wait for them to do something.

I: and if they backed down or whatever and it got to that point that things are kind of ok would you have sex with them or would you do anything like that?

M: probably, yeah (laughing); I wouldn't do that with someone that didn't mean much to me, only in a relationship or something; just trying to make a point non-verbally, as non-confrontational as possible. Just store it all up and then let it dissipate, what a good word!

I: and would you want to talk about it then?

M: maybe after the time, but at the time I wouldn't. Wouldn't show any affection, umm, that's what she said on the phone, "you are saying all this but it doesn't really sound like you like me at this point"; but its how I feel at the time kind of thing. I am like matter-of-fact, non-emotional, no emotion in my voice whatsoever which to the other person may sound really bad.

(..........)
End of interview
Paul, Heterosexual, 21 years old (13.5)

P= Paul
I= Interviewer

P: Well I am not with anyone at the moment, I think it'll be a past one am referring to. I think I've changed, I think I act differently now than I would do perhaps a year ago.
I: where you with a partner a year ago?

P: umm, sort of, yeah. So umm, a heated argument; I think I wouldn't storm off, definitely not, because I am not that type of person; I am quite sort of laid back and not emotional; yeah definitely not an emotional person.

I: so you can keep your cool while, well, during the argument?

P: yeah definitely; umm, I probably might crack a joke to like break the ice; oh well, maybe not break the ice but just to lighten things a little bit; but then if the argument wasn't mine, I mean if she started the argument, umm, I would get fairly defensive and umm, I don't think I would apologise

I: you mean you would wait for her to apologise then?

P: no, nothing like that; I don't know; I don't think an apology is always needed, sometimes its probably best to bury it and just move on. I think that without actually saying anything its kind of there; yeah, it maybe be either a look or something like that, and then you sort of thing, and you think "well ok I think we are going to disagree about this and its not worth it"; until it comes up next time and I've got a better argument because I thought about it more.

I: you said its like an unsaid thing or unsaid rule or whatever; you know when you are ok again you don't need to verbally apologise or anything like that.

P: no, I don't need to do that all the time, sometimes it can be a look or a touch or something like that;

I: a touch? What do you mean? Something like a hug or?

P: I wouldn't say a hug, that's quite a big think, emotional thing. Its like a definite sort thing; maybe just a little touch or something or a grab of the hand because I am definitely not fond of arguments and by touching, or touching her hand of something I kind of stop it you know. I think that is down to because I am from a, well, my parents divorced and I sort of grew up with a fair bit of arguments and stuff that make me whenever I hear an argument or have one to more like agree rather than disagree, that would be it for me;

I: so you don't like confrontation or anything like that?

P: no, not at all;
I: would like to stay alone or anything like that, like stay isolated?

P: yeah, kind of walk away, umm, either walk away or can be in the same room or stay alone and reflect on the situation. I would do it to think over things and sort of get my argument together maybe. Umm, say that we had an argument and it was quite heated and it really got quite tense, umm, you always have those sort of silent periods when you think about what you said, think about what you could have said and stuff; I would use that time to reflect on what I said and probably try to patch things up but not at that kind of apology level or anything because that would probably give her too much power too much, umm, she would have won.

I: oh is it about winning then?

P: I think in some sense it is, I've got quite traditional views I think; well maybe not traditional but I've got sort of very definite views and, umm, I think you have to let the women win most of the time but obviously on certain issues we don't; because I am from a single parent background I've got quite a lot of respect for my mum so the way I look at things is probably different to quite a lot of people from say a normal, two parent background where the dad is probably really quite influential and maybe what he says goes or something like that whereas for me, my dad hasn't been like a real father figure; it doesn't mean I mean sort of like differential to women at all, but I probably see their point of view more, I've got a sister as well; compared to quite a lot of people I know probably I've got more of an idea on what they are thinking (women); and I went to a mixed school as well, whereas in uni you meet people that come from all boys schools and I've got completely different views to them; I wouldn't say I am like a chauvinist but I've got certain perhaps ideals. (looking at the cards) I am not affectionate at all after an argument.

I: you said that's too much or whatever because I said hugging and you said that's too big or too much

P: mm, if we both come to a sort of say a conclusion and we sort of both really apologised then fair enough we would hug and stuff; but if it was one of those inconclusive things where nobody wants to back down but still get over it then I don't know probably not affection no.

I: do you see sex the same way or? That it shouldn't be done after an argument or its too much whatever?
P: I think sex could be a good thing, yeah, it could clear the air; like if you have an argument I think probably the best sex I’ve had was after an argument, passions are a bit high and we are both fired-up and all.

I: do you see that as different from affection? I mean, is it like you kind of start hugging and kissing and then you have sex kind of thing, so is it making love or just having sex

P: I don’t know, umm that’s a difficult question, umm, I would say sex is different though isn’t it? I can be quite a touchy person, but when it comes to arguments and stuff I wouldn’t involve (....) at all; sex is different though isn’t it? I am sure a lot of people would say that sex is better after an argument, I mean passions are high and stuff.

I: and you said sex clears the air? Brings kind of like normality or anything like that?

P: not necessarily, I wouldn’t say it brings normality because sort of, say you have an argument and then you have sex the argument will still be there afterwards, pretty sure but it does relieve the tension; it can bring you back down, calm you down

I: and then you ca start not arguing but maybe talking on a different level maybe?

P: but then I think , that’s why the women take advantage of the situation; well, form my point of view, say we’ve had an argument and it get not forgotten but passed, swept under the carpet and then we have sex, its been numerous times that arguments were brought up thinking that they can take advantage of me because we had sex and I’ll be like “yeah whatever you can buy a new pair of shoes I don’t care” kind of thing because they know I am vulnerable after sex; I think it’s a tactic, definitely a woman’s tactic, it is. Because if it is like 4 o’clock in the morning you don’t want to listen to anything really, so yeah I think it’s a tactic. I think they probably use the sex as part of it (the argument) actually, its different, I think for a bloke sex is different to, umm, I don’t know I think women will use sex more than men would as a way round things; possibly I don’t know.

I: so do you think they use sex in a manipulative kind of way?

P: yeah correct, absolutely that’s the word I was looking for, manipulative, yes, mm. Definitely women use sex as a manipulative way of controlling men, because they can say ‘yes’ or ‘no’ really,
well the bloke can as well but its not the same for men its not as easy to say no; but they seem to have a lot of control because it's a physical thing and men find it really hard to say no or hide your desire to have sex so its quite easy for women from that respect to just say yes or no really.

Samantha, 27 years old, Heterosexual (18.5 minutes)

S: Samantha
I: Interviewer

S: I am glad that you said 'heated argument', umm, because I think there are different types of arguments. Well the ones I had in the past, it kind of depends on the heat of the argument so to speak. It really depends on who are you arguing with what the argument is about, umm, the level of anger, aggression and passion and all that. I am thinking of examples, in the past I have been with people who have been as passionate and, umm, but not necessarily aggressive as me, and that created a quite few emotional situations and arguments. Umm, example, I remember one where I've been with the person and we've had a fight about something we both feel strongly about, umm, I think fights are really helpful if you've got a lot of tension that need to be cleared; having a good argument really clears the air especially if you’ve got one that argues at the level that you will, won’t just go off and sulk, going to have an argument with you, I am not talking about punching and stuff or anything like that, just having a good shout every now and again, umm, then you both getting out a certain amount of tension and then you can calm down at the same rate and then, err, then you’ve got that same sort of level as each other and then for example, with other people who have been very timid, umm, like the person I am with now for example, I get very worked up about things and I like to have a good debate and if someone is there who doesn’t want to argue or will just run off or will cry or whatever, then I find it irritating and then I don’t think that the argument gets out of your system as good as if someone would fight against you.

I: so there not a clear kind of ending do you mean?
S: Umm, I think I’ll just end up feeling irritated if someone is not really at the same level as me. I don’t know if that’s like a power or a control thing but if I feel like having an argument and the other person will argue with me then I find that a more successful argument than someone who will just go off or..

I: successful argument?
S: umm,
I: What do you mean how can an argument be successful?

S: well, you both getting across your point of view, you feel like you've been constructive, you perhaps both get emotional kind of thing to the same extent, and it feels like you relieved something. But someone who won't do that, someone who is quiet and doesn't like to address the issue, then you don't get your point across and that's irritating. Sorry am I repeating myself here? (laughing)
I: no, no that's fine

S: so yeah, in answer to the heated argument thing, heated arguments are better than non-productive arguments. What do we usually do, ok let me think of an example. Umm, when it escalates vocally, might get loud or whatever, I think we are arguing and its heated you can get really physically into it and we have a shout and I think that kind of ties in with the whole feeling into the other person; you can really see a different side of the person if they are willing to get emotional in front of you and I think that's a good bond with the other person.

I: it is really interesting that you refer to an argument as a bonding thing. Some people think that is like the point that you get emotionally detached or distanced, so it's really interesting that you see it like that, or take it to another level really. You can be into that person because you connect at that moment maybe? Just because of the argument.

S: umm, I mean if someone will show those emotions and feelings in front of you I feel that's really important and really connecting like you said, rather than someone who would just walk off which is just, its like they are defeated. Maybe it is a control thing like I was taking about. I used to, it was when I was younger and I had my first relationships that I, would occasionally spark up, spark up some sort of emotional reaction in someone maybe an argument, just to see how far you can take someone and see how emotional they will become because I like emotional people. I am not finding that as much at the moment, maybe its because of the person I am with, who is more laid back and subdued, umm, but that kind of benefits the relationship too, because then you can have an argument and then you get emotional and worked up and maybe you shouldn't. for example before when I've had a relationship and both of us have been really emotional and, it can be really exhausting to have a big fight with someone and to some extent it can escalate beyond what is necessary. But when you are with someone who is more laid back sometimes it is more productive because they can calm you down and really get to the point of what
you were discussing in the first place. But then I think it had different consequences I mean the argument. Before when you have this big fight with someone who is as emotional and passionate as you are you can really be in tune with that person and get really worked up and end up having fiery, hot sex and that brings it all together really; the sex I mean, umm it kind off tells you that they still care. The whole process really is about confirming your boyfriend’s feelings really; whereas when you are with someone who is very laid back and isn’t really into arguing either it can be irritating, you don’t really address the issues that are necessary and you don’t feel in tune with that person or it can calm you down and bring you back to just discussing things in a normal way rather than having a heated argument. In that extent you probably won’t get as worked up and feel the connection with someone but it pacifies the situation.

I: balances you out kind of thing?

S: umm, I think they both have their pros and cons being with a laid back person who doesn’t like to fight or being with someone who likes to fight as much as you. I can imagine fighting a lot more with someone who is as passionate and emotional as I was, that would probably be a waste of energy but I think it does also lead to more sex in that respect.

I: with a passionate person?

S: yeah, because you have these fights and you’re in tune with someone emotionally and physically and you get really worked up and into something and to see someone that emotional and reacting so strongly against you or with you can be a real tum-on. To have this argument and for example if you’re not sure how the other person feels about you like what I used to do, to start off an argument and see them react in a really emotional way, you can think to yourself “they really feel strongly about me or the situation” and it can be a reassurance and you can see the fire in them, it can make you feel a bit horn as well, umm, yeah, kind of makes you want them again, be with them, feel safe and connect with them. But then when you’re with a laid- back person and they calm you down I think consequentially that has lead to me being affectionate with them. You don’t really feel horny about it, you just feel relaxed and calmer and you have the security and then you feel emotional and to the extent where you want to be affectionate and loving rather than you know, have a good shag. So what would you like me to say?

I: I can’t tell you what to say really. Its up to you to say anything you want to say.
S: ok, umm, if I can I would like to separate these different terms out if I may (referring to the theme cards)

I: yeah you can do

S: because I talked about different kinds of arguments with different people and I can separate it out into different types of arguments and what they lead to. Right my example of having a heated argument with someone who is equally as angry as I am and physically fired-up, umm, that can lead to sexual desire and sex (looking at the cards). But also it has the risk of leading to isolation because you get so pissed off in having this argument that you just want to get out of their faces. It can have like two consequences, a negative or a positive so either way that the risk of having a big fight with someone. Or when you've got this kind of more productive discussion with someone who is more chilled out and calm you down then you talk a lot more about it. We have verbal affection and hugging and affection, and I think you have more intimacy because you are being a little more constructive. (looking, referring to cards) I think, umm, yeah more kissing is involved in like a topic or argument or person that is a bit more laid back. I don't really have situations where I have apologies or using humour in argument’ its either the one or the other, you’ve got affection and feeling romantic and sweet and cuddly or you've got this like full on, having sex, and then, you know, but sometimes that can lead to being pissed off as well because personally I really like to have sex if I am feeling relaxed in someone’s company and secure and if you have this huge heated argument, sometimes it makes you feel insecure so to have the sex then you feel “oh hang on, have we actually resolved the argument at the end of it” and you feel this kind of resentment at the end of it perhaps and then maybe this thing will happen, you know, the isolation and wanting them to piss off. Because they just want to have sex with you, yeah it makes you feel that’s all they want from you sex, not being with you and sorting it out.
This one is more constructive, I mean, you have the affection and then you gradually getting the trust and the security back again; maybe that can lead to sex afterwards but you actually got this more progressive getting back together thing that is a bit more, umm, maybe laboured and a bit more gradual and you can both chill out.

I: so you think in terms of what works better to well, kind of achieve normality or anything like that, umm, you feel like the hugging, affectionate, kissing side is kind of, more, is giving you more in that respect; but you connect and bond with them emotionally really and you feel reassured or..
S: yeah, I think so; it's like, well, I think of examples in the past when I've been with someone we got so into an argument that we forgot about the whole point of what the argument was about, ended up having this passionate sex session, but afterwards I remember feeling "oh hang on, what was the point of the argument? I am sure we were arguing about something" and then I end up feeling pissed off; because we had the sex and afterwards I was thinking "well that's crap" because you are not really addressing the issue and having the sex just for the shake of sex, afterwards you are feeling like you haven't resolved anything. But this way when it's more affectionate and gradual you can actually get to the point and maybe in this sense you are more in tune with someone, more in tune than if you are both having a heated argument.

I: so it's kind of like a way of normalising or putting things back in their place.

S: yeah, I think there is the nice side and the scary but passionate side


I: scary?

S: yeah because of this risk that at the end you are going to be so angry and pissed of with each other that sex is going to seem like sex for sex's shake rather than making up and having affection. So yeah, I've got two categories depending on the size and the power of the argument and the person that you are with and the types of characteristics that you have, whether they want to have the argument and how they deal with it really. I think, yeah, since I've been getting older and having more stable relationships, or calmer relationships I suppose, before I didn't really know who I want to be with, what my emotions where, I was just finding myself and that kind of thing; since I've been in calmer relationships I found that this is more beneficial for me its more, yeah nicer, just having an apology, affection, hugging and sexual intimacy; yeah I think I separated sexual intimacy and sexual desire I don't know why I did that; intimacy seems more emotional and calmer and desire is more of a heated passion and sex.

I: so in terms of that card that says sexual intimacy, you kept on picking, out of the two words, 'sexual' and 'intimacy', you were
referring to sexual stuff or just being intimate, being affectionate or more emotional, so why did you separate sexual desire, sex and sexual intimacy? Is this kind of like making love (pointing at the 'good' side) or? And that's kind of having sex, plain sex (pointing at the 'bad' side)

S: yeah, I guess so, desire, if you think about it, it is like a spontaneous, physical, animal thing perhaps. I hope I am not being too concrete about the two things but with intimacy, I think, intimacy and sexual intimacy are very closely linked; for example if I am with someone and we are kissing and hugging and saying that we love each other, and having this intimacy, then that leads to a more making love kind of sexual situation. When you've got this very extreme, like isolation or sexual desire or as a response to having a huge argument, yeah that's like the fucking thing. I don't know whether people have a general pattern of fighting and (...) what the consequences are, but I think you are dependent on who are with and how they also react with you and, yeah, its not really a 'me' thing its who ever I am with, I mean some people can be both very fiery and I suppose they can have the kind of verbal affection and sex equally.

I: umm, it was very interesting how you separated them into two categories, umm, instead of just a mixed, umm, you know array of words, err, you know, for you obviously its more important to do the more, the calm, the affectionate, kind of progressive thing...

S: I think that sort of stabilises the situation; when you've had this disagreement I personally want things to be more stable and more relaxed and calmer before I move on to the sex thing because I feel that is something that should occur when you are feeling, umm, secure with someone for it to be more of a relationship, loving situation; I mean this is something you can do (pointing at the 'bad' side) with someone you don't even know, I mean, sexual desire and having sex and whatever; to be in tune with someone, have his verbal affection and intimacy is more deep more emotional. Well that can lead to good sex of course but I'd like to have the lovey-dovey thing first because it sets the foundations again. Like we have this fight and everything is up in the air and it settles things down, it stabilises the situation (talking about the good side). Of course you can great, passionate sex this side ('bad' side) but then I think it doesn't tie up all the loose ends.

I: so leaves you feeling empty or something?

S: yeah, mm, I think it does; because that's the whole point of the argument in the first place and you haven't really addressed it, this way ('good' side) you are getting back to the basis again, but that way ('bad' side) everything is still up in the air.

Steve, Heterosexual Male, 21 years old (15mins)

S: Steve
I: Interviewer

S: So it’s like a really bad argument yeah?

I: yeah

S: If it is a really bad argument, yeah, I would normally like walk off because I get, I wouldn’t want to get too angry; so I wouldn’t want to say something I regret, so I’d normally say “right leave me alone” or I’ll go “right I am off”, and I’d just walk off and stay away for a little while to just calm down and maybe afterwards; once I’ve calmed down and had a little think about it then maybe then I might talk about it a bit more calmly

I: so you go back?

S: yeah then I go back and try to chat about it and get it all sorted, finished done and dusted, you know.

; once I’ve, because otherwise you just say something nasty and you get yourself in more trouble (laughing). You just go like “oh for god’s shake ra ra ra” because I have quite a bad temper and all and then that’s a whole new argument you’ve got to deal with because you’ve said something.

I: so you just prefer to walk away?

S: yeah walk away, have a think about it, have a little think about how right I am (laughing)

I: do you think it is about winning or who’s right or wrong and stuff?

S: no, if I was wrong I would say I wrong; I would say “look, I am sorry, it was my fault” but when you are angry it just covers everything doesn’t it, and you don’t think properly

I: would you try to approach her and like try to hug her and kiss her and stuff?

S: yeah, once we start talking about it its all calmer so yeah but I wouldn’t try anything like that at the time of the initial argument I wouldn’t; but as you start to settle things down and calm it, because you have to eventually don’t you? And once you get to that stage, yeah, give her a hug or a kiss, yeah definitely.

I: and why do you think you want to do that?

S: it sort of, well I just want to comfort her to make her feel a bit more secure, so she feels secure again, yeah; you take it away when you have an argument, that is the security, and then you’ve got to replace it at some stage, because that’s what relationships are all about isn’t it?

I: and that’s your way of doing that right?
S: yeah, “sorry, lets forget about it lets move on”; and that’s what the hugging and kissing bit does it shows that you can move on and be together again normally.

I: would you go as far as sex or anything like that or?

S: I haven’t in relationships, it hasn’t worked that way, but hey I wouldn’t mind having sex to make up (laughing); for instance in my last relationship she said, she was like (mimicking her voice) “no I don’t want to have sex with you, it doesn’t work like that! You don’t have an argument and then have sex afterwards” I think she just hated that so I couldn’t really do anything about it. I wouldn’t mind having sex after an argument though, it was more her not wanting it. I think she just saw it as wrong she’ll be like “you just told me this, you’ve just said that, or you’ve done this and now you want to have sex with me? No! I am angry with you I can’t switch off just like that” was her general angle; I’ve tried that once or twice and then I never done that again; it made her think that I got a bit of a cheek really; but, yeah, I do know that sex works for some people, some people love having argument and then having sex afterwards but no, I didn’t, unfortunately I didn’t, in my last relationship I didn’t.

I: do you think that is better? I mean that way it’s a bit more gradual, well maybe you’ll have sex later or maybe next day; what do you think?

S: yeah, I think its better in a way, because if you just dive into it then you leave issues lying around and yeah, its not really fully cleaned up; so if you have sex you release your tension and everything is fine again but then that’s kind of short-term; because there might be little bits in there, in your brain and, you know, that you are still pissed off about so I think, like, the gradual, a bit of kissing a bit of hugging and talking as well, that just sort of tentative and shows that you care without going for the full on “lets have sex” kind of thing.

I: umm, would you make a joke afterwards or anything like that?

S: umm, I am quite often sarcastic; which is quite bad, well it wasn’t quite a good thing to do but I don’t know, it’s a bit mean really but after the argument I might make a couple of sarcastic remarks about the argument or about the way she acted, like, umm, I cant think of a specific example at the moment, but you know, I’d drop in the odd sarcastic remark and it wouldn’t go down very well (laughing) it would just amuse me more that her (laughing). Maybe its my way of coping with it maybe, umm, yeah, sometimes it might be down to the fact that I am still pissed off and I’ll try to, rather than have a scenario where I have another argument, I possibly prefer to vent my little grievances through saying the odd little remark or something, and that’s just sort of, the tail of the argument, if you know what I mean, sort of the last little thing that I get out of my system with a sacri remark or something

I: umm, good, good.

S: umm, do you want me talk about some of these? (pointing at the theme cards)

I: its up to you really, if you want to go ahead
S: umm, I think they are all like, important elements of an argument, you just go through them all one by one I guess. Apology, umm, yes I said I would that if I was in the wrong; umm, intimacy, umm, I mean I’ve been intimate with girls without being sexual; umm, verbal affection, umm, I often said, “oh I love and whatever” and I think that’s quite important, quite an important thing to like reassure them, it links back to security again; I mean my last girlfriend, she was extremely confident and all but I know that she needed to be told that you love her most of the time, she needed that sense of security; it helps repair the situation after an argument, umm, and not only for repairing really, I think it is just as important to say it when it is not even necessary; every now and then not all the time because then it loses its meaning and has no value but if you just sort of drop it in at an appropriate time, especially when there is no need to, I think it goes down extremely well and really is a big thing to do. You need to let them know you are there and that you care and all. So yeah after an argument its important to tell them you love them because that, umm, will just make them feel safe again and feel that you are still there for them despite of what just happened; but even in everyday normal situations without arguments and stuff, you need to like tell them often enough, makes them feel wanted and all. Umm, I think that’s it really, anything else you want to know?

I: no unless you want to add anything
S: no I am covered I think (laughing)
I: thank you very much

END
Suzanna, Heterosexual, 36 years old, (30 mins)

S: Umm....I'm just trying to think... about heated arguments, I tend to avoid conflict so I tend to avoid heated arguments and the reason that I do it is that I tend to burn my bridges, if you get me mad then that is it, and so I suppose there has only been one person that I've actually kind of worked to kind of rectify things when things have gone wrong, the rest of the time..

I: You just walk away?

S: yeah I suppose I'm not a good example because most of my relationships have been abusive so its not been heated arguments, it's been about that kind of thing, I've not really had that much sense of power thing, to have an argument with someone you've both got to feel able to argue and for a lot of my relationships I wasn't able to do that because they were violent.

I: So you wouldn't be able to say anything?

S: It became, I mean I've only had a few relationships and the main one, it was a case of, he didn't say anything, it was kind of survival, it's like “don't say anything”

I: Because if you say anything you're gonna...

S: It's gonna be worse so you learn not to react, even to the point of not crying, not waking up and leaving, you just do nothing and wait for it to pass and then carry on as
normal or as normal as you can... erm... before that when I was a lot younger I did have a real temper and if I had a row I would walk away but I wouldn’t come back, and I’ve had relationships end because, you know, I’m all so stubborn and that’s it, you know, if it gets to the point of being a major row where I’m right and you’re wrong then that’s it. And one of the relationships I had, we were going to be engaged, and this kind of crap and he was a really nice guy and he would just agree with everything I said and we’d have a row and he’d always apologise or an argument or something would happen and he’d always apologise and try to make thing alright and it irritated me so much and it made me even worse because I saw that as being weak but he wouldn’t stand up to me so I went the other way and I was really awful with him and I would just push him and push him and say the most awful things.

I: Just to see if he would still come back and apologise?

S: Yeah, yeah, and eventually he just, we’d been to a club and I’d done this in front of all our friends and been really awful and he walked me back home and I was still having a go at him and still trying to wind him up and he did get up and walk out, and I didn’t see him again. In a way I was quite like...

I: So in a way you wanted him to react like, to react to the.

S: Yeah, I wanted him to argue back because he was the kind of person who would do anything for the quiet life, he really loved me and wanted me to be happy

I: Why did you want him to argue though, what would that give you?

S: Because I wanted someone to stand up to me I think when I was out of order, I wanted that, I didn’t want to feel, because he was very eager to please and I wanted, you know what it’s like when you’re young, I wanted a big strong man, I wanted someone to challenge me, I wanted someone to tell me, like, you’ve gone to far, you know there’s boundaries that you cannot do that to me because I’m a person, and he didn’t, but the (not audible) thing was that I didn’t see him again for about six months and I bumped into him in the street and we walked home together because we were both on our way home from work and I just, you know by that time you’re thinking oh, (non audible) he loves me, and he came back for coffee and he was just the same. This is not gonna work because it’s not that I wanted to be arguing, I just wanted that kind of (non audible) reaction, I suppose passion or whatever it was. I mean the guy that I was seeing before that, (how did we resolve an argument), we never did, we had one major row and I ended up chasing him with a knife didn’t I, and he was absolutely terrified and didn’t come anywhere near me ever again, which is why, the way I am is that I don’t shout and scream and when I’m really mad I just go quiet and I just lash out, well that’s the way I used to be.

I: So you build up and build up and eventually you release kind of thing, so maybe you wanted the first guy kind of thing (to argue) that in a way it’s a release isn’t it if you have a big, big argument and then its over and you both shout or you both whatever then you both just release and then the air is clear again.

S: Yeah, but I never got that. The last relationship that I had the guy was moody, his way of having an argument would be he would just withdraw and go very quiet.
I: In a strop kind of thing?

S: Yeah, and so you couldn’t, you can’t have an argument, because my dad was a lot like that and I saw it with my mum and dad, you can’t have an argument with somebody who won’t argue back with you, just stands there and lets you argue, and even though they’re very passive you still know that they’re angry but they won’t show it, they won’t express it and it’s very hard to get over that, I mean my family background is, my grandma and granddad would fall out and not speak for maybe three weeks, and my dad’s very much like that and that’s what I grew up with, my mum would get mad, my mum shouts and screams and lets it all go and my dad would go off to the greenhouse or go off in the garden and disappear for three days and then come back.

I: And you didn’t want that in a partner?

S: No

I: Some people said that if their partner doesn’t shout and scream or don’t really react to an argument then it means that they don’t care about them, or they perceive it that way.

S: I don’t think it’s not caring, I think it’s when you’re really angry and you vocalise it, you want that to come back, it’s like you might as well be shouting at the wall, you want some kind of response and it’s like wanting someone to say ‘wow hold on’ you know you’ve gone too far, what you’re saying isn’t right and when you don’t get that it’s like, what do I do

I: How do you go back to normality – what would be the sign?

S: With the second guy, the guy who didn’t argue it was kind of, he was so laid back that nothing ever phased him, I mean it did me and it was stupid petty things that would annoy me like not going out of my door with shorts wearing sandals with socks on, but he was just so laid back and he just assumed, and that was another factor that he just assumed that we would go on forever and nothing was such a big deal and nothing was worth arguing about, (not audible) the worst argument we had was when we were having sex, we were actually in the middle of it at the time and he had a cold and his nose started running and a drop of snot landed between my eyes, and that kind of freaked me out completely and I got really irate but he again, it was like nothing was worth arguing about

I: He would just give it some time and then he would just assume what you said, that we’re fine again – did that do your head in?

S: yes, with my husband, because them two guys I didn’t actually live with and I think it’s different when you’re actually living with someone as opposed to living apart because you can you’ve got your own space. In that relationship I was so damaged by the previous one that for a long time I didn’t argue he would tell me to “do this, do that, I know better, I’ve done this, I’ve done that” and I just accepted everything and the thing that happened there was that when I did start to argue it was the one time I
did was when he hit my daughter and things didn’t go back to normal because I left three days afterwards, I picked up the kids, packed all my stuff and he caught me leaving and that was the biggest row we ever had because that was then he tried to lock me in the flat so its like the rows, I think because I’m not confrontational I don’t tend to have little rows because for one I’m not confrontational the partners that I’ve had, if they’ve not been abusive they’ve been kind of the other extreme, really laid back and not argued, so I think you learn how to argue and get over it and make up and I think that if you don’t have that experience then its weird, it’s not something that you do.

Talking about friends? .....................

S: After I left my husband

I: Way your husband abusive?

S: He wasn’t physically abusive with me, he started being physically abusive with my daughter and that’s when I left. There was a lot of circumstances with that marriage that meant that it wasn’t a normal marriage. I’d been abused a long time before I met him. He was 31 years older than me, he was a client because I was on the game and I lost my youth, which was another reason why I haven’t had normal relationships and so the marriage for him was like having a women that he did what he wanted when he wanted it and that means going out and paying for it but after that all kind of and I wanted kids and I wanted to be safe but after all that.(...) he majorIy committed because obviously I was loosing my mind because I wanted to walk away from all of this, he did come back to see the kids and he ended up staying in my flat for about three months before I could get rid of him and we did, I walked round in perpetuously (not audible) because by that time every single thing about him would irritate me and I think when you’ve reached that point there isn’t any way you can let go of him and get back its just...

I: No going back situation

S: No

I: So he came back for the kids you said?

S: He came back to see the kids and then I think he wanted to try again. His was of making up to me from this massive row that we had, was to sit at my kitchen table and open his wallet and shake out two teeth on the table which had fallen out his mouth and he’d had one of the cleaned he and wanted me to have it plated and wear it on the chain round my neck. That was his way of you know ‘I’m giving you a piece of my body’ and his other way was to say that if I ever left him the children would have no dad, he would never ever see them. So his way of making up was not I love you, you’re wonderful, you’re this, you’re that, it’s we have to be together for practicalities for the kids.

I: You mean it was like a threat because he knew that you cared about the kids?
S: Yeah.... The only time I've been in love was with this last guy and I was not staying with him like I had been with others, I think I kind of lost my mind a bit because I'd never been in that situation before and we did have a couple of rows and again he went quiet but I actually made that effort to push through that and that's the first time I've ever done it like I would not leave him alone until he told me what I'd done, what was wrong. And that's the only time I've (not audible). It was absolutely awful to have to do it and it didn't really resolve anything, I mean it resolved what the problem was but it didn't actually make me feel a hell of a lot better because I'd had to put in so much effort to get him to tell me what was wrong. Because I had to be the one to kind of, which I'd never done before I was the one who actually had to do the ‘tell me what I've done wrong’ put myself in the position of being the one who caused it, you don't like to feel that way about things.

I: And obviously when somebody's told you what you've done wrong it's quite a hard thing to accept

S: Yeah I think it is hard to accept that you've done something wrong and sometimes it feels very uncomfortable when you apologise but only with my most recent ex I would do that. You know, now that I think of it I just didn't want to lose him I guess and I was do sick of arguing because of the previous bastards that I've been out with. So yeah, I did apologise a lot with Mark even when I didn't have to really. I couldn't bear having fight after fight; it's silly there's no point so why argue when you can just say you're sorry?

I: But still it would leave you emotionally empty

S: Yeah, It wasn’t this kind of big yeah its over, we're back and everything, it just kind of heated away, things were a bit uncomfortable. I think because it wasn’t, again it’s all about power and balance and it was kind of if one person’s doing all the apologising like I was and all the work to make things right and the other person is just saying ok then, whatever, yes this is what’s wrong. It’s not like that romantic notion of you have an argument, you both apologise, you make up and have great sex and it’s wonderful, Because it has to be an equal effort on both sides to make that apology mutual, and if it’s not then for one person it’s still gonna feel like you’re not getting anything back because you’re the one that’s doing all the apologising and making the effort.

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Goodness of Fit Statistics

Degrees of Freedom = 3
Minimum Fit Function Chi-Square = 3.96 (P = 0.27)
Normal Theory Weighted Least Squares Chi-Square = 3.87 (P = 0.28)
Estimated Non-centrality Parameter (NCP) = 0.87
90 Percent Confidence Interval for NCP = (0.0 ; 10.27)

Minimum Fit Function Value = 0.03
Population Discrepancy Function Value (F0) = 0.0069
90 Percent Confidence Interval for F0 = (0.0 ; 0.082)
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = 0.048
90 Percent Confidence Interval for RMSEA = (0.0 ; 0.16)
P-Value for Test of Close Fit (RMSEA < 0.05) = 0.41

Expected Cross-Validation Index (ECVI) = 0.14
90 Percent Confidence Interval for ECVI = (0.13 ; 0.22)
ECVI for Saturated Model = 0.16
ECVI for Independence Model = 0.43

Chi-Square for Independence Model with 6 Degrees of Freedom = 45.88

Independence AIC = 53.88
Model AIC = 17.87
Saturated AIC = 20.00
Independence CAIC = 69.29
Model CAIC = 44.83
Saturated CAIC = 58.52

Normed Fit Index (NFI) = 0.91
Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI) = 0.95
Parsimony Normed Fit Index (PNFI) = 0.46
Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = 0.98
Incremental Fit Index (IFI) = 0.98
Relative Fit Index (RFI) = 0.83

Critical N (CN) = 364.83

Root Mean Square Residual (RMR) = 0.064
Standardized RMR = 0.064
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) = 0.98
Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) = 0.95
Parsimony Goodness of Fit Index (PGFI) = 0.30

PA:Indirect Model without Error

Modification Indices and Expected Change

Modification Indices for BETA

AggRes SexDes PconSex
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**Expected Change for BETA**

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**Modification Indices for GAMMA**

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**Expected Change for GAMMA**

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No Non-Zero Modification Indices for PHI

**Modification Indices for PSI**

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**Expected Change for PSI**

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**Modification Indices for THETA-EPS**

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**Expected Change for THETA-EPS**
AggRessex SexDes PconSex

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Modification Indices for THETA-DELTA-EPS

JeaLou 0.84 2.13 0.03

Expected Change for THETA-DELTA-EPS

JeaLou -0.15 -0.56 0.01

Modification Indices for THETA-DELTA

JeaLou 2.13

Expected Change for THETA-DELTA

JeaLou 2.08

Maximum Modification Index is 2.82 for Element (2, 3) of BETA

PA: Indirect Model without Error

Total and Indirect Effects

Total Effects of X on Y

JeaLou

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Indirect Effects of X on Y
JeaLou
---
AggRess  --
SexDes  --
PconSex  0.09
         (0.04)
        2.23

Total Effects of Y on Y
AggRess  SexDes  PconSex
---  ---------  -----------
AggRess  --   --   --
SexDes  --   --   --
PconSex  0.40
         (0.08)
        4.90

Largest Eigenvalue of B*B' (Stability Index) is 0.160

Goodness of fit Statistics

Degrees of Freedom = 3
- Minimum Fit Function Chi-Square = 27.40 (P = 0.00)
- Normal Theory Weighted Least Squares Chi-Square = 25.67 (P = 0.00)
  - Estimated Non-centrality Parameter (NCP) = 22.67
  - 90 Percent Confidence Interval for NCP = (10.06; 42.73)
  - Minimum Fit Function Value = 0.22
  - Population Discrepancy Function Value (F0) = 0.18
  - 90 Percent Confidence Interval for F0 = (0.080; 0.34)
  - Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = 0.24
  - 90 Percent Confidence Interval for RMSEA = (0.16; 0.34)
  - P-Value for Test of Close Fit (RMSEA < 0.05) = 0.00012
  - Expected Cross-Validation Index (ECVI) = 0.31
  - 90 Percent Confidence Interval for ECVI = (0.21; 0.47)
  - ECVI for Saturated Model = 0.16
  - ECVI for Independence Model = 0.43
- Chi-Square for Independence Model with 6 Degrees of Freedom = 45.88
  - Independence AIC = 53.38
  - Model AIC = 39.67
  - Saturated AIC = 20.00
  - Independence CAIC = 69.29
  - Model CAIC = 66.63
  - Saturated CAIC = 58.52
  - Normed Fit Index (NFI) = 0.40
  - Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI) = -0.22
Parsimony Normed Fit Index (PNFI) = 0.20
Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = 0.39
Incremental Fit Index (IFI) = 0.43
Relative Fit Index (RFI) = -0.19
Critical N (CN) = 53.60
Root Mean Square Residual (RMR) = 0.14
   Standardized RMR = 0.14
   Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) = 0.91
Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) = 0.69
Parsimony Goodness of Fit Index (PGFI) = 0.27
APPENDIX C