

Development of the Couples Resource Map Scales

By: [Christine E. Murray](#)

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Abstract:

This article describes the initial phases of development of the Couples Resource Map Scales (CRMS). These scales are designed to assess the degree of support couples receive from various personal, relationship, and contextual resources. The first phase involved the initial item development and an expert review of an extended list of potential items. The second phase involved a survey of university seniors (n = 397) involved in monogamous, intimate relationships to test the psychometric properties of the instrument. The third phase involved an analysis of variance in CRMS scores based on participants' self-reported level of satisfaction with their relationship. The results provide preliminary support for the reliability and validity of the CRMS.

Keywords: Scale development, Couples Resource Map Scales, resource assessment

Article:

DeFrain, Cook, and Gonzales-Kruger (2005) wrote, "A strengths-based approach to couples and families has more promise than one focused on failure and pathology" (p. 4). Accordingly, there are now many theories of couple and family therapy that emphasize collaborative, strength-based approaches to working with clients—such as Solution-Focused Therapy (O'Connell, 1998), Narrative Therapy (Monk, Winslade, Crocket, & Epston, 1997), the competence-focused approach (Waters & Lawrence, 1993), and Collaborative Therapy (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992). These strength-based approaches validate the importance of assessing and utilizing available resources to help clients achieve successful gains in therapy. Rather than focusing on pathology or problems, these approaches emphasize the resourcefulness, courage, and creativity of clients (Walter & Peller, 1992; Monk et al., 1997).

Assessments that identify strengths and positive aspects of couples' relationships can help couples experience increased hope about their chances for making progress in therapy (Dinkmeyer, 1993; Fowers, 1990). Many assessment instruments measure relationship distress and problems. Examples include the Discord Questionnaire (Beier & Sternberg, 1977), the Construction of Problems Scale (Heatherington, Freidlander, Johnson, Buchanan, Burke, & Shaw, 1998), the Dominance-Accommodation Scale (Hoskins, 1986), the Kansas Marital Conflict Scale (Eggeman, Moxley, & Schumm, 1985), and the Marital Instability Index (Edwards, Johnson, & Booth, 1987). However, a need exists for more empirically-sound strength-based approaches to relationship assessment. The purpose of this article is to describe the preliminary steps taken to develop an instrument that assesses the resources that are available to provide support to couples in their relationships—the Couples Resource Map Scales (CRMS).

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Murray and Murray (2004) developed the Couple's Resource Map through their application of solution-focused therapy (SFT) to premarital counseling. Likewise, the theoretical foundation for the CRMS lies in the solution-focused approach. Therefore, this article begins with a brief presentation of the major tenets of SFT in this section in order to clarify the conceptual framework of this assessment instrument.

Steve de Shazer, Insoo Kim Berg, and their colleagues developed their solution-focused approach to psychotherapy through their work at the Brief Family Therapy Center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (Brief Family Therapy Center, 2005). Solution-focused therapy (SFT) is a strength-based approach to counseling grounded in a postmodern epistemology (Hoyt & Berg, 1998). Using a solution-focused approach, a therapist works collaboratively with the client to build solutions and positive changes in the client's life (O'Connell, 1998). An important assumption of SFT is that small changes can lead to larger changes as clients begin to focus on their strengths, successes, and competencies (Murray & Murray, 2004; Walter & Peller, 1992). Therefore, resources play an important role in SFT, in that they provide support for clients as they work toward the solutions that will promote positive change.

THE ROLE OF RESOURCES IN COUPLE RELATIONSHIPS

Previous research highlights the important function that resources and strengths play in supporting couples in their relationships. Although space limitations preclude a comprehensive review of research examining the importance of each category of resources assessed in the CRMS, this section reviews some of the research demonstrating that couples benefit from the support they receive from personal, relationship, and contextual resources.

Regarding personal resources, researchers have demonstrated that higher levels of self-esteem and more positive attitudes toward marriage are associated with higher levels of marital satisfaction (Holman, Birch, Carroll, Doxey, Larson, & Linford, 2001). Other personal qualities or resources that have been linked to positive relationship outcomes include self-acceptance, self-soothing strategies, and positive personal dreams for one's life (Gottman, 1999). In addition, Jacobson and Christensen (1996) have noted the importance of partners' abilities to promote their own self-care in order to enhance their relationship functioning.

Relationship resources also appear to play an important function in the maintenance of healthy relationships. Relationship skills, such as communication and conflict management skills, have been linked to relationship outcomes (Holman et al., 2001; Lindahl, Clements, & Markman, 1998; Stanley, 1995). For instance, in a study of heterosexual, lesbian, and gay couples, Metz, Rosser, and Strapko (1994) found a relationship between more positive conflict resolution styles and relationship satisfaction, particularly for lesbian couples. In addition, John Gottman's (1994, 1999) research findings suggest that a couple's abilities to manage conflict and negativity and to experience more positive than negative interactions are crucial for relationship success. Another important relationship resource involves the shared dreams and meaning systems that develop within couple relationships (Gottman, 1999).

In addition to personal and relationship resources, contextual resources influence relationship outcomes. Social support from friends and the surrounding community provides an important resource for couples. For example, Holman et al. (2001) found that "social network support or pressure is a pivotal factor in whether marriage partners decide to stay in an unhappy marriage or leave the marriage" (p. 73). In addition, for married couples, a supportive social network is associated with higher levels of marital satisfaction (Holman et al., 2001). Another contextual resource that has been linked with relationship satisfaction involves partners' relationships in their families-of-origin, with more positive relationships with family members being associated with higher levels of relationship satisfaction (Holman et al., 2001; Larson & Holman, 1994).

Although these research findings demonstrate the important function of personal, relationship, and contextual resources in determining couple relationship processes and outcomes, additional research is needed to determine the resources that are most important for different types of couples throughout their relationships. Indeed, much of the existing research on couple relationships and interventions was conducted on Caucasian, heterosexual, middle class couples (Christensen & Heavey, 1999). The present study aims to develop an assessment instrument that is useful for assessing the role and function of various specific resources within different types of relationships (e.g., heterosexual, same-sex, dating, engaged, and cohabiting).

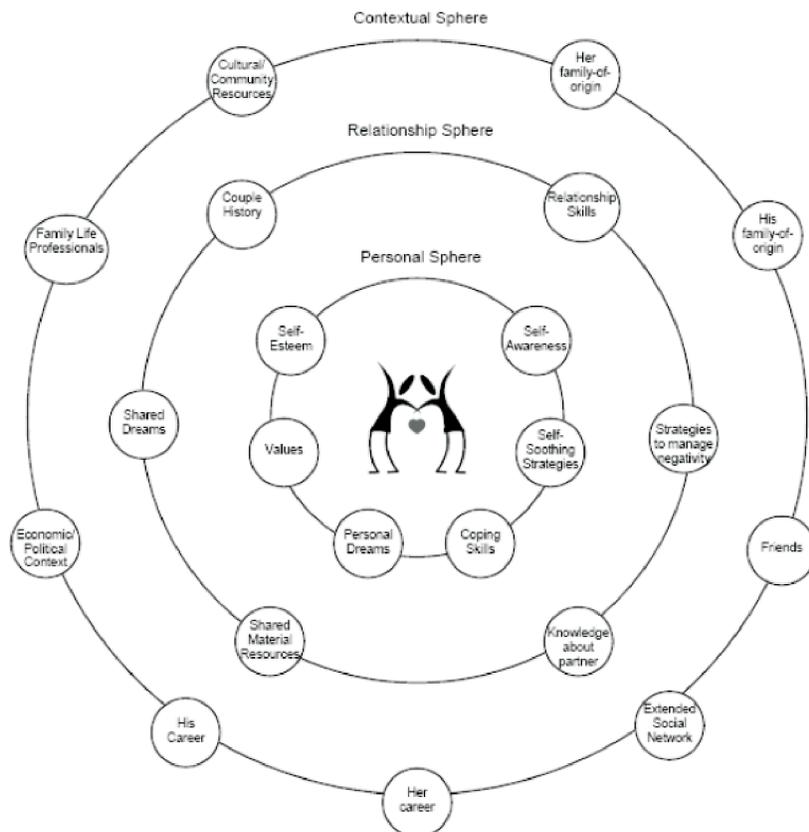
ORGANIZATION OF THIS STUDY AND INSTRUMENT

This study was organized into three phases. Phase One included the development of the initial item pool and an expert panel review of these items. The results of Phase One were used to develop the Pilot Version of the Couples Resource Map Scales (CRMS-P). The CRMS-P was then used in Phase Two, which involved a survey of individuals who were involved in monogamous intimate relationships. The purposes of Phase Two were to examine the initial psychometric properties of the CRMS-P and to use the results of this analysis to reduce the number of items to develop a more concise version of the Couples Resource Map Scales (CRMS). The concise version of the CRMS was used in Phase Three to provide an initial examination of the validity of the instrument.

The CRMS-P contained 84 items, and the CRMS contains 63 items. Each study phase is described in detail in the following sections.

The organization of the instrument is based on the Couples Resource Map (Murray & Murray, 2004, Figure 1). Thus, there are three levels of information contained on the CRMS (both the pilot and concise versions). First, total scale scores provide an overall measure of the resources available to couples across all areas and categories. A participant's total scale score includes the sum of his or her responses on the entire instrument.

FIGURE 1. Couple's Resource Map (Murray & Murray, 2004).



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The Couple's Resource Map consists of three spheres of relationship resources (Contextual Sphere, Relationship Sphere, and Personal Sphere). The second level of assessment is based on these three resource spheres. There are three Resource Area Scales corresponding to the three spheres: the Personal Resource Area Scale, the Relationship Resource Area Scale, and the Contextual Resource Area Scale.

The third, and most specific, level of assessment is based on the 21 resource categories contained on the Couples Resource Map. Within each of the three resource spheres, there are specific categories of relationship

resources. The Contextual Sphere contains nine categories, the Relationship Sphere contains six categories, and the Personal Sphere contains six categories. Each category represents a proposed Category Subscale within the three broader Resource Area Scales (Personal, Relationship, and Contextual). The CRMS-P contained four items per Category Subscale, and this number was reduced to three items per Category Subscale for the CRMS. The Category Subscales were not examined in Phase Three (initial validation of the CRMS) of this study. However, the items comprising each Category Subscale are presented in order to guide further development of the CRMS.

PHASE ONE: ITEM POOL DEVELOPMENT AND EXPERT REVIEW

The purpose of Phase One was to reduce an initial item pool to an 84-item pilot instrument (CRMS-P). This phase consisted of the item development and an expert panel review.

Methods

Initial item development. The Couple's Resource Map (Murray & Murray, 2004) provided the conceptual framework for the development of items for the CRMS-P. The researcher developed a list of approximately six to eight items designed to assess components of each of the 21 categories. The initial item pool was developed to be as comprehensive as possible in order to include all possible items that could be relevant within each category (Clark & Watson, 1995). The initial item pool consisted of 130 items.

Items were developed to reflect the definitions of each category as described by Murray and Murray (2004). Items were worded to be gender-neutral. For example, the categories of "his career" and "her career" were changed to be "my career" and "my partner's career." Also, the word "partner" was used rather than "boyfriend," "girlfriend," "husband," or "wife." These wording choices were used in order to make the instrument useful for assessing resources in all types of couples, include same sex, heterosexual, dating, engaged, and married couples.

Expert panel and review and ratings. The next step involved a review and rating of the items by a panel of experts. There were two reasons for this expert panel review. First, the expert panel review provided an examination of the face validity of the initial items. Second, the results of the expert panel ratings were used to reduce the number of items within each category to a standard number of four items. These four items per category were included on the CRMS-P.

The expert panel was comprised of six mental health professionals with experience and training in marriage and family counseling. The expert panel included one Doctoral level licensed marriage and family therapist, two Masters level counseling professionals with training in marriage and family counseling, two Doctoral candidates in marriage and family counseling, and one Doctoral candidate in mental health counseling who also possessed a Masters degree in marriage and family counseling.

Each expert was presented with a questionnaire describing the 21 categories and a list of the initial items arranged by category. The questionnaire listed the definitions of each category (Murray & Murray, 2004). The experts were provided with the following instructions: "Considering the definition provided, please rank how much you believe each statement reflects the essence of the category's definition. Rank each item in each category, beginning with '1' for the most reflective statement, '2' for the second-most reflective statement, and so on until you have ranked each statement in each category."

The researcher scored the experts' questionnaires by summing all of their ratings for each item. Based on the rating procedure, items with lower summed scores represented the items that the experts believed to be most reflective of the category definition. Prior to sending the questionnaire to the expert panel for review, the researcher completed the questionnaire and rated each item according to the same procedure. The researcher's ratings were not entered into the summed scores. The researcher's ratings were only used in the event of a tie score for the fourth item to be included in each category.

Results

The researcher compiled the experts' ratings into one composite score for each item. For each category, the four items with the lowest composite scores were retained, and the remaining items were eliminated. For 6 of the 21 categories, there was a tie for the items with the fourth-lowest scores. In these cases, the researcher returned to her own ratings that she completed prior to the expert panel review. In these cases, the researcher retained the items that she rated with the highest ranking, and the other item was eliminated.

These procedures resulted in the retention of an 84-item instrument, which contained four items per category. The number of items retained in each scale is as follows: Personal Resources: 24; Relationship Resources: 24; and Contextual Resources: 36. These 84 items comprised the Couples Resource Map Scales-Pilot Version (CRMS-P), which was used to collect the data for the second and third phases of this project as described in the next section.

PHASES TWO AND THREE: PSYCHOMETRIC ASSESSMENT

The purposes of Phases Two and Three were (a) to collect data that would permit the psychometric evaluation of the instrument, (b) to use statistical analyses to reduce the number of items on the CRMS-P to 63 for the new version (CRMS), retaining the three most psychometrically-sound items in each category, and (c) to use the final version scales to analyze variance in CRMS scores (total scale and Resource Area Scales) based on participants' self-reported levels of satisfaction with their relationships. Both phases relied on data collected in an Internet-based survey of university seniors. This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of the host university prior to data collection.

Methods

Sample. The sample consisted of 397 seniors enrolled in a mid-sized public university in the southeastern United States. University seniors were selected as the target population for this study in order to attain a sample of respondents who would be likely to demonstrate a wide range of relationship statuses, including dating, engaged, and married.

The names and e-mail addresses of all students classified as seniors were obtained from the University Registrar's Office on September 16, 2005. All of these students were invited to participate in this study. A total of 3,312 students were included on the list obtained from the Registrar's Office. However, electronic mail (e-mail) invitations to participate in the study were not able to be delivered to 16 students due to defunct e-mail addresses. Therefore, the total number of students who received the invitation was 3,296.

In order to be eligible to participate in this study, participants had to meet the following two eligibility criteria: (a) participants must have been at least 18 years of age and (b) participants must have been currently involved in a monogamous intimate relationship. For purposes of this study, *monogamous intimate relationship* was defined as *an exclusive relationship, in which two individuals share an emotional, romantic, and/or sexual connection, and both individuals agree that neither partner will share a similar relationship with another person*. This definition is inclusive of individuals in both heterosexual and same-sex relationships. Participants were recruited at the individual level, and individuals were not required to participate with their partners in order to be eligible for the study. There were no additional exclusion criteria for participation. An unknown, though likely large, number of students who were recruited were not eligible to participate in this study due to not being involved in a monogamous intimate relationship. Therefore, it was not possible to calculate an accurate response rate for the number of people who were eligible to participate in this study.

Instrumentation. The instrumentation included the Couples Resource Map Scales-Pilot Version (CRMS-P) and a 16-item demographic questionnaire. The development of the CRMS-P was described in the previous section. The CRMS-P consisted of 84 items. These items were ordered randomly. Participants were asked to rate the degree to which they agreed with each item as it applied to their current intimate relationship. Ratings were based on a four-point Likert scale (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree). According to

Microsoft® Word, the CRMS-P has a Flesch-Kincaid reading level of 9.5. Psychometric properties of the CRMS-P, as well as the resulting final instrument, the CRMS, are presented in the Results section.

As part of the demographic questionnaire, participants were asked one question related to their current level of relationship satisfaction and one question about their beliefs about how satisfied their partners were with their relationships. These items were rated on a four-point Likert scale (Very satisfied, Mostly satisfied, Mostly unsatisfied, Very unsatisfied).

Data collection procedures. This study was conducted via the Internet. The primary reason for selecting the Internet as the method for data collection was because the final version of the CRMS is intended to be an Internet-based instrument, so an Internet-based pilot survey reflects more accurately the planned final version of the instrument as compared with a paper-based pilot survey. The survey was hosted by an Internet-based survey hosting company.

Potential participants were recruited via e-mail and contacted a maximum of three times. The survey hosting company tracked which participants had responded to the survey, and participants who had not responded to the survey were contacted at the second and third e-mail follow-up reminder e-mails. Contacts occurred in weekly intervals for three weeks. The entire data collection process was complete in four weeks (October 16 through November 7, 2005). In the recruitment e-mails, participants were directed to the survey web-site. Participants were required to read and agree to an informed consent document in order to access the survey. The survey was estimated to take 20 minutes to complete. Participants' responses were confidential.

Data analyses. There were two phases of data analysis using the same data. The questions guiding Phase Two of this study were: (a) What are the psychometric properties (internal consistency, item-scale correlations) of the CRMS-P?; (b) Which three items in each of the 21 Category Subscales should be retained in the concise version of the CRMS?; and (c) What are the psychometric properties (internal consistency, item-scale correlations) of the CRMS?

Question (a) was answered using Cronbach's alpha and item-scale correlation analyses. Item-scale correlations were calculated for each item and the total scale (all 84 items), the corresponding Resource Area scale (i.e., Contextual Resources, Relationship Resources, and Personal Resources), and the corresponding Category Subscale. Question (b) was answered based on an analysis of item response patterns and the results of the analysis of question (a). Item response patterns were analyzed to determine if any items needed to be eliminated due to all or nearly all (i.e., 95% or higher) of the participants responding in the same way, as these items can distort subsequent analyses (Clark & Watson, 1995). Then, items demonstrating the lowest item-subscale correlations were eliminated from each of the 21 subscales, leaving 21 three-item subscales. The remaining 63 items formed the new CRMS for question (c). Using the CRMS, psychometric properties (Cronbach's alpha and item-scale correlations) were recalculated for the total scale, the Resource Area Scales, and the Category Subscales.

The question guiding Phase Three of this study was: Do participants differ in their CRMS scores (total scale and Resource Area Scales) based on their level of satisfaction with their relationships? Based on the solution-focused assumption that available resources help couples to manage the problems they face in their relationships (Murray & Murray, 2004), the hypothesis for this question was that participants who report more available resources (total scale scores and Resource Area Scale scores) would also report higher levels of relationship satisfaction. One-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were used to answer this question.

Results

Description of the sample. The sample was comprised of 397 university seniors. Complete demographic data were missing for some of the participants. The available demographic data are reported here. The sample was comprised of 333 females (83.9%) and 60 males (15.1%). The mean age for participants was 25.5 years ($SD = 7.5$), with a range from 20 to 55 years. The mean age of participants' partners was 27.26 years ($SD = 8.3$), with

a range from 18 to 62 years. Most participants were Caucasian ($n = 313$, 78.8%), followed by African American ($n = 49$, 12.3%), Multiracial ($n = 14$, 3.5%), Hispanic ($n = 9$, 2.3%), Asian American ($n = 5$, 1.3%), Native American ($n = 2$, 0.5%), and Other Ethnic Backgrounds ($n = 1$, 0.3%). Participants reported their partners' ethnic backgrounds, and the majority of partners' were also Caucasian ($n = 308$; 77.6%), followed by African American ($n = 54$, 13.6%), Hispanic ($n = 10$, 2.5%), Multiracial ($n = 8$, 2.0%), Other Ethnic Backgrounds ($n = 6$, 1.5%), Asian American ($n = 5$, 1.3%), and Native American ($n = 2$, 0.5%).

Participants reported information about their relationships. The most common relationship status was dating ($n = 169$, 42.6%), followed by married ($n = 89$, 22.4%), engaged ($n = 82$, 20.7%), living together but not married or engaged ($n = 48$, 12.1%), and other ($n = 4$, 1.0%). Most of the participants were involved in heterosexual relationships ($n = 380$, 95.7%), with 11 participants reporting involvement in same-sex relationships ($n = 11$, 2.8%). Most participants ($n = 214$, 53.9%) did not share the same household as their partners. The mean length of participants' relationships was 4.9 years ($SD = 5.8$), with a range from 0 to 34 years.

Participants rated their levels of satisfaction with their current relationships. Most participants indicated that they were very satisfied ($n = 191$, 48.1%), followed by mostly satisfied ($n = 161$, 40.6%), mostly unsatisfied ($n = 22$, 5.5%), and very unsatisfied ($n = 18$, 4.5%). In addition, participants rated how satisfied they believed their partners were with their current relationships. Most participants indicated that they believed their partners to be very satisfied with their relationships ($n = 214$, 53.9%), followed by mostly satisfied ($n = 146$, 36.8%), very unsatisfied ($n = 19$, 4.8%), and mostly unsatisfied ($n = 14$, 3.5%).

Phase Two. The first question, regarding the psychometric properties of the CRMS-P was answered using Cronbach's alpha and item-scale correlation analyses. All 84 items on the CRMS-P were included in this analysis. This analysis revealed that the total scale Cronbach's alpha for the CRMS-P was $a = 0.95$. The Resource Area Scale coefficients were as follows: Personal Resource Area Scale ($a = 0.91$), Relationship Resource Area Scale ($a = 0.93$), and Contextual Resource Area Scale ($a = 0.88$). The internal consistency coefficients for each of the 21 Category Subscales (with four items each) were as follows: Self-esteem ($a = 0.88$), Values ($a = 0.64$), Personal dreams ($a = 0.78$), Coping skills ($a = 0.71$), Self-soothing strategies ($a = 0.79$), Self-awareness ($a = 0.50$), Couple history ($a = 0.77$), Shared dreams ($a = 0.87$), Shared material resources ($a = 0.68$), Knowledge about partner ($a = 0.70$), Strategies to manage negativity ($a = 0.75$), Relationship skills ($a = 0.84$), Cultural/community resources ($a = 0.38$), Family life professionals ($a = 0.73$), Economic/political context ($a = 0.78$), My career ($a = 0.62$), My partner's career ($a = 0.66$), Extended social network ($a = 0.65$), Friends ($a = 0.72$), My family-of-origin ($a = 0.83$), and My partner's family-of-origin ($a = 0.76$). Thus, the mean Cronbach's alpha for the 21 Category Subscales was $a = 0.72$, with a range from $a = 0.38$ to $a = .88$. Due to space limitations, item-scale correlations for the CRMS-P Resource Area Scales and the Category Subscales are not presented in this article. However, this information is available from the researcher.

The second question related to which three items in each of the 21 categories should be retained in the concise version of the CRMS. This analysis began with a review of item response patterns. No items were eliminated due to unbalanced response patterns, as all items demonstrated adequate variability in response patterns. Next, the item-Category Subscale correlations determined in the analysis of the first research question were evaluated. The items with the lowest item-Category Subscale ratings in each of the 21 categories were eliminated. The 63 items that were retained can be found in Table 1. These items formed the version of the CRMS that was used to answer the remaining research questions in Phases Two and Three.

The third question examined the psychometric properties of the concise version of the CRMS, and this question was answered using Cronbach's alpha and item-scale correlation analyses. For the CRMS, the total scale Cronbach's alpha was $a = 0.94$. The Resource Area Scale coefficients were as follows: Personal Resource Area Scale ($a = 0.88$), Relationship Resource Area Scale ($a = 0.92$), and Contextual Resource Area Scale ($a = 0.86$). The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the 21 Category Subscales can be found in Table 1. For the CRMS, the mean Cronbach's alpha for the 21 Category Subscales was $a = 0.72$, with a range from $a = 0.40$ to $a = 0.88$. Again, the CRMS item-Category Subscale correlations are not presented here due to space limitations,

but this information is available from the researcher. However, item-Resource Area Scale correlations can be found in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Psychometric Properties of the CRMS: Resource Area Scales and Category Subscales

| Cronbach's alpha coefficients and Item-Resource Area Scale Correlation (<i>r</i> *) | |
|---|---|
| Personal Resource Area Scale ($\alpha = 0.88$) | Shared dreams ($\alpha = 0.85$) |
| <i>Self-esteem</i> ($\alpha = 0.88$) | My partner and I talk about goals we share for the future. ($r = 0.69$) |
| Generally, I like myself. ($r = 0.65$) | My partner and I have discussed what we want our relationship to be like in the future. ($r = 0.68$) |
| I would describe myself as having high self-esteem. ($r = 0.63$) | My partner and I share similar interests for the types of experiences we will have in our relationship in the future. ($r = 0.73$) |
| I think generally positive thoughts about myself. ($r = 0.66$) | Shared material resources ($\alpha = 0.70$) |
| <i>Values</i> ($\alpha = 0.62$) | My partner and I have discussed how we will share financial resources in the future. ($r = 0.55$) |
| I value family togetherness. ($r = 0.34$) | My partner and I hold similar beliefs about money management. ($r = 0.56$) |
| I believe that it is important to prioritize one's relationship. ($r = 0.41$) | My partner and I share similar goals for the amount of money we want to earn as a couple. ($r = 0.51$) |
| The things I believe are important in life are found within my relationship. ($r = 0.54$) | Knowledge about partner ($\alpha = 0.67$) |
| <i>Personal dreams</i> ($\alpha = 0.81$) | My partner and I share similar goals for the amount of money we want to earn as a couple. ($r = 0.51$) |
| My dreams about my future include my current partner. ($r = 0.40$) | I usually understand why my partner acts the way he/she does. ($r = 0.55$) |
| I believe that I could accomplish my dreams for the future within my current relationship. ($r = 0.50$) | I am aware of my partner's personal strengths and weaknesses. ($r = 0.50$) |
| My partner supports my dreams for the future. ($r = 0.46$) | I am aware of the people and experiences that have influenced my partner's life. ($r = 0.52$) |
| <i>Coping skills</i> ($\alpha = 0.77$) | Strategies to manage negativity ($\alpha = 0.71$) |
| I believe I can effectively solve the problems that arise in my life. ($r = 0.60$) | When we start to get into a heated argument, my partner and I take time to calm down before we continue to discuss the topic at hand. ($r = 0.42$) |
| I would describe myself as having strong problem-solving skills. ($r = 0.52$) | We have established ground rules to promote mutual respect during disagreements. ($r = 0.54$) |
| I believe that I am able to cope well when I face challenging situations. ($r = 0.59$) | My partner and I are able to manage negative interactions in our relationship. ($r = 0.70$) |
| <i>Self-soothing strategies</i> ($\alpha = 0.80$) | Relationship skills ($\alpha = 0.85$) |
| When I feel anxious, I can usually calm myself down. ($r = 0.51$) | My partner and I communicate well with each other. ($r = 0.70$) |
| I am able to relax easily. ($r = 0.54$) | My partner and I have open communication in our relationship. ($r = 0.66$) |
| I know how to calm myself down when I feel myself becoming anxious. ($r = 0.51$) | We are both able to express our opinions clearly and openly. ($r = 0.69$) |
| <i>Self-awareness</i> ($\alpha = 0.50$) | Contextual Resource Area Scale ($\alpha = 0.86$) |
| I am aware of my personal strengths and weaknesses. ($r = 0.51$) | <i>Cultural/community resources</i> ($\alpha = 0.40$) |
| I usually understand why I act the way I do. ($r = 0.45$) | My cultural group supports my relationship with my partner. ($r = 0.38$) |
| I am aware of the people and experiences that have influenced my life. ($r = 0.37$) | My partner and I belong to a religious and/or spiritual group in which healthy relationships are valued. ($r = 0.39$) |
| Relationship Resource Area Scale ($\alpha = 0.92$) | Long-term, monogamous relationships are common in my community. ($r = 0.34$) |
| <i>Couple history</i> ($\alpha = 0.79$) | |
| My partner and I share many happy memories of times we have shared. ($r = 0.62$) | Family life professionals ($\alpha = 0.72$) |
| My partner and I have supported one another through challenging situations. ($r = 0.66$) | My partner and I both would be willing to seek couples counseling if we faced problems we could not resolve on our own. ($r = 0.40$) |
| My partner and I often reminisce about good times we have shared together. ($r = 0.53$) | I would feel comfortable speaking with a professional (e.g., a counselor or clergy member) about my relationship. ($r = 0.39$) |
| | My partner and I would be willing to attend a relationship enrichment workshop in our community. ($r = 0.38$) |
| | Economic/political context ($\alpha = 0.78$) |
| | I believe that the current national economy provides opportunities for couples to achieve financial security. ($r = 0.41$) |
| | I believe that politicians prioritize the issues that are important to me and my family. ($r = 0.45$) |
| | The current national government has developed a number of family-friendly public policies. ($r = 0.44$) |
| | My career ($\alpha = 0.65$) |
| | My job has a flexible work schedule to allow me to spend time with my partner. ($r = 0.42$) |
| | I am happy with my current job. ($r = 0.38$) |
| | Family relationships are valued within my current place of employment. ($r = 0.44$) |
| | My partner's career ($\alpha = 0.69$) |
| | My partner's job has a flexible work schedule to allow us to spend time together. ($r = 0.37$) |
| | Family relationships are valued within my partner's current place of employment. ($r = 0.37$) |
| | The demands of my partner's career do not interfere with our relationship. ($r = 0.31$) |
| | Extended social network ($\alpha = 0.65$) |
| | My partner and I have many social contacts within our community. ($r = 0.51$) |
| | I have many acquaintances with whom I enjoy spending time. ($r = 0.42$) |
| | My partner and I belong to groups in our community through which we have met other couples. ($r = 0.41$) |
| | Friends ($\alpha = 0.76$) |
| | My partner and I have friends who are couples with whom we enjoy spending time. ($r = 0.55$) |
| | My partner and I can rely on our friends to provide us with emotional support when we need it. ($r = 0.54$) |
| | If I were to talk with my friend(s) about some problems I was having in my relationship, my friend(s) would listen without judging me or my partner. ($r = 0.45$) |
| | My family-of-origin ($\alpha = 0.82$) |
| | I am close with my family-of-origin. ($r = 0.37$) |
| | I can turn to members of my family-of-origin for emotional support. ($r = 0.44$) |
| | My partner and I enjoy spending time with my family-of-origin. ($r = 0.51$) |
| | My partner's family-of-origin ($\alpha = 0.73$) |
| | My partner is close with his/her family-of-origin. ($r = 0.28$) |
| | I get along well with my partner's family-of-origin. ($r = 0.37$) |
| | My partner can turn to members of his/her family-of-origin for emotional support. ($r = 0.30$) |

Notes. Total scale Cronbach's alpha is $\alpha = 0.94$. *Item-scale correlations presented are for each item with its corresponding Resource Area Scale (i.e. Personal, Relationship, and Contextual Resources).

Phase Three. Phase Three was guided by the following research question: Do participants differ in their CRMS scores (total scale and Resource Area Scales) based on their levels of satisfaction with their relationships? One-way ANOVAs were conducted to answer this question. Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations of total scale and Resource Area Scale scores based on participants' level of satisfaction with their relationships. The ANOVA summary table (Table 3) indicates that there were significant differences based on participants' levels of relationship satisfaction in all four scale scores (total scale scores, Personal Resource Area Scale, Relationship Resource Area Scale, and Contextual Resource Area Scale). Thus, this analysis provides an affirmative response to the research question regarding whether participants differ in their CRMS scores based on their levels of relationship satisfaction.

TABLE 2. Means and Standard Deviations of CRMS Total Scale and Resource Area Scale (RAS) Scores Based on Participants' Levels of Relationship Satisfaction.

| Level of Relationship Satisfaction | | Total Scale Score | Personal RAS Score | Relationship RAS Score | Contextual RAS Score |
|------------------------------------|------|-------------------|--------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| Very satisfied | Mean | 209.47 | 62.13 | 63.58 | 83.97 |
| | n | 156 | 181 | 185 | 165 |
| | SD | 17.13 | 5.58 | 5.57 | 9.69 |
| Mostly satisfied | Mean | 188.07 | 56.82 | 55.26 | 76.12 |
| | n | 135 | 150 | 152 | 146 |
| | SD | 15.58 | 5.05 | 5.97 | 7.89 |
| Mostly unsatisfied | Mean | 171.71 | 53.05 | 49.70 | 70.84 |
| | n | 17 | 20 | 20 | 19 |
| | SD | 22.76 | 7.08 | 9.14 | 9.62 |
| Very unsatisfied | Mean | 204.75 | 59.88 | 61.72 | 81.47 |
| | n | 16 | 17 | 18 | 17 |
| | SD | 25.55 | 8.18 | 11.63 | 12.02 |
| Total | Mean | 198.34 | 59.37 | 59.38 | 79.82 |
| | n | 324 | 368 | 375 | 347 |
| | SD | 20.99 | 6.30 | 7.81 | 10.03 |

Note. Due to missing data, the number of participants (n) who were included in the analysis is indicated on this table.

A Scheffe post-hoc test was conducted to determine which mean scale scores differed from one another. The results of the Scheffe test (Table 4) revealed the following significant differences at the $p < 0.05$ level: (a) participants who reported that they were very satisfied with their relationships demonstrated significantly higher means on total, Personal Resource Area, Relationship Resource Area, and Contextual Resource Area scale scores as compared with individuals reporting that they were either mostly satisfied or mostly unsatisfied; (b) there were no significant differences in mean scores for any of the scales between participants reporting that they were very satisfied with their relationship and participants reporting that they were very unsatisfied with their relationships; (c) participants who indicated that they were mostly satisfied with their relationships demonstrated significantly higher scores than those who indicated that they were mostly unsatisfied with their relationships on the following scale scores: total, Personal Resource Area, and Relationship Resource Area; (d) participants who reported that they were very unsatisfied with their relationships demonstrated significantly higher scores as compared to participants reporting that they were mostly satisfied with their relationships on their total scale and Relationship Resource Area Scale scores; and (e) participants who reported that they were very unsatisfied with their relationships demonstrated significantly higher scores on all four scales as compared to participants reporting that they were mostly unsatisfied with their relationships. Thus, this analysis reveals a general trend for participants who report higher levels of relationship satisfaction to also demonstrate greater availability of resources, including personal, relationship, and contextual resources. The major exception to this trend was the finding that participants who reported that they were very unsatisfied with their relationships demonstrated significantly higher CRMS scores in several categories than participants reporting higher levels of relationship satisfaction. Thus, this analysis demonstrated partial support for the hypothesis that more available resources are related to higher levels of relationship satisfaction.

TABLE 3. ANOVA Summary Table for CRMS Total Scale and Resource Area Scale (RAS) Scores Based on Participants' Levels of Relationships Satisfaction

| Source | SS | df | MS | F | p |
|-------------------------------|-----------|-----|----------|-------|--------|
| Total Scale Score | | | | | |
| Between groups | 46304.83 | 3 | 15434.94 | 51.42 | 0.000* |
| Within groups | 96055.83 | 320 | 300.17 | | |
| Total | 142360.65 | 323 | | | |
| Personal RAS Score | | | | | |
| Between groups | 3160.07 | 3 | 1053.36 | 33.56 | 0.000* |
| Within groups | 11423.67 | 364 | 31.38 | | |
| Total | 14583.74 | 367 | | | |
| Relationship RAS Score | | | | | |
| Between groups | 7826.47 | 3 | 2608.82 | 64.57 | 0.000* |
| Within groups | 14989.76 | 371 | 40.40 | | |
| Total | 22816.23 | 374 | | | |
| Contextual RAS Score | | | | | |
| Between groups | 6421.65 | 3 | 2140.55 | 25.84 | 0.000* |
| Within groups | 28414.63 | 343 | 82.84 | | |
| Total | 34836.28 | 346 | | | |

Note. * $p < 0.01$

TABLE 4. Results of Scheffe Post-hoc Analysis of Differences in Mean CRMS Total Scale and Resource Area Scales Based on Relationship Satisfaction.

| Dependent Variable | Relationship Satisfaction | Mean Difference | Significance |
|---|---------------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Total Scale Score | | | |
| Very satisfied | Mostly satisfied | 21.41 | 0.000* |
| Very satisfied | Mostly unsatisfied | 37.77 | 0.000* |
| Very satisfied | Very unsatisfied | 4.72 | 0.782 |
| Mostly satisfied | Mostly unsatisfied | 16.36 | 0.004* |
| Mostly satisfied | Very unsatisfied | -16.68 | 0.005* |
| Mostly unsatisfied | Very unsatisfied | -33.04 | 0.000 |
| Personal Resource Area Scale Score | | | |
| Very satisfied | Mostly satisfied | 5.31 | 0.000* |
| Very satisfied | Mostly unsatisfied | 9.08 | 0.000* |
| Very satisfied | Very unsatisfied | 2.25 | 0.475 |
| Mostly satisfied | Mostly unsatisfied | 3.77 | 0.048* |
| Mostly satisfied | Very unsatisfied | -3.06 | 0.209 |
| Mostly unsatisfied | Very unsatisfied | -6.83 | 0.004* |
| Relationship Resource Area Scale Score | | | |
| Very satisfied | Mostly satisfied | 8.33 | 0.000* |
| Very satisfied | Mostly unsatisfied | 13.88 | 0.000* |
| Very satisfied | Very unsatisfied | 1.86 | 0.704 |
| Mostly satisfied | Mostly unsatisfied | 5.56 | 0.004* |
| Mostly satisfied | Very unsatisfied | -6.47 | 0.001* |
| Mostly unsatisfied | Very unsatisfied | -12.02 | 0.000* |
| Contextual Resource Area Scale Score | | | |
| Very satisfied | Mostly satisfied | 7.85 | 0.000* |
| Very satisfied | Mostly unsatisfied | 13.13 | 0.000* |
| Very satisfied | Very unsatisfied | 2.50 | 0.762 |
| Mostly satisfied | Mostly unsatisfied | 5.27 | 0.132 |
| Mostly satisfied | Very unsatisfied | -5.35 | 0.155 |
| Mostly unsatisfied | Very unsatisfied | -10.63 | 0.007* |

Notes. * $p < 0.05$. Reported mean difference is based on first column category being entered into equation first.

DISCUSSION

Statement of Limitations

The interpretation of the findings must be considered in light of the limitations of this study. The first limitation of this study relates to the sample, which consisted entirely of students from one university only. Most participants were female, Caucasian, and involved in heterosexual relationships. Thus, the findings should be generalized to other populations with caution. Another limitation relates to the majority of participants who reported that they were either very or mostly satisfied with their current relationships. Only 40 out of the 397 participants reported that they were either mostly or very unsatisfied with their relationships. This limitation is especially relevant due to the finding that CRMS scores differed based on relationship satisfaction levels. The

sample should be considered a non-clinical sample, and the findings may differ for clinical populations. A related limitation was that participants' levels of relationship satisfaction were measured by only one item. Further research is needed to examine the relationship between relationship satisfaction and CRMS scores using standardized relationship satisfaction assessment instruments [e.g., the Index of Marital Satisfaction (Hudson, 1997) and the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (Schumm et al., 1986)].

Review of Major Findings

The findings of this study provide preliminary support for the reliability and validity of the CRMS. The total scale and Resource Area Scales demonstrate strong internal consistency, demonstrated by Cronbach's alpha coefficients of over $\alpha = 0.80$ (Clark & Watson, 1995). The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the 21 Category Subscales demonstrated variability, with alpha coefficients ranging from $\alpha = 0.40$ to $\alpha = 0.88$. Thus, further attention is needed to examine and revise these subscales in order to enhance their psychometric properties. In order to conduct a preliminary evaluation of the validity of the CRMS, an analysis of the variance in CRMS scores based on relationship satisfaction was conducted. The results indicated that there were significant differences in participants' CRMS scores based on their levels of relationship satisfaction. The general trend was for participants who reported higher levels of relationship satisfaction to also demonstrate higher CRMS scores. One notable exception to this trend was found. Participants who indicated that they were very unsatisfied with their relationships—the lowest possible rating of relationship satisfaction—did not differ significantly in their CRMS scores from participants indicating that they were very satisfied with their relationships—the highest possible rating of relationship satisfaction. In addition, participants who reported that they were very unsatisfied with their relationships actually demonstrated higher CRMS scores on certain scales as compared to those who reported that they were either mostly satisfied or mostly unsatisfied with their relationships.

Implications for Marriage and Family Therapy Practice and Theory

The findings of this study provide preliminary support for the use of the CRMS in clinical practice. Additional research is needed to confirm whether the CRMS can be used to assess the resources that are available to support the relationships of the couples with whom clinicians work, thereby providing a positive context for therapy (Dinkmeyer, 1993; Fowers, 1990). As Dinkmeyer (1993) wrote, "Focusing on strengths allows the therapist to create movement more quickly. It creates an encouraging atmosphere and allows each marital partner to refocus their energies" (pp. 417-418).

Because the CRMS is an assessment instrument grounded in SFT (Hoyt & Berg, 1998; O'Connell, 1998), the findings of this study have implications for the refinement of this theoretical framework. In particular, the findings demonstrated a general trend for participants who reported that they had greater access to personal, relationship, and contextual resources to support their relationships to demonstrate higher levels of relationship satisfaction. This finding supports the solution-focused assumption that available resources provide support to couples to help them manage the problems that arise in their relationships (Murray & Murray, 2004), thus contributing to more positive relationship outcomes.

One exception requires further attention. Participants who reported the lowest levels of relationship satisfaction actually demonstrated significantly higher CRMS scores compared with those who reported that they were either mostly satisfied or mostly unsatisfied with their relationships, and they did not differ significantly from those who demonstrated the highest levels of relationship satisfaction. Two possible reasons may explain this finding. First, it is possible that participants may have misread the term "very unsatisfied" as "very satisfied." Although this is plausible, it appears unlikely in that the trend for higher CRMS scores to be related to higher levels of relationship satisfaction was found to be true for participants who described their levels of relationship satisfaction as "mostly unsatisfied."

The second possible explanation has important implications for theory. Individuals who demonstrate very low levels of relationship satisfaction must have reasons for staying in those relationships despite their dissatisfaction. This study involved a cross-sectional measure of relationship satisfaction, yet relationship

satisfaction is dynamic over time (Huston & Houts, 1998). This finding suggests that personal, relationship, and contextual resources may provide support to individuals who are unsatisfied with their relationships as they remain in their relationships with an expectation or hope that their relationships will improve over time. These individuals may also demonstrate increased confidence in their ability to work on their relationships and improve them. Due to a small sample size and measurement issues, this finding requires further attention by researchers. However, this finding indicates that personal, relationship, and contextual resources may have a complex influence on couple relationships.

Implications for Research

Several recommendations can be made for future research using the CRMS. First, the use of the CRMS should be evaluated with more broad samples drawn from wider populations. In particular, researchers should examine how the use of the instrument differs between clinical and non-clinical samples. Second, further validation of the CRMS should be undertaken to establish the construct validity of the instrument (Clark & Watson, 1995). In particular, the Resource Area Scales and Category Subscales should be validated by demonstrating the relationships among these scales and other existing measures of the various constructs represented on the CRMS. Third, a confirmatory factor analysis should be conducted to determine whether the proposed conceptual framework represents the actual underlying factor structure of the instrument (Floyd & Widaman, 1994). Although a confirmatory factor analysis was beyond the scope of this study, it will provide valuable information about the CRMS.

Fourth, additional research should be done to examine the manner in which CRMS scores vary as a function of personal, relationship, and contextual characteristics (e.g., gender, education level, length of relationship, relationship status, income level, and community involvement). In addition, researchers should examine the relationships between the resources assessed on the CRMS and other related constructs, such as relationship adjustment and stability.

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