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**THE IMPACT OF DYSFUNCTIONAL RELATIONSHIP BELIEFS
ON MARITAL SATISFACTION:
COMPARISON OF CLINICAL AND NON-CLINICAL SAMPLES**

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the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Psychology

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ABSTRACT

Cognitive components of marital distress have been examined in the past decade, but few studies to date have focused on relationship beliefs. The present study is a partial replication of Eidelson and Epstein's (1982) evaluation of the Relationship Belief Inventory, a questionnaire developed by them to assess dysfunctional relationship beliefs. Participants comprised ninety men and ninety-two women (including 90 couples) drawn from both clinical and non-clinical settings. They completed questionnaires which included demographic data, the Relationship Belief Inventory (Eidelson & Epstein, 1982) and the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976), a commonly used measure of marital satisfaction. Comparisons were made between responses from clinical and non-clinical groups, between men and women, and between partners. A multiple regression analysis was performed to determine whether specific beliefs represented by the Relationship Belief Inventory were predictive of low levels of marital satisfaction. The results indicated that a belief that *disagreement is destructive* to a relationship was consistently related to low levels of marital satisfaction. Participants in the clinical group had significantly higher scores on this belief than the non-clinical group, and in the multiple regression equation, this belief was a unique predictor of reduced marital satisfaction. Men were found to hold the belief that *sexual perfectionism* is important with greater intensity than women. The findings are discussed in terms of their implications for marital therapy.

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