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Should You Rock the Boat?
Understanding the Association between Conflict Management Styles, Self Disclosure,
and Relational Satisfaction

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Should You Rock the Boat?

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Master's Thesis

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Conflict Management Styles, Self disclosure, and Relational Satisfaction

From a young age, individuals are taught how to interact with other human beings by those who are around them during their life development. Essentially families model how individuals develop human interaction; parents typically serve as children's first communicative role models, and thus interactions with parents may have the most impact on a child's communicative development (Vuchinich, Vuchinich, & Coughlin, 1992). This communication pattern developed during childhood, which would include conflict management styles, can continue to influence children into adulthood, even long after they have left their home and family of origin (Rossler, Ting-Toomey, & Lee, 2007). Research also indicates that the way families handle conflict episodes spill over to other interpersonal relationships, including romantic relationships. People use certain conflict management styles with their relational partner based on communication patterns they experience at home (Rossler et al., 2007).

According to Rossler et al. (2007), the way individuals handle conflict in romantic relationships is predictive of what has been learned in prior experiences, specifically experiences within their family. The way individuals manage conflicts creates either relational satisfaction or dissatisfaction in close relationships. Being able to understand how individuals in intimate relationships resolve conflicts and incorporating the amount of self disclosure used during a conflict may allow for understanding of an individual's relationship satisfaction. Gilbert (1976) noted because conflict and self disclosure have such a large influence on relational development, it is valuable to examine how they are associated with each other and how they combine to affect relational satisfaction. Given this, the purpose of the current study is to elaborate on previous research on conflict management styles in romantic partnerships by examining whether or not

families have an influence on conflict management styles used in romantic relationships, and if the amount of self disclosure during a conflict is associated with individuals' relational satisfaction.

Conflict Management Styles

“It is considered axiomatic by relational scholars that romantic couples experience conflict” (Mitchell & Boster, 1998, p. 398). Research indicates that frequency of conflicts increases when moving from a casual to serious dating relationship (Canary, Cupach, & Messman, 1995). Conflict is “the interaction of interdependent people who perceive opposition of goals, aims, and values, and who see the other party as potentially interfering with the realization of these goals” (Putnam & Poole, 1987, p. 552). Other scholars refer to conflict styles as general tendencies or modes of patterned responses to conflict in a variety of antagonistic interactive situations (Putnam & Poole, 1987; Sternbery & Dobson, 1987; Ting-Toomey, 1997). These general tendencies of conflict styles provide an overall picture of how an individual will communicate in a conflict situation. Research indicates that conflict management styles are shaped largely within an individual's family (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001), and carried over into romantic relationships.

The primary approach for explaining conflict styles is based on the five-style model which includes two dimensions: Concern for self and concern for other (Blake & Mouton, 1964; Rahim, 1983, 1992; Thomas & Kilmann, 1974). Concern for self illustrates the degree (high and low) to which individuals seek to satisfy their own interests, whereas concern for other represents the degree to which individuals desire to incorporate their partner's interest. These two dimensions combine to create five styles of handling interpersonal conflict: *Integrating* (high concern for self and other), *compromising* (moderate on both concern for self and other),

dominating (high self and low other concern), *obliging* (low self and high other concern), and *avoiding* (low on both concern for self and other) (Ting-Toomey, Oetzel, & Yee-Jung, 2001). To follow Blake Moulton, and Rahim and Thomas and Kilman, lead researchers in conflict, this study will include the primary five conflict management styles most frequently used.

Given that conflict management styles are developed and formed from what is learned in the home at a young age, research suggests that individuals' conflict management styles within a family will be positively correlated to the individual's conflict management styles in romantic relationships. For example, Harp, Webb, and Amason (2007) tested whether participants in their study transferred conflict behaviors used with parents to conflicts used with romantic partners based on five family communication patterns (i.e., integrating, avoiding, competing, collaborating, and compromising). They found that, with the exception of accommodating, participants' conflicts with mothers correlated significantly with scores for romantic partners. An interesting gathering from this study showed that only two of the five, competing and compromising, scores from conflict-with-father's assessments correlated with scores for romantic partners. Because mothers in the American society are often primary caregivers, individuals may transfer conflict behaviors from the primary caregiver (mother) to another (romantic partner). Based on previous research, the current study put forward the following hypothesis to examine the association between individuals' conflict behaviors with the parents and with a relational partner:

H1: Conflict management styles used by individuals with mothers will positively correlate with those used with romantic partners.

Self disclosure

Couples who self disclose are believed to be on a “path toward building a strong relationship foundation that will enhance each partner’s satisfaction with the relations and promote more efficient and effective interpersonal problem-solving techniques which, in turn, will result in more stable and satisfying relationship over time” (Jorgensen & Gaudy, 1980, p. 282). Self disclosure is associated with one’s orientation of sharing information with another person about one’s self (Wheless & Grotz, 1976). Early stages of a romantic relationship consists of partners using positive communication to learn more about each other while purposely avoiding negative confrontations. It is also said that greater disclosure in a relationship is related to greater emotional involvement, liking, feeling of intimacy, and relationship satisfaction (Finkenauer, Engles, Branje, & Meeus, 2004). During the evolution of a dating relationship, when self disclosure can be high or low, events can change an individual’s perception of the relationship and can motivate the relationship to move in either a positive or negative direction (Baxter & Bullis, 1986, Cupach & Metts, 1986; Infante, Myers, & Buerkel, 1994; Siegert & Stamp, 1994).

When a conflict arises, however, other factors may play a role in the amount of self disclosure used during the communication of a conflict. Self disclosure would vary from person to person depending upon various life events that an individual has encountered prior to the relationship forming (Loveless et al, 2000). Those prior experiences include experiences that come from family relationship associated with self disclosure. Loveless et al. suggest that self disclosure in a relationship can be affected by a participant’s memories of what happened in the past, how they felt about what happened, and how they communicated in the situation. For example, individuals in a relationship who feel secure and stable in the relationship are more

likely to express their feelings openly to their partner during a conflict. Alternatively, if an individual in a relationship has a fear of dissolution of that relationship, the individual will attempt to repress or displace feelings in a conflict (Fahs, 1981). Fahs demonstrated that a key method for controlling and managing conflict is the communication process and communication, including the area of self disclosure, should be the primary area of investigation.

Although conflicts may arise in any type of relationship from family relationships to romantic relationships, the current study looks to investigate if the different types of conflict management styles are associated with the amount of self disclosure one provides during a conflict within romantic relationships. Studies have shown that those who feel as though expressing their thoughts, opinions, beliefs, and values during a conflict would jeopardize their relationship with an intimate partner are more likely to *self-silence* or provide low amounts of self disclosure for fear of the dissolution of a relationship (Harper & Welsh, 1999). Taking what we know about concern for self and concern for others and the idea behind self disclosure and the levels of disclosure one may have during a conflict, the following research question has been proposed:

RQ1: What is the association between the five conflict management styles and the level of self disclosure during conflicts?

Self disclosure and Relational Satisfaction

Finkenauer et al. (2004) note that the greater disclosure in relationships is related to greater emotional involvement, liking, feeling of intimacy, and most importantly, relational satisfaction. As for conflict, the more one is satisfied with the way in which conflict is managed the more one is satisfied with the relationship as a whole (Mitchell & Boster, 1998). In other words, Mitchell and Boster suggest that couples who manage conflict to their satisfaction tend to

be satisfied with their relationship. In reverse, those people who do not manage conflict to their satisfaction tend to have unsatisfying relationships. With a lack of research surrounding relational satisfaction and the amount of self disclosure during a conflict, this study focuses on closing the gap in these knowledge areas on how they are interrelated. Various different research studies would suggest that self disclosure during a conflict, or the way an individual manages conflict by their amount of self disclosure, can have a great impact on relational satisfaction (Finkenauer et al., 2004; Harp et al., 2007; Lloyd, 1987; Loveless et al., 2000; Mitchell & Boster, 1998; Rossler et al., 2007). These studies suggest that the more comfortable an individual feels around his/her romantic partner the more certainty the individual has in the future of the relationship. These two items (i.e., comfort and certainty) combined would, as the research suggests, make an individual more likely to disclose to his/her partner. The reverse is also true, the more uncertain, or the fear of the unknown in the relationship, the more likely the individual would choose to limit his/her amount of self disclosure. Thus, the current study examined if self disclosure during a conflict is associated with relational satisfaction in both mother-child relationships as well as romantic relationships. Accordingly, the following hypotheses were posed:

H2: Individuals' self disclosure during a conflict with the mother is positively associated with relational satisfaction.

H3: Individuals' self disclosure during a conflict with a relational partner is positively associated with the individuals' relational satisfaction.

Method

Participants

Participants ($N = 231$) were undergraduate and graduate communication students at a large Midwestern university. The sample consisted of 159 females (68.8%) and 72 males (31.2%). The average age of these students was 25.9 years old ($SD=7.56$). Ethnicity of participants included 58% Caucasian, 29% African American, 7.4% Asian, 2.2% Hispanic/Latino, 1.3% Middle Eastern, and 2.2% did not indicate their ethnicity. Of the total sample, over half of the respondents, 73.7%, are still currently involved with their romantic relationship. Participants in this survey averaged over a 2 year relationship ($SD=2.18$) with their partner discussed throughout the survey.

Procedure

Individuals, who agreed to participate through their undergraduate and graduate courses, received an email in which they were asked to complete a series of surveys to assess their conflict management styles, self disclosure, and relationship satisfaction. Individuals who chose to participate in the study were directed to Survey Monkey, an online survey tool, and after being informed of their rights as research subjects were required to agree to the terms and conditions. Students were then asked to complete the necessary questionnaires to be used for the study and to collect demographic information. All undergraduate students received extra credit points in their selected course for their participation. After the online questionnaires were completed participants received a message thanking them for their time.

Measurements

Conflict management styles. To measure the participants' conflict management styles, a questionnaire based on the Conflict Styles Dimensions (CSD) scale (Ting-Toomey, Yee-Jung,

Shapiro, Garcia, Wright, & Oetzel, 2000) was selected. This scale measured the five conflict style factors: avoiding, compromising, dominating, integrating, and obliging. Due to the length of the CSD, this study was shortened to two questions per each of the five predominant conflict styles, totaling 10 item Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Always) to 5 (Never). The scale was then recoded to put those more likely to use a certain conflict at the higher end of the scale. Also, participants had the option of choosing N/A as a response. For those participants who chose N/A, the data were recoded to equal 1 on the rating scale signifying “Never”, as it would be assumed if you have never had a conflict or for some reason it is not applicable it would signify that such items would never be addressed, therefore being recoded as 1 on a 5 point scale for “Never”. Questions such as “I would generally avoid an open argument” and “I would attempt to solve our problems by talking things over” were used to determine how participants generally deal with conflicts. Identical measure was used to assess respondents’ conflict management style in romantic relationships and the relationship with their mother. Each of the 10 items included the word “mother” or “partner” when being asked each question. Prefacing the 10 item Likert-type questions, the participants were asked to think back to the most recent conflict he/she had with their mother and then again with their romantic partner. In romantic relationships, Cronbach’s *alpha* for avoiding is .44 ($M = 3.2, SD = .94$), dominating is .55 ($M = 2.3, SD = .84$), compromising is .62 ($M = 2.1, SD = .73$), obliging is .47 ($M = 3.0, SD = .87$), and integrating is .58 ($M = 2.0, SD = .73$). In mother-child relationships, Cronbach’s *alpha* for avoiding is .54 ($M = 2.8, SD = 1.0$), dominating is .70 ($M = 2.6, SD = 1.1$), compromising is .62 ($M = 2.4, SD = .94$), obliging is .58 ($M = 2.6, SD = .96$), and integrating is .69 ($M = 2.4, SD = .95$). All the items are attainable in Appendix A.

Self disclosure. For the purpose of the current study, self disclosure measure was developed. Identical measure was used to evaluate individuals' self disclosure levels in dating relationships and mother-child relationships. The scale consists of 9 items assessing positive, negative, and uncertainty self disclosure during conflict in both romantic and parental relationships. An example item for positive self disclosure includes: "Positive aspect about the conflict situation". An example item for negative self disclosure includes "Mother's negative behavior" or "Partner's negative behavior". An example item for uncertainty self disclosure includes "Future of the relationship". The items were answered in Likert-type scales which asked individuals to evaluate their self disclosure on a 1 to 5 range with 1 equaling "did not discuss at all" to 5 "discussed fully and completely". Participants had the option of choosing N/A as an answer. For those participants who chose N/A, the items were recoded to a 1 on the rating scale signifying "Do not discuss at all", as it would be assumed if the participant would choose not applicable it would mean that the participant was likely not to discuss such an item at all, therefore being recoded as 1 on a 5 point scale. Please see Appendix B for the self disclosure scale.

Factor analyses were conducted for the two self disclosure scales (romantic and mother-child). Factor analyses were conducted for the three subscales in each self disclosure scale. A maximum likelihood factor analysis of the 9 romantic self disclosure items, using varimax rotation was conducted, with the three factors explaining 64% of the variance. In the three-factor solution for romantic relationships, 3 items loaded above .8 on Factor 1, 3 items loaded above .6 for Factor 2, and 3 items loaded above .7 for Factor 3. The factor loading matrix for this final solution is presented in Table 1. A maximum likelihood factor analysis of the 9 mother-child self disclosure items, using varimax rotation was conducted, with the three factors explaining 70% of

the variance. In self disclosure to mothers during a conflict, in the same three-factor solution, 3 items loaded above .7 on Factor 1, 3 items loaded above .6 on Factor 2, and three items loaded above .6 for Factor 3. The factor loading matrix for this final solution is presented in Table 2.

Factor analyses revealed that the self disclosure scales consist of three factors: The level of self disclosure regarding the uncertainty of the relationship (items 6, 7, and 8), the level regarding positivity of the relationship (items 1, 4, and 9), and the level of self disclosure regarding negativity (items 2, 3, and 5).

In romantic relationships, Cronbach's *alpha* for positive self disclosure is .78 ($M = 3.2$, $SD = 1.2$), negative self disclosure is .79 ($M = 3.9$, $SD = 1.0$), and uncertainty self disclosure is .90 ($M = 3.2$, $SD = 1.5$). In mother-child relationships, Cronbach's *alpha* for positive self disclosure is .84 ($M = 2.5$, $SD = 1.3$), negative self disclosure is .82 ($M = 3.1$, $SD = 1.4$), and uncertainty self disclosure is .92 ($M = 2.1$, $SD = 1.4$).

Relational satisfaction. Participants were assessed on their relational satisfaction by utilizing a modified version of Huston, McHale, and Crouter's (1986) marital opinion questionnaire (MOQ). MOQ was used to measure respondents' relational satisfaction in their romantic relationship and the relationship with their mother. This scale asked individuals to rate their satisfaction with their relationships on 10 semantic differential scale (e.g., enjoyable vs. miserable, empty vs. full, rewarding vs. disappointing). Each semantic differential is accompanied by a 7-point rating scale. Questions 1, 3, and 5 were recoded in the analysis so if chosen these questions would correlate to the rest of the scale of 7 being satisfying and 1 being the least satisfying. Then, a final question of the survey asks for individuals to examine and rate their overall satisfaction in the relationship with both their romantic partner (current or most

recent) and their mother. This item was answered by a 7-point Likert type scale with 1 signifying “not at all satisfied” and 7 signifying “very satisfied”.

Vangelisti, Corbin, Lucchetti, and Sprague (1999) explain that using the modified version of the MOQ is an appropriate way to measure satisfaction in close relationships. To score satisfaction, three items (items 7, 8, and 10) were dropped. Once calculated, item 11 was added to the total of relational satisfaction and then the sum of the numbers was divided by 2 to obtain the mean score of relational satisfaction. This procedure is consistent with the one used by Huston and his colleagues. Cronbach’s *alpha* for relational satisfaction in dating relationships is .83 ($M = 4.5$, $SD = 1.0$) and mother-child relationships is .78 ($M = 4.8$, $SD = 1.1$). All the relational satisfaction items are attainable in Appendix C.

Results

Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis predicted conflict management styles used during conflicts with mother would positively correlate with those conflict management styles used with romantic partners. Dominating conflict management style used with mother and dominating conflict management styles used with a romantic partner were significantly positive ($r = .40$, $p < .01$). Those using a dominating conflict style with their mother were more likely to use a dominating style during a conflict with their romantic partner. Looking at the integrating approach during conflicts with mothers and romantic partners, there was a positive correlation ($r = .42$, $p < .01$). There is a significant positive correlation between obliging conflict management styles with a mother and with a romantic partner ($r = .25$, $p < .01$). Compromising conflict management styles with mothers correlate with compromising styles used with romantic partners ($r = .30$, $p < .01$). The data also revealed that not all conflict management styles used with mothers are correlated

with those used with romantic partners. Those using avoiding as their conflict management style with their mother and those using avoiding conflict styles with romantic partner were not significantly correlated ($r = .11, p = .09$).

Research Question 1

A research question was proposed to gain knowledge on what the association was between the five conflict management styles (i.e., dominating, integrating, compromising, obliging, avoiding) and the three types of self disclosure during a conflict (i.e., uncertainty, positive, negative).

The data showed that association between conflict management styles and self disclosure used with mothers is different than the association between these two concepts with romantic partners. Viewing the conflict management styles used with mothers, avoiding was positively significant with negative self disclosure ($r = .21, p < .01$), but was not associated with uncertainty ($r = .03, p = .67$) or positive self disclosure ($r = .11, p = .10$).

Dominating style was positively significant with positive self disclosure ($r = .14, p < .05$), but was not significant with negative ($r = -.06, p = .34$) or uncertainty ($r = .00, p = .44$) self disclosure.

Integrating conflict management style used with mothers was negatively associated with positive self disclosure ($r = -.14, p < .05$). The integrating style, however, was not associated with uncertainty ($r = .00, p = .56$) or negative ($r = .04, p = .54$) self disclosure.

Obliging was positively associated with negative ($r = .15, p < .05$) self disclosure. Data show obliging was not correlated with uncertainty ($r = -.00, p = 1.00$) or positive ($r = .03, p = .63$) self disclosure.

Compromising style data show there was no association between any of the three self disclosure variables: Uncertainty ($r = .07, p = .33$), negative ($r = .07, p = .28$), or positive ($r = .03, p = .09$) self disclosure.

As for conflict management styles used for a romantic partner, avoiding style was positively associated with negative ($r = .22, p < .01$) and positive ($r = .26, p < .01$) self disclosure; however, avoiding was not significantly associated with uncertainty self disclosure ($r = -.01, p = .87$).

Dominating style was positively associated with positive self disclosure ($r = .13, p < .05$), but was not associated with negative ($r = -.03, p = .67$) or uncertainty ($r = -.03, p = .66$) self disclosure.

Integrating style was negatively significant with negative ($r = -.15, p < .05$) and positive ($r = -.20, p < .01$) self disclosure. However, integrating was not significant with uncertainty self disclosure ($r = -.01, p = .87$).

Interestingly, obliging style used during conflict with a romantic partner was significantly associated with all three levels of self disclosure: Uncertainty ($r = .15, p < .01$), positive ($r = .14, p < .01$), and negative ($r = .27, p < .05$) self disclosure.

Finally, the compromising style was significantly associated negatively with positive self disclosure ($r = -.21, p < .01$), but was not significantly linked with uncertainty ($r = -.05, p = .39$) or negative ($r = -.10, p = .13$) self disclosure. This data would suggest that those utilizing the compromising style with a romantic partner would be less likely to use positive self disclosure during a conflict. Data suggest that there are some associations between the different types of conflict management styles and the level or type of self disclosure that is verbalized during a conflict.

Hypotheses 2 & 3

Hypothesis 2 and 3 proposed that self disclosure during a conflict will be associated with relational satisfaction. Specifically, *Hypothesis 2* suggested that individuals' views of self disclosure during a conflict with a mother would be positively associated with relational satisfaction. *Hypothesis 2* was not supported as there was no correlation between positive self disclosure ($r = -.12, p = .07$), negative self disclosure ($r = .01, p = .86$), and uncertainty self disclosure ($r = -.03, p = 1.00$) and relational satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3 suggested that self disclosure during conflicts with romantic partners would also be positively associated with relational satisfaction. *Hypothesis 3* was not supported as there was no correlation between positive self disclosure ($r = -.09, p = .21$), negative self disclosure ($r = -.06, p = .39$), and uncertainty self disclosure ($r = -.00, p = .95$) and relational satisfaction.

Post-Hoc Analyses

A Post-Hoc analysis was run to see if any other associations were present for conflict management styles used with mothers to those used with romantic partners from results received during the analysis of *H1*. Data revealed that avoiding conflict management style during conflict with mothers was not only associated with avoiding styles in a romantic relationship but it was also significantly correlated with the obliging style ($r = .08, p < .05$). Looking at the integrating approach used during conflicts with mothers two conflict management styles: Dominating ($r = .18, p < .01$) and compromising ($r = .33, p < .01$) used with romantic partners were significant with positive correlations. There was a significant, positive correlation between obliging conflict management styles used with mothers not only with the obliging style with romantic partners, but also dominating ($r = .17, p < .01$), integrating ($r = .24, p < .01$), and compromising ($r = .20, p$

< .01) styles used with romantic partners. Compromising conflict management styles with mothers associated with the integrating style ($r = .30, p < .01$) used with romantic partners and their association was positive. Findings such as these produced interesting insights that relate to *H1*. Data showed there are other associations outside of the mirror conflict management styles used between mother and romantic partners.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between conflict management styles, self disclosure during conflict, and how together they may influence overall relational satisfaction with both mothers and romantic partners. Three Hypotheses and one Research Question were generated to review these variables.

When examining participants' conflict management styles used with mothers in relation to the use of conflict management styles with romantic partners the data revealed there is a significant correlation between four of the five of the conflict management styles (i.e., dominating, integrating, obliging, and compromising) used with mothers and romantic partners, which partially supported *H1*. Those dominating, integrating, obliging, and compromising styles individuals use with their mothers were associated with the mirror style with romantic partners. Ting-Toomey and Oetzel's (2001) research indicated findings which suggested conflict management styles are shaped largely within an individual's family which is carried over into romantic relationships and the present study supports these findings. The current findings also support Harp, Webb, and Amason's (2007) study which tested whether participants in their study transferred conflict behaviors with parents to romantic partners based on family communication patterns. Though the current study did not utilize family communication patterns, it still supports the findings that there is an relation between the way individuals' use conflict behaviors with

parents, mothers in particular, and the way they handle conflict in romantic relationships. There was an interesting finding in the data and post-hoc evaluation. In the original data, individuals who used the style of avoiding with their mothers were not likely to use the mirror style of avoiding with their romantic partners, the only conflict management style which mothers and romantic partners conflict management styles did not associate. Instead, the data revealed that those using avoiding conflict styles with mothers were more likely to use obliging with their romantic partners. This is not surprising as both styles have a low concern for self. However, it appears that individuals are more likely to have low concern for both self and mothers during a mother-child conflict, where as in a romantic relationship, their styles are often low on self and high on concern for partners. Perhaps this finding is due to the fear of losing the romantic partner.

In the post-hoc findings, the data indicated that three of the five conflict management styles (i.e., integrating, obliging, and compromising) used during conflicts with individuals' mothers were also associated to conflict management styles outside of the mirror styles with the romantic partners. For example, those who often use an integrating method to handle conflict with their mother (i.e., more likely to talk through problems during a conflict) were not just significantly associated with integrating with romantic partners, but were also associated with dominating and compromising styles. This finding is particularly interesting because those who often have a high concern for both self and others when discussing conflicts with their mother could potentially use dominating style with romantic partner, in which there is high concern for self and low concern for the other, putting their needs ahead of their partners needs.

Same with those using the obliging style with their mother, the data shows that not only is there an association between obliging with mothers and the mirror style used with romantic

partners, but those with an obliging style with mothers also showed significant association with dominating, integrating, and compromising styles during a conflict with romantic partners. In other words, a participant who has a low concern for himself/herself during a conflict with his/her mother and high concern for the mother (obliging style) may be likely to not only use obliging with his romantic partner, but is likely to sometimes show high concern for self and low concern for other (dominating) in a romantic relationship. Some respondents were noted as even using moderate concern for both self and other by using a compromising style of conflict with a romantic partner. Further, compromising styles used by participants with their mothers also had more than one significant correlation; this style is often associated with integrating as well as compromising. Identifying the cause of this is beyond the current study, however, an interesting future study would be to examine how conflict management styles used with friends or siblings correlate with styles used with romantic partners. Perhaps a roommate in college changed the way individuals manage conflicts with others. Another interesting proposed question would be to see if the ability to communicate through computer-mediated-medium (i.e. texts, computer, etc.) changes the way individuals in this generation deal with conflicts with their romantic partner.

Finally, one style that did not have any association with any other style outside of its mirror conflict management style was dominating. Those who have high concern for self will have low concern for both mothers and romantic partners during a conflict.

The current study also put forward *Research Question 1* to explore the associations among conflict management styles (i.e., dominating, integrating, compromising, obliging, and avoiding) and different types of self-disclosures (i.e., uncertainty, positive, negative) during

conflicts. The data show a great deal of support for this research question and provides an insight into the association of these two variables in both conflict with mothers and romantic partners.

The results suggest that individuals who generally use an avoiding conflict management style will often provide negative self disclosure with their mother, however, with their romantic partner, they not only discuss negative, but they also disclose positive information.

Those participants who frequently use a dominating style during conflicts most often disclose positive information during a conflict to their mother and their romantic partner. Dominating is the only conflict management style in which the type of self disclosure is the same for both communication with mothers and romantic partners. It appears those who often have high concern of themselves in a conflict would only disclose positive information during the conflict.

Integrating styles of conflict are negatively associated with positive self disclosure when enduring a conflict with the mother. Those using this style in a romantic relationship also have a negative association with both negative and positive self disclosure. That is, the more likely one is to have an integrating style of conflict the less likely that individual is to use positive self disclosure with his/her mother and negative and positive self disclosure with his/her romantic partner.

Individuals who most generally use obliging style for conflict are more likely to be self disclosing negative information to their mother and negative, positive, and uncertainty information to their romantic partner. Obliging conflict styles used with romantic partners are the only styles that disclosed all three types of self-disclosure during a conflict.

The final style, compromising, did not associate with any of the types of self disclosure when discussion occurred with mother. On the other hand, those using compromising with

romantic partners have a significant association with positive self disclosure; however, it is a negative association. Those individuals using compromising conflict management styles are less likely to express positive self disclosure during a conflict.

Overall, the data suggest that there are associations between the five conflict management styles and the three types of self disclosure. Interestingly, of five conflict management styles, obliging only was associated with uncertainty self disclosure in conflicts with a partner. In other words, only those who use an obliging style will disclose their uncertainty with their romantic partner. In mother-child relationships, regardless of conflict management styles, there is no association with uncertainty self disclosure; however, all conflict styles are associated either at the positive or negative level of association with positive self disclosure to their mothers. This is interesting because previous research conducted from Loveless et al. (2000) has suggested self disclosure in a relationship can be affected by a participant's memory of what happened in the past, how they felt about what happened, and how they communicated the situation. The current study found that conflict styles used with mothers and the mirror style used with romantic partners can yield different associations with the different types of self disclosure provided during a conflict. This may strengthen the argument of Loveless et al. noting that the reason for the changes in self disclosure types from mothers to romantic partners may come from previous experiences of self disclosure during a conflict with a mother.

The final hypotheses, *H2* and *H3*, were proposed to determine if self disclosure during a conflict with either mothers or romantic partners were associated with that individual's satisfaction of the relationship. The data show there is no association between individuals' self disclosure during a conflict and their level of relational satisfaction in both types of relationships. There are other factors outside of self disclosure during a conflict that may affect an individual's

relational satisfaction. The findings from this data elaborate on previous research (Finkenauer et al., 2004; Harp et al., 2007; Lloyd, 1987; Loveless et al., 2000; Mitchell & Boster, 1998; Rossler et al., 2007;). These researchers, who chose to study the amount of self disclosure during a conflict, believed the way an individual handled a conflict by self disclosure can have a great impact on relational satisfaction. The data from the current study expanded on the focus of previous research on the amount of self disclosure to examine if the different types of self disclosure in conflicts (i.e., positive, negative, uncertainty) showed the same findings. The current data suggested the way individuals self disclose does not have an impact on relational satisfaction. Taking the ideas of these researchers to the next level, knowing something causes relational satisfaction, the current study looked at how conflict management styles played a role in relational satisfaction. Like self disclosure and relational satisfaction, no association was present between the two variables. Due to the fact that the current study examined types of self disclosure instead of the amount of self disclosure conducted prior by Finkenauer et al, Harp et al, Lloyd, Loveless et al, and Mitchell and Boster, Rossler et al. the information provided should be considered an advancement in previous research. The data showed that during a conflict, self disclosure, regardless of type, does not influence the relational satisfaction with either mothers or romantic relationships.

Limitations

Despite the importance of the findings in the current study, there are several limitations to consider. To begin with, the use of the conflict styles dimensions scale is limited. While this study has obtained meaningful results regarding the five conflict management styles through its modification, in future studies researchers should examine the additional three conflict management styles (i.e., third-party, emotional expression, and passive aggressive) to see if these

factors contribute to the research of conflict management styles and self disclosure and what can be learned from these three additional conflict styles. Another limitation is the ratio of women to men in the study, as 68.8% of the respondents were female. Future studies should look to obtain an equal number of men and women to then be able to see if gender is an outlier for chosen conflict management styles and self disclosure both with mothers and with romantic partners. Further, this study only examined mother-child relationships. Future research could look at father-child relationships in comparison to the associations with romantic partners. A final limitation lies in the participants' ability to accurately recall their conflict management styles and self disclosure. Due to the self-reported recall study, there may be skewed data.

Conclusion

The study's goal was to examine the association between conflict management style, self disclosure, and relational satisfaction. Data from this study lent insight into the association between these three concepts. This data showed there were significant associations between conflict management styles used by mothers and romantic partners. Due to the limited research conducted prior to this study, the data also extended knowledge of the association between conflict management styles and self disclosure, suggesting that different conflict management styles yield different types of self disclosure (positive, negative, and uncertainty) during a conflict depending on if the conflict is with mother or romantic partner. Finally, to elaborate on previous research, the data suggested the type of self disclosure does not influence relational satisfaction in either a mother-child or romantic relationship. Despite the limitation of the current study, it has provided a great deal of information to further the study of conflict management styles, self disclosure, and relational satisfaction.

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Table 1

Factor loadings based on an maximum likelihood for 9 items from the Relational Partner

Self Disclosure scale

	Factor		
	1	2	3
Item 7: Your worries about the relationship	.864	.133	.201
Item 8: Uncertain concerning the partner or relationship	.838	.135	.180
Item 6: Future of the relationship	.798	.164	.221
Item 4: Partner's positive behavior	.080	.901	.133
Item 1: Positive Aspect about the conflict situation	.084	.642	.264
Item 9: Positive feelings toward the partner or relationship	.319	.585	.184
Item 3: Partner's negative behavior	.193	.158	.738
Item 5: Partner's attitudes	.238	.267	.691
Item 2: Negative Aspect about the conflict situation	.140	.155	.673

Table 2

Factor loadings based on an maximum likelihood for 9 items from the Mother-Child Partner

Self Disclosure scale

	Factor		
	1	2	3
Item 7: Your worries about relationship	.931	.159	.234
Item 8: Uncertainty concerning the mother or relationship	.870	.119	.222
Item 6: Future of relationship	.733	.226	.253
Item 4: Mother’s positive behavior	.142	.788	.324
Item 1: Positive Aspect about the conflict situation	.090	.787	.149
Item 9: Positive feelings toward the mother or relationship	.389	.629	.283
Item 5: Mother's attitudes	.230	.244	.815
Item 3: Mother’s negative behavior	.235	.178	.729
Item 2: Negative Aspect about the conflict situation	.221	.301	.565

Table 3

Zero-Order Correlation Matrix of the Study Variables of Romantic Partners

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. CMS – Avoiding	--								
2. CMS – Dominating	.11	--							
3. CMS – Integrating	-.02	.24**	--						
4. CMS – Obliging	.42**	.26**	.13*	--					
5. CMS – Compromising	.08	.14*	.66**	.18**	--				
6. SD – Uncertainty	-.01	-.03	-.01	.15*	-.06	--			
7. SD – Negative	.22**	-.03	-.15*	.27**	-.10	.42**	--		
8. SD – Positive	.26**	.13*	-.20**	.14*	-.21**	.36--	.43**	--	
9. Relational Satisfaction	-.03	-.01	.04	.06	.01	-.00	-.02	-.09	--

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

Table 4*Zero-Order Correlation Matrix of the Study Variables of Mothers*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. CMS – Avoiding	--								
2. CMS – Dominating	-.12	--							
3. CMS – Integrating	.05	.32**	--						
4. CMS – Obliging	.60**	.02	.30**	--					
5. CMS – Compromising	.09	.25**	.75**	.32**	--				
6. SD – Uncertainty	.03	-.04	.00	-.00	.07	--			
7. SD – Negative	.21**	-.06	.04	.15*	.07	.50**	--		
8. SD – Positive	.11	.14*	-.14*	.03	-.11	.45**	.54**	--	
9. Relational Satisfaction	.02	.07	-.11	.03	-.12	.00	.01	.12	--

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

Appendix A

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES

The statements below concern how you most commonly communicate in a conflict with your current or most recent romantic partner (i.e., a girlfriend, boyfriend, or spouse). We are interested in how you *generally* experience conflicts with your romantic partner. Respond to each statement by clicking a circle to indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statement. (1 = Always, 5 = Never, N/A = not applicable)

- 1.) I would generally avoid an open argument with my dating partner
- 2.) I am generally firm in pursuing my side of the issue
- 3.) I would attempt to solve our problems by talking things over
- 4.) I would use the silent treatment to signal my displeasure
- 5.) I would try to tolerate our disagreement and not make waves
- 6.) I would express my anger openly so that my dating partner knows where I stand on the issue
- 7.) I would communicate with my dating partner to come up with a compromise
- 8.) I would seek out the advice of a third-party help before confronting the conflict issue
- 9.) I would usually comply with the wishes of my dating partner when we disagree
- 10.) I would integrate my viewpoints with that of my dating partner to achieve a joint resolution
- 11.) I would generally keep quiet and wait for things to improve
- 12.) I would express my displeasure open and clearly

- 13.) I tend to use a flexible give-and-take approach to solve our differences
- 14.) I would ask a mutual friend to lend support in resolving the conflict issue
- 15.) I would often “pout and sulk” to get my dating partner’s attention
- 16.) I generally like to win when arguing with my dating partner

Appendix B

Self disclosure During Conflict Measurement

The statements below concern the amount of self disclosure during the conflict situation. Respond to each statement to indicate how much you discuss or do not discuss the items below. (1= Do not discuss at all, 5= Discussed fully and completely, N/A = not applicable?)

Please think back to your last conflict with your partner, what was the nature of the conflict?

During this conflict addressed above did you discuss the following:

- 1.) Positive aspect about the conflict situation
- 2.) Negative aspect about the conflict situation
- 3.) Partner's negative behavior
- 4.) Partner's positive behavior
- 5.) Partner's attitudes
- 6.) Future of the relationship
- 7.) Your worries about the relationship
- 8.) Uncertain concerning the partner or relationship
- 9.) Positive feelings toward the partner or relationship
- 10.) Negative feelings toward the partner or relationship
- 11.) Express your wants and needs out of the conflict

Appendix C

Relational Satisfaction

Between each pair of adjectives, please circle the number that best describes your relationship with your partner?

- | | | |
|---|---------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Enjoyable | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Miserable |
| 2. Empty | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Full |
| 3. Rewarding | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Disappointing |
| 4. Boring | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Interesting |
| 5. Hopeful | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Discouraging |
| 6. Useless | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Worthwhile |
| 7. Free | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Tied-down |
| 8. Hard | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Easy |
| 9. Lonely | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Friendly |
| 10. Doesn't give me much chance | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Brings out the best in me |
| 11. Overall, how satisfied were you with your relationship with your partner? | | |
| Not at all satisfied 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Satisfied | | |