

ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP CONFLICT MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES OF
ADULT ONLY CHILDREN AND ADULTS WITH SIBLINGS

A THESIS

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BY

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DEDICATION
For Nana and Grandma.

I lost each of you at different points in the process of this project, but was fortunate enough to have been able to talk with each of you about my plans for it and hear your ideas before I began writing. I know you would be proud to see the final product.

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ABSTRACT

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Only children have long been considered to be different from their peers who grew up with siblings, even though they have generally not been found to differ significantly from them in most areas. This study aimed to see if this belief holds true in the area of adult partner conflict by using a family systems lens. The attachment styles and conflict management techniques of adult only children and adults with siblings were compared. The results showed that the adult only children participants perceived their partners to be more demanding than their peers with siblings did, but did not significantly differ from the participants with siblings in the other areas measured, including avoidance, anxiety, constructive communication, demand-withdraw communication, and avoidance and withholding. Potential clinical implications for couple and family therapists, as well as recommendations for possible future research, are presented based on the results of the study.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
COPYRIGHT	iii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
ABSTRACT	vii
LIST OF TABLES	x
 Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem.....	2
Purpose of the Study	4
Summary	4
II. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	6
The Only Child Stereotype	6
Theoretical Framework.....	7
Family Systems Perspective	7
Family Systems Perspective and the Proposed Study.....	8
The Effects of Birth Order	8
Theories About Only Children.....	8
The Role of Siblings in Childhood	9
Birth Order and Adulthood	11
Mate Selection	11
Adult Romantic Attachment	11
Attachment in Adult Only Children vs. Adults with Siblings	12
Partner Conflict.....	13
What Causes Partner Conflict to Arise	13
Variables that Affect Partner Conflict	14

Only Children and Partner Conflict during Emerging Adulthood	14
Adult Attachment and Conflict	16
Summary	17
III. METHODOLOGY	18
Sample	19
Recruitment.....	19
Procedure	21
Instruments.....	21
Analysis	28
IV. RESULTS	30
Participants.....	30
Results.....	32
Correlations.....	32
MANOVA	33
ANOVAs	34
Summary	35
V. DISCUSSION	37
Conclusions.....	37
Clinical Implications.....	38
Limitations	40
Future Directions	41
Summary	42
REFERENCES	44
APPENDICES	
A. Recruitment Materials.....	51
B. Informed Consent Forms.....	56
C. Survey.....	63
D. Permission from Author.....	95

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Summary of Sample Demographics.....	40
2. Summary of Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviation for Scores on the CPQ and ECR-Short Form Subscales.....	43
3. Summary of ANOVAs, Means, and Standard Deviation for Scores on the CPQ and ECR-Short Form Subscales.....	45

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The number of couples having only one child is steadily increasing in the United States due to recent financial situations and the increasing trend of later marriages (Mancillas, 2006). The number of women with a single child in the United States has doubled over the last 20 years (Bronson & Merryman, 2009), and according to the 2010 U.S. Census, 19% of the families in the United States have only one child (United States Census Bureau, 2012). Although there are presently greater numbers of only children, negative stereotypes regarding the only child having a lack of social skills and a selfish nature continue (Mancillas, 2006). In contrast, research continues to debunk these negative assumptions about only children, repeatedly concluding that only children do not seem to be greatly affected by their lack of siblings.

While research studies generally demonstrate that only children do not significantly differ from their peers with siblings in most areas (Falbo, 2012), certain studies have shown that differences do exist in the area of conflict, specifically regarding conflict resolution with peers (Kitzmann, Cohen, & Lockwood, 2002). This difference regarding interaction in conflict, including the ability to effectively resolve conflict and negotiate with individuals similar in age, has been potentially attributed to the lack of sibling interaction that only children experience during childhood. This dissimilarity in conflict can be seen specifically within adult romantic relationships, in which adult only children

between the ages of 17 and 27 years old have been found to demonstrate an overall higher level of partner conflict than their peers who grew up with siblings (Chen et al., 2006). This increase in partner conflict during the stage referred to as emerging adulthood could possibly be due to the lack of practice at dealing with conflict with siblings during childhood, causing adult only children to utilize different conflict management techniques than their adult peers with siblings (Chen et al., 2006). If adult only children do approach partner conflict differently, this could potentially pose an important implication for couple and family therapists working with couples with an only child partner engaged in conflict and discord within their relationships, as well as with families who have an only child. For the purpose of this study, the term *only children*, or *onlies*, will be used throughout the rest of this paper to refer to individuals who did not grow up with siblings.

Statement of the Problem

Even though about 20% of all children grow up without siblings (Roberts & Blanton, 2001), there is still a lack of research examining the experience of adult only children, specifically within their social relationships (Trent & Spitze, 2011). Much of the research on only children has aimed at disproving the many negative stereotypes that exist about individuals who come from single-children households (Mancillas, 2006). Furthermore, when only children are compared to children with siblings in research, the focus has often been placed on their cognition and academic abilities instead of on their social tendencies (Kitzmann et al., 2002). In addition, in the research that has been done,

there has been inconsistent results in regards to the differences between only children and individuals who have siblings (Falbo, 2012).

Siblings play an important role in the development of peer negotiation and conflict skills, as the sibling relationship is believed to play a profound role in which individuals learn social and, in some cases, conflict skills that they use within their peer relationships outside of the family (Kitzmann et al., 2002). Despite the lack of sibling interaction, some research has shown that only children demonstrate better social competency than their peers with siblings (Mancillas, 2006). In contrast, some research has shown that only children might be lacking in conflict management skills when dealing with their peers. Nevertheless, the effects that being an only child has on the development of conflict management skills have not been extensively covered within the research. For example, when looking at the only children literature, including meta-analyses done by Falbo and Polit (1986, 1987), the variable of conflict management was not included (Mancillas, 2006). Furthermore, little research on the effect of having siblings on adult partner conflict has been conducted thus far (Chen et al., 2006).

The lack of research on the effect that having no siblings has on an adult only child's conflict management ability could hold a missing piece of the puzzle in the subjective reality of being an adult without siblings. It could also help family professionals to better understand the context of the adult only child engaging in conflict, specifically within romantic relationships. A family systems perspective will be used to guide the present study in investigating whether having siblings affects an individual's behaviors in adult

romantic relationships, specifically within the areas of conflict management and attachment.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present research study is to explore how adults approach conflict in romantic relationships and the potential differences that may exist between adults without siblings and adults with siblings. The specific research question is:

- 1) Are there differences in conflict strategies between adults without siblings and adults with siblings? If so, how do these groups differ?

Based on the existing literature, the hypotheses set forth are:

H_0 = Adult only children and adults who have siblings will show no differences in the conflict management techniques that they use during partner conflict and their attachment in their romantic relationships.

H_1 = Adult only children will use less constructive communication, more demand-withdraw, and more avoidance and withholding during partner conflict than adults who have siblings.

H_2 = Adult only children will have lower levels of attachment avoidance and attachment anxiety, demonstrating a more secure attachment in romantic relationships than adults who have siblings.

Summary

In summary, the present study will look to confirm past research regarding the relationship between attachment style and conflict management of adults. Furthermore, the study will aim to discover any differences based on whether an individual has siblings

or not in the areas of romantic relationship conflict and attachment. Family systems theory will be used to guide the study, and based on the results, implications for clinicians working with couples and families will be presented.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Only Child Stereotype

Even though one-child families are at their highest rates in recent years (Roberts & Blanton, 2001), the negative stereotypes about only children continue to persist (Mancillas, 2006), and there is a lack of research on the adult only child and their reality (Trent & Spitze, 2011). The negative way of viewing individuals who do not have any siblings can be seen as far back as 1898 when the famous child psychologist G. Stanley Hall asserted that “being an only child is a disease in itself” (as cited in Fenton, 1928, p. 547). One of the prevailing beliefs about only children is that they end up lacking social skills due to not growing up and interacting with siblings during critical times of development (Riggio, 1999). This stereotype has been discounted in most areas, with adult only children being found to show similar social skills as their peers who grew up with siblings (Falbo, 2012). Furthermore, only children have been found to continually rate higher in the areas of intelligence and achievement (Mancillas, 2006). Although only children continue to prove the stereotypes believed about them to be wrong, it has been found that only children and their parents (Mancillas, 2006), often believe the negative assumptions about onlies to be true. In Stewart (2004), it was also found that therapists tend to believe these stereotypes about only children as well. In the study, clinicians were given a hypothetical case to read about a client, each receiving the same storyline except

for the client's birth order, including oldest, middle, youngest, or only child. It was found that the clinicians who received a case about an only child client reported viewing the only child as being more susceptible to experiencing problems than the other birth orders. The author concluded that based on these findings, a client's birth order could potentially bias a therapist's judgment in the same way that race, sex, or age can.

Theoretical Framework

Family Systems Perspective

According to general systems theory, all aspects of a system or relationship affect each other (Hanson, 1995). Furthermore, the theory states that a change in one part of the system inevitably causes a change in all other parts of the system. The present study will be conducted through a more specific lens of family systems theory, in which the family is a system in which the members' behavior is often a result of the patterns, interactions, and relationships that exist within the family system (Steinglass, 1984).

Family systems theory also asserts that an individual's family of origin, often that of two generations back, plays a role in how an individual interacts within his or her relationships. The theory states that each partner brings their own beliefs and experiences from their family of origin into their couple relationship, and it is the couple's task to negotiate how these different beliefs can be included in their relationship (Beavers, 1981). For example, sibling position is an important aspect of one's family of origin that can affect adult relationships. When investigating with a systems perspective, sibling position is believed to possibly play a role in the way that patterns play out within the adult relationship system because of its early effects on an individual (Gilbert, 1992).

Family Systems Perspective and the Proposed Study

The purpose of the current study is to explore how adults approach conflict in romantic relationships and the potential differences that may exist between adults without siblings and adults with siblings. The ideas set forth by family systems theory will guide the proposed study by taking into consideration how the family system, specifically whether an individual has siblings or not, affects an individual as he or she enters adulthood and engages in partner conflict within romantic relationships.

Family systems theory posits that the way one's family is structured has an effect on an individual and his or her behaviors (Steinglass, 1984). Therefore, this study could potentially add to this idea by investigating whether an individual's sibling structure affects his or her behaviors within romantic relationships, specifically in their conflict processes. The overall idea that every part of a system affects the rest of the system (Steinglass, 1984) will be used to guide this investigation of whether having interaction with siblings or not may have an effect on adults in other parts of their lives, specifically within romantic relationships.

The Effects of Birth Order

Theories About Only Children

The theory of Alfred Adler is often cited when examining the behavior of only children (Mancillas, 2006). Adler was a leading proponent of the idea that an individual's order of birth within the family system played a profound role in the development of one's personality and sociability (Boss, Doherty, LaRossa, Schumm, & Steinmetz, 2009). Adler believed that only children turn out in one of two ways. He believed that some only

children feel too overprotected by their parents and seek autonomy in their relationships outside of the family. The other option, according to Adler, was that the only child will enjoy their parent's constant attention so much that they will seek and feel entitled to this same kind of attention within their other relationships (Adler, 1927, 1937). Furthermore, Adler described the oldest child, who is temporarily raised as an only child before the birth of siblings, as being increasingly aware of the power that he or she holds simply from being his or her parents' only child as the years go on without siblings. Oldest children eventually lose this position of power when their siblings are born, while only children presumably do not (Adler, 1928).

Walter Toman (1993) asserted that birth order and early family relationships played a particularly important role in who individuals choose to engage with in romantic relationships with. Toman believed that the only child was not prepared to enter relationships, including romantic ones, with individuals around his or her own age due to their lack of siblings. Because the only child has only his or her parents as an example of relationship interaction growing up, Toman proposed that the only child would actually be searching for a parent when looking for a mate, causing distress because this search will be taking place among the individual's peer group (Toman, 1993).

The Role of Siblings in Childhood

Some research has been devoted to the effects that siblings have on an individual's development of social competence and interpersonal relationships. The sibling relationship has been found to play an important role in learning how to interact with peers, especially during childhood (Kitzmann et al., 2002). Kitzmann et al. (2002)

conducted a study of 139 elementary school children in which the social interactions of various birth orders, including 51 first-borns, 40 second-borns, and 48 only children, were compared. The children were asked to nominate their same-sex peers for various social behavioral roles, and these results showed that the only children in the study scored highest for demonstrating the conflict techniques of aggressive-disruption, victimization, and passive-withdrawal. The researchers concluded from these results that only children may miss out on learning important conflict management skills, such as assertiveness

In contrast, research has shown that only children may miss out on important conflict management skills that individuals with siblings learn growing up (Mancillas, 2006). Without sibling interaction to learn about relationships, the only child often learns about conflict management from their parents (Mancillas, 2006). Studies have also shown that the young only child is less capable of effectively negotiating relationships with children their own age than other children who have at least one sibling (Downey & Condon, 2004).

While the benefits of having siblings are generally emphasized in research, it has been asserted that the negative consequences of having siblings exist, including in the area of adjustment (McHale, Updegraff, & Whitman, 2012). It has been shown that only children often feel that they benefited from not having a sibling, specifically when it comes to sibling conflict. In one study, many of the only children participants reported looking at sibling conflict negatively and being grateful for not having to participate in this discord while growing up (Roberts & Blanton, 2001).

Birth Order and Adulthood

Mate Selection

Hartshorne, Salem-Hartshorne, & Hartshorne, 2009 investigated whether birth order would predict who individuals choose as romantic partners. The study included a survey taken by 900 undergraduates, as well as an online survey taken by additional participants. The only children participants were found to have chosen to enter relationships with other only children or individuals who held the oldest or youngest birth rank more often than individuals of the other birth orders. It was suggested that only children might prefer to have a mate from a smaller family, potentially explaining their choice of mates from one- or two-child families

Adult Romantic Attachment

Hazan and Shaver (1987) discussed the idea that the attachment styles seen in infants are also present as similar behaviors in adult within romantic relationships, including the secure, avoidant, and anxious/ambivalent styles. Infants who display the avoidant attachment style tend to avoid their mother when she returns after leaving the infant, while infants who display the anxious/ambivalent attachment style generally cry and resist reassurance from others upon their mother leaving them for a time. The study showed that the three types of attachment styles, secure, avoidant, and anxious/ambivalent, also occur as adults engage in romantic relationships, specifically finding that the three attachment styles occur at about the same rate within infants and adults.

Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) described four types of adult attachment styles: secure, preoccupied, fearful, and dismissing. Adults with a secure attachment style feel they are deserving of love from others, have a positive view of intimacy, and have positive beliefs about others. Individuals with a preoccupied style generally feel that they are not worthy of receiving love while still holding positive beliefs about others. Individuals with a fearful attachment style do not feel that they are deserving of receiving love from others, assume that others cannot be trusted, and tend to avoid intimacy in order to avoid getting hurt by others. Adults who display a dismissing attachment style believe they deserve love from others, but have a negative view of others, and therefore, avoid intimacy (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

Attachment in Adult Only Children vs. Adults with Siblings

An area in which adult only children have been found to differ from individuals with siblings is their behavior within romantic relationships. Despite the popular assumption that only children grow to be dependent within their relationships (Polit, et al., 1980), it has been found that only children often demonstrate more autonomy within their adult romantic relationships (Polit et al., 1980). In one study of 537 married couples, including 62 husbands and 70 wives who reported being only children, only child wives spoke about feeling more autonomous in their marriages than the female spouses who grew up with siblings, declaring that they felt that it was wholly their own personal decision whether to work or not (Polit et al., 1980).

An individual is said to demonstrate secure attachment within a romantic relationship when he or she is trusting of and is able to experience a close relationship

with his or her partner (McGuirk & Pettijohn, 2008). Adult only children have often been found to be more securely attached within their relationships than adults with siblings, often scoring the highest in this area among all of the birth ranks (McGuirk & Pettijohn, 2008). Furthermore, only children have been found to display a more secure orientation in their marital relationships when compared to spouses who grew up with siblings (Polit et al., 1980). It has been proposed that adult only children's high levels of secure attachment to their romantic partner could possibly be a result of receiving their parents' full attention during childhood (Buunk, 1997).

Partner Conflict

What Causes Partner Conflict to Arise

In considering what could potentially be the cause of partner conflict, two theories are often used to attempt to explain the distress within relationships. Social learning theory suggests that partner conflict arises as a result of the partners lacking effective conflict management skills due to not having had the opportunity to observe constructive conflict management skills within their family of origin (Whitton et al., 2008). In terms of only children, this idea may apply in that it has been asserted that only children may not have the opportunity to observe and engage in constructive conflict management due to not having sibling interaction (Kitzmann et al., 2002). A second view proposes that partner conflict arises as a result of the partners simply not having enough in common (Christensen, 1987). Christensen suggested that both of these theories could potentially explain partner conflict to a degree, often interacting with each other. For example, Christensen reported that couples who used constructive communication techniques were

less likely to express differences in their levels of desired intimacy and couples who used demand-withdraw techniques reported differences in their desired intimacy levels in their relationship. In addition, couples who said they had differences in the intimacy they desired used more demand-withdraw techniques and less constructive communication.

Variables that Affect Partner Conflict

Sex differences. Sex differences have also been found to be a predictor of the way an individual engages in partner conflict. For example, women have been found to begin conversations about issues that surround or lead to partner conflict, while men have been found to often withdraw from these types of discussions and arguments (Faulkner, Davey, & Davey, 2005). In addition, women have been found to be more likely to experience dissatisfaction within their marriages, and women have been found to more often report problems in their relationships than their male partners (Chen et al., 2006). In terms of intimacy, when partners' levels of desired intimacy do not match, either the male demands and the female withdraws, or the female demands and the male withdraws. When this interaction takes place, a couple will tend to use less constructive communication within their relationship (Christensen, 1987). Christensen found that usually the woman wants more intimacy, while the man wants more independence. Furthermore, the woman is more often the partner who is demanding, while the man is more often the partner who withdraws in the relationship.

Only Children and Partner Conflict during Emerging Adulthood

Emerging adulthood has been documented as a time when individuals begin to seek out romantic partners based on their own identity, as well as become involved in

romantic relationships that are more based on intimacy than recreation (Arnett, 2000). It has also been asserted that this a time when individuals learn new techniques that help them to reduce their level of partner conflict, usually by the end of this period (Chen et al., 2006).

Chen et al. (2006) conducted a study of 200 adults, including 11 only children. The authors found that among all of the birth orders in the study, adult only children reported the highest level overall of partner conflict during the transition to adulthood, or emerging adulthood. This transition to adulthood includes individuals between the ages of 17 and 27 years of age (Chen et al., 2006). The study also showed a sex difference among the adult only children's prevalence of partner conflict during these ages. The male only children participants in the study reported experiencing higher levels of partner conflict during the transition to adulthood than the participants who grew up with siblings. In addition, between the ages of 17 and 22 years, the male only children's partner conflict levels increased. These levels tended to decrease and eventually level off between the ages of 22 and 27 years, with levels being comparable to their peers with siblings by the age of 27 years. The female only children adult participants reported having experienced levels of partner conflict that were lower than their peers with siblings during the time period spanning between 17 and 27 years of age. The authors proposed that these differing results between the male and female only children participants could be due to the tendency for male only children to learn to handle conflict with aggression while growing up, whereas the female only children generally do not. Furthermore, the authors asserted that sibling relationships often help male children

to learn how to handle conflict in a stable manner. Without this experience during childhood, male only children may miss out on learning that disruptive and inconsiderate behavior often causes conflict with peers (Chen et al., 2006).

Adult Attachment and Conflict

In terms of partner conflict, Bookwala and Zdaniuk (1998) found that when relationship satisfaction and relationship duration were controlled for, individuals who experienced reciprocal aggression within their dating relationships had higher scores for either fearful or preoccupied adult attachment styles. In addition, when interpersonal problems, including having trouble being assertive, sociable, submissive, or intimate and being too responsible or controlling, were controlled for, individuals in mutually aggressive dating relationships scored higher for preoccupied attachment than individuals in non-aggressive dating relationships (Bookwala & Zdaniuk, 1998).

It has also been shown that attachment style can have an effect on how individuals engage in conflict resolution, specifically that individuals with secure attachment styles are generally more constructive during conflict resolution than individuals with the other attachment styles (Feeney, 1999). For example, individuals with a secure attachment style have been found to employ more problem-solving techniques than individuals with an insecure attachment style. Also, individuals with secure attachment were found to generally compromise more often than individuals with an ambivalent attachment style (Feeney, 1999). In addition, it has been found that individuals with an insecure attachment utilize more destructive communication techniques and less constructive communication techniques during conflict (Givertz & Safford, 2011).

Summary

In conclusion, the literature regarding only children reports conflicting findings. Based on the fact that adult only children have been found to display more secure attachment (McGuirk & Pettijohn, 2008), only children may be expected to use more effective conflict resolution techniques as well due to secure attachment being related to constructive conflict resolution (Feeney, 1999). But in contrast, adult only children have been found to engage in a larger overall level of partner conflict during emerging adulthood (Chen et al, 2006). As a result, the hypotheses for this study demonstrate these conflicting findings, including the hypothesis that adult only children will display less constructive conflict resolution techniques, but score lower for attachment anxiety and avoidance. The present study aims to clarify some of these mixed findings, as well as investigate whether the results of this study support any of the findings that exist in the literature.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the current study is to explore how adults approach conflict in romantic relationships and the potential differences that may exist between adults with siblings and adults without siblings. The specific research question is:

- 1) Are there differences in conflict strategies between adults without siblings and adults with siblings? If so, how do these groups differ?

Based on the existing literature, the hypotheses set forth are:

H_0 = Adult only children and adults who have siblings will show no differences in the conflict management techniques that they use during partner conflict and their attachment in their romantic relationships.

H_1 = Adult only children will use less constructive communication, more demand-withdraw, and more avoidance and withholding during partner conflict than adults who have siblings.

H_2 = Adult only children will have lower levels of attachment avoidance and attachment anxiety, demonstrating a more secure attachment in romantic relationships than adults who have siblings.

The present study is quantitative with the purpose of investigating whether adults who did not grow up with siblings interact in partner conflict differently than adults who did grow up with siblings. By gathering information from both only children and

individuals with siblings, the researcher aimed to compare and contrast the conflict processes and interactions of adult only children and adults who grew up with siblings. The results were used to answer the research question above, specifically: Do only children use different conflict resolution strategies within adult romantic relationships than adults who have siblings? If so, how do adult only children approach partner conflict differently than adults who grew up with siblings?

Sample

Similar to prior research that used a sample of individuals in emerging adulthood to investigate differences in conflict management based on birth order (Chen et al., 2006), adults within emerging adulthood (aged 18 through 25 years) were recruited for the present study. The sample for this study consisted of 106 adults between 18 and 25 years of age. The participants included 44 adult only children and 62 adults with siblings, as well as consisted of 98 females and 8 males.

Recruitment

Approval for this study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board at Texas Woman's University prior to beginning to recruit participants and collect data. Participants were recruited for the proposed study by electronic means, including email, social networking sites, and listservs (Appendix A). The purpose of the study was explained in the recruitment message, and a link to the survey was also included where interested eligible individuals could go and complete the survey available through PsychData. PsychData is an online data collection service for the social sciences and utilizes encrypted data transfer. The participants were provided with an electronic

informed consent document (Appendix B) upon clicking on the link in the recruitment message, and they were asked to click 'I Agree' to continue to the actual survey after reading the informed consent.

Eligibility was determined using the following inclusion criteria. First, the participants had to be between the ages of 18 and 25 years of age. Next, only children participants had to be either biological or adopted only children. In order to be considered an only child for this study, the participant must have been raised as an only child in their household since the age of three years, either due to being their parents' only child, their sibling dying before the participant was three years old, or their siblings, stepsiblings, or half-siblings living away from the household permanently. An individual who had a sibling living away from the household because of college did not count as an only child for this study. For the purpose of the present study, participants with siblings included any individual who grew up with at least one sibling in their home, either biological, adopted, or step. Participants were not excluded from this study because of their sex, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or gender identity or their partner's sex, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or gender identity. In addition, participants did not need to be in a current relationship in order to participate. Participants were asked to answer the survey questions about their most recent relationship if they were not currently in a relationship.

During the data collection stage, a modification was submitted to the Institutional Review Board in order to only recruit only children for the remainder of the study due to their being an overwhelming response from adults with siblings taking the survey but a small response from adult only children. Upon receiving approval from IRB to use the

modified recruitment materials (Appendix A) and informed consent (Appendix B), only children were recruited solely for the rest of the data collection stage.

Procedure

The electronic survey was completed by participants online. All measures were offered in English only. The survey consisted of 69 questions and took approximately 25-30 minutes to complete. The survey included a Demographic Questionnaire, the Experience in Close Relationship Scale-Short Form (ECR-Short Form; Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998), the Communication Patterns Questionnaire (CPQ; Christensen & Sullaway, 1984), and a final open-ended question. Additional questions were included if the participant or the participant's partner had siblings. Participants could exit the interview at any time without penalty by closing the survey. Participants were asked to answer the entire survey about their most recent relationship if they were not currently in a relationship.

Instruments

Demographic Questionnaire. The participants were asked to answer demographic questions about themselves, as well as their current or most recent romantic partner. The demographic questionnaire included 16 items asking about the participant's sex, ethnicity/race, sexual orientation, age, education level, and income with additional questions if the participant or participant's partner had siblings (Appendix C). The questionnaire also asked about whether the participant was an only child or had siblings, and the participant was given the opportunity to provide details about their own and their partner's birth order and family structure.

Experiences in Close Relationships Scale-Short Form. Participants completed the 12-item Experience in Close Relationship Scale-Short Form (ECR-Short Form; Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998). The measure assesses whether adult only children and adult siblings display differing attachment styles in their relationships. The ECR-Short Form asks participants to rate each item about their personal experiences within close and romantic relationships on a Likert scale of 1 (*Disagree Strongly*) to 7 (*Agree Strongly*). Example items include, “It helps to turn to my romantic partner in times of need” and “I need a lot of reassurance that I am loved by my partner” (ECR-Short Form; Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998).

The ECR-Short Form consists of two subscales, each measured by 6 items in the survey. The Avoidance subscale measures the participant’s level of attachment avoidance, and the Anxiety subscale measures the participant’s level of attachment anxiety (Wei, Russell, Mallinckrodt, & Vogel, 2007). Each subscale score is found by calculating the mean of the answers to the questions for that subscale (Mallinckrodt & Wang, 2004). Four items in the Avoidance subscale and one item in the Anxiety subscale are reverse-coded. Higher scores on either one or both of these subscales indicate an individual is more likely to experience a more insecure form of attachment, while individuals who rate low on these subscales are likely to experience a more secure attachment within their relationships (Wei et al., 2007).

Reliability and validity. Wei et al. (2007) examined the reliability and validity of the ECR-Short Form. The authors used six studies of samples of college students as participants for the study. The authors found that the Avoidance subscale has an alpha of

0.78 to 0.88, while the Anxiety subscale was found to have an alpha of 0.77 to 0.86. The authors concluded that based on these alpha values, the Experience in Close Relationship Scale-Short Form subscales have significant internal consistency. In addition, the authors reported that both of the subscales have been found to hold test-retest reliability, as well as have a correlation of $r = 0.28$ between the two scales (Wei et al., 2007).

In the present study, the reliabilities for both ECR-Short Form subscales were good (Avoidance $\alpha = 0.82$; Anxiety subscale $\alpha = 0.70$).

Communication Patterns Questionnaire. The participants also completed the Communication Patterns Questionnaire (CPQ; Christensen & Sullaway, 1984), which can be found in Appendix D, in order to investigate the process of engaging in conflict. Permission was given by the author to utilize this measure in the present study (Appendix D). The CPQ consists of 35 items about the interactions that take place during three phases of partner conflict. All items are scored on a Likert-type scale that ranges from 1 (*Very Unlikely*) to 9 (*Very Likely*) with higher scores indicating that a particular behavior is more likely to be used by the participant or their partner during conflict. The CPQ includes three phases of conflict (when a relationship problem arises, during discussion of the relationship problem, and withdrawal and reconciliation of the relationship problem) and six subscales (Christensen & Sullaway, 1984). In the present study, the terms “You” and “Your Partner” were used in replacement of “Man” and “Woman” within the survey in order to allow participants in same-sex relationships to be able to effectively answer the items. For example, the Man Demand/Woman Withdraw

Communication and Woman Demand/Man Withdraw Communication subscales were reworded to You Demand/Partner Withdraws and Partner Demands/You Withdraw.

The CPQ includes six subscales, each measuring a different aspect of couple communication within conflict. These subscales are Constructive Communication, Total Amount of Demand-Withdraw Communication, Man Demand/Woman Withdraw Communication, Woman Demand/Man Withdraw Communication, Roles in Demand-Withdraw Communication, and Mutual Avoidance and Withholding. The Constructive Communication subscale measures behaviors such as avoidance, expression, negotiation, blame, and threatening done mutually by each partner, as well as verbal aggression used by both male and female partners. The subscale of Total Amount of Demand-Withdraw Communication measures behaviors such as the male and female pattern of discussing and avoiding, demanding and withdrawing, and criticizing and defending. The Man Demand/Woman Withdraw Communication and Woman Demand/Man Withdraw Communication subscales narrow down the scores from the Total Amount of Demand-Withdraw Communication subscale to display particular patterns based on sex. As mentioned previously, these subscales were reworded as You Demand/Your Partner Withdraws Communication and Your Partner Demands/You Withdraw Communication. The Roles in Demand-Withdraw Communication subscale combines the scores from the You Demand/Your Partner Withdraws Communication and Your Partner Demands/You Withdraw Communication subscales by subtracting the participants' ratings of their own behavior from their ratings of their partners' behaviors (Christensen & Sullaway, 1984). This means that a positive score would demonstrate that the participant perceives their

partner as demanding more in the relationship while the participant withdraws more, and vice versa (Christensen, 1987). Finally, the Mutual Avoidance and Withholding subscale measures behaviors including how much partners avoid, withdraw, and withhold from each other mutually (Christensen & Sullaway, 1984). For the purpose of answering the proposed research question, only the scores from the Constructive Communication, You Demand/Your Partner Withdraws, Your Partner Demands/You Withdraw, and Mutual Avoidance and Withholding subscales are reported. The Total Amount of Demand-Withdraw Communication and Roles in Demand-Withdraw Communication subscale scores are not reported in the present study since they are combinations of the You Demand/Your Partner Withdraws Communication and Your Partner Demands/You Withdraw Communication subscales (Christensen & Sullaway, 1984), and therefore, provides less information about each individual partners' behaviors within the relationship. For the purpose of answering the hypotheses of the study, the individual behaviors of the participant and his or her partner were focused on.

Reliability and validity. Christensen and Shenk (1991) reported that the mean alpha of a group of the subscales, including Constructive Communication, Mutual Avoidance, Man Demands/Woman Withdraws, and Woman Demands/Man Withdraws, was .71, with alpha values ranging from 0.62 to 0.86. In addition, the correlations between the partners' scores on the three subscales were between .73 to .80 (Hahlweg et al., 2000). For the Constructive Communication Subscale that measures how the couple works together to solve a conflict (Hahlweg et al., 2000), couples' ratings on the subscale and observers' ratings of the couples' constructive communication had correlations from

.62 to .72 (Heavey, Larson, Zumtobel, & Christensen, 1996). These ratings demonstrate the Constructive Communication Subscale has criterion validity (Heavey et al., 1996).

Christensen (1987) reported the reliability of the three CPQ subscales of Mutual Constructive Communication, Demand-Withdraw Communication, and Demand-Withdraw Roles. The author did this by looking at the means of the male and female responses to the items and analyzing the corrected Pearson correlations and intraclass correlations of these for each subscale. For the subscale of Mutual Constructive Communication, the corrected Pearson correlation was reported as being 0.82, and the intraclass correlation was reported as 0.80. For the Demand-Withdraw Communication subscale, the corrected Pearson correlation was 0.73, and the intraclass correlation was 0.73. Finally, for the Demand-Withdraw Roles subscale, both the corrected Pearson correlations and intraclass correlation were reported as being 0.74. For this third subscale, the male participants' scores were subtracted from the female participants' scores. As a result, positive values were assigned to times when the female was demanding and the male withdrew, and negative values were assigned to times when the male was demanding and the female showed withdrawing behavior. In addition, male and female answers on each item from each of the three subscales agreed at a statistically significant level of $p < .001$ (Christensen, 1987).

Various studies have looked at the validity of the CPQ. Noller and White (1990) found that the CPQ displayed discriminant validity in that it was effective at discriminating the individuals who were happy with their marital relationship from the individuals who were not happy with their marital relationship. In the same study, the

items that individuals gave regarding their couple conflict patterns generally matched the answers that their spouses gave at a moderate level (Noller & White, 1990).

In a study using the CPQ-Short Form, the *man* and *woman* labels were reworded to *mother* and *father*, Chronbach's alphas for some of the subscales were averaged for the responses given by the mothers and fathers. For the mothers' responses, an alpha value of 0.85 was found for the Mother Demands/Father Withdraws subscale and a value of 0.50 was found for the Father Demands/Mother Withdraws subscale. For the fathers' responses, an alpha value of 0.71 was found for the Mother Demands/Father Withdraws subscale, and a values of 0.72 was found for the Father Demands/Mother Withdraws subscale (Christensen & Heavey, 1990). In addition, in a study where husbands and wives were asked to answer the CPQ-Short Form about how they deal with both an issue of the husband's and an issue of the wife's. The results of these reports were averaged to find alpha values for some of the subscales. For the subscale of Constructive Communication, the alpha value was found to be 0.87. The subscales of Husband Demands/Wife Withdraws ($\alpha = .66$) and Wife Demands/Husband Withdraws ($\alpha = .71$) were both found to be reliable (Heavey, Layne, & Christensen, 1993).

For the present study, the Chronbach's alphas were found for each subscale used, including the Constructive Communication subscale ($\alpha = .36$), the You Demand/Your Partner Withdraws Communication subscale ($\alpha = 0.63$), the Your Partner Demands/You Withdraw subscale ($\alpha = 0.52$), and the Mutual Avoidance and Withholding subscale ($\alpha = 0.45$).

Open-ended question and contact information. At the end of the survey, an open-ended question was presented for the participant to answer: “Describe in your own words the steps that take place when you and your partner have a conflict or argument (What do your interactions look like before, during, and after an argument).” Following this question, the participant was given the option to provide their email address if they wanted to receive information regarding the results of the study. In the informed consent, the participant was informed that any contact information that they provided, such as email addresses, would be kept separate from the survey data and would be destroyed once the data collection process was complete.

Analysis

For the present study, SPSS 20 software was used to analyze the results of the demographics questionnaire and both the Experiences in Close Relationships Scale-Short Form and the Communication Patterns Questionnaire. Descriptive analyses were conducted to examine participants’ demographic information, including their sex, ethnicity/race, sexual orientation, age, education level, length of relationship, relationship status, and whether they are only children or have siblings. This was done by running descriptive statistics, including the frequencies, means, and standard deviations for each.

Correlations were conducted on all of the subscales, including Avoidance, Anxiety, Constructive Communication, You Demand/Partner Withdraws Communication, Partner Demands/You Withdraw Communication, and Mutual Avoidance and Withholding. A MANOVA was then conducted to test group differences on the ECR-Short Form and CPQ subscales. Finally, ANOVAs were used to confirm

group differences between both the only children and adults with siblings on the subscales highlighted in the MANOVA results. An ANOVA was also conducted to test group differences in subscale scores based on sex.

In conclusion, the ECR-Short Form was administered and analyzed to examine whether the adult only children and adults with siblings in the study showed differences in attachment styles, and the CPQ was administered and analyzed in order to find out whether adult only children in the study used different conflict resolution techniques than adults in the study who have siblings.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Participants

The original sample consisted of 303 participants who began the survey. Of the 303 participants, 89.44% met the eligibility requirements ($n = 271$). Of the participants who met the requirements, 35.05% discontinued the survey before completing it ($n = 95$), leaving a sample size of 176 participants. Due to there being a larger number of participants with siblings ($n = 132$) than with only children ($n = 44$), a group of adult siblings were randomly selected from the overall sample of adult siblings in order to create an even final sample for analyses. Therefore, the final sample included 44 adult only children and 62 adults with siblings, giving a total sample of 106 participants (Table 1). The sample was 92.5% female ($n = 98$), with 42 of these females being only children, and 7.5% male ($n = 8$), with two of these males being only children. The entire final sample was between the ages of 18 and 25 years of age; the average age was 21.89 years ($SD = 2.09$). Of the sample, 71.7% reported being White/Caucasian ($n = 76$), 11.3% Hispanic/Latino ($n = 12$), 8.5% Mixed Race ($n = 9$), 3.8% Black/African American ($n = 4$), 1.9% Asian American ($n = 2$), 0.9% Native American or Alaskan Native ($n = 1$), and 1.9% Other ($n = 2$). In terms of sexual orientation, 89.6% reported being heterosexual ($n = 95$), 2.8% gay or lesbian ($n = 3$), 2.8% bisexual ($n = 3$), and 4.7% Other ($n = 5$). Of the participants, 63.2% reported having completed some college ($n = 67$), 21.7% reported

Table 1

Summary of Sample Demographics

Characteristic	No Siblings (<i>n</i> = 44)	Have Siblings (<i>n</i> = 62)
Sex		
Female	42 (39.62%)	56 (52.83%)
Male	2 (1.89%)	6 (5.66%)
Ethnicity/Race		
White/Caucasian	32 (30.19%)	44 (41.51%)
Hispanic/Latino	3 (2.83%)	9 (8.49%)
Mixed Race	6 (5.66%)	3 (2.83%)
Black/African American	2 (1.89%)	2 (1.89%)
Asian American	0 (0.00%)	2 (1.89%)
Native American or Alaskan		
Native	0 (0.00%)	1 (0.94%)
Native Hawaiian or other		
Pacific Islander	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Other	1 (0.94%)	1 (0.94%)
Sexual Orientation		
Heterosexual	39 (36.79%)	56 (52.83%)
Gay or Lesbian	0 (0.00%)	3 (2.83%)
Bisexual	2 (1.89%)	1 (0.94%)
Other	3 (2.83%)	2 (1.89%)
Highest Level of Education		
Completed some high school	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Graduated from high school	2 (1.89%)	1 (0.94%)
Some college	27 (25.47%)	40 (37.74%)
Graduated from college	5 (4.72%)	4 (3.77%)
Some graduate school	9 (8.49%)	14 (13.21%)
Completed master's degree	0 (0.00%)	3 (2.83%)
Completed doctoral or professional degree	1 (0.94%)	0 (0.00%)
Relationship Status		
Dating	32 (30.19%)	41 (38.68%)
Living together	11 (10.38%)	6 (5.66%)
Married	1 (0.94%)	15 (14.15%)

having completed some graduate school ($n = 23$), 8.5% reported having graduated from college ($n = 9$), 2.8% reported having graduated from high school ($n = 3$), 2.8% reported having completed a master's degree ($n = 3$), and 0.9% reported having completed a doctoral or professional degree ($n = 1$). In terms of the participants' relationships with their partners, 68.9% reported being in a dating relationship ($n = 73$), 16.0% reported living together ($n = 17$), and 15.1% reported being married ($n = 16$). The participants reported having been in their most current relationship for an average of 2.36 years ($SD = 2.33$).

Results

Correlations

Due to past findings indicating that there is a relationship between attachment and conflict resolution techniques (Feeney, 1999), correlations were used to evaluate the connections between the ECR-Short Form and CPQ subscales (Table 2). The subscales were found to be correlated with each other regardless of whether the participants had siblings or not. As the scores for the Avoidance subscale increased, the scores on the Anxiety, You Demand/Your Partner Withdraws Communication, Your Partner Demands/You Withdraw, and Mutual Avoidance and Withdrawal subscales increased and the Constructive Communication subscale score decreased. As the Anxiety subscale scores increased, the scores for Avoidance, You Demand/Your Partner Withdraws Communication, Your Partner Demands/You Withdraw Avoidance, and Mutual Avoidance and Withholding scores increased and the scores for the Constructive Communication decreased. As the scores for Constructive Communication increased, the

scores for each of the other five subscales decreased. As the You Demand/Your Partner Withdraws Communication subscale scores increased, the scores for Avoidance, Anxiety, Your Partner Demands/You Withdraw Avoidance, and Mutual Avoidance and Withholding increased and scores for Constructive Communication decreased. As scores for Your Partner Demands/You Withdraw Communication increased, Avoidance, Anxiety, You Demand/Your Partner Withdraws Communication, and Mutual Avoidance and Withholding increased and Constructive Communication decreased. Finally, as Mutual Avoidance and Withholding increased, all of the subscales except for Constructive Communication increased.

MANOVA

Next, to test the hypotheses, a repeated-measures MANOVA was computed for the effect of having siblings or not on the subscales of Attachment Avoidance, Attachment Anxiety, Constructive Communication, You Demand/Your Partner Withdraws Communication, Your Partner Demands/You Withdraw Communication, and Mutual Avoidance and Withdrawal. The overall MANOVA was not found to be significant based on whether the participants were only children or not ($F(6, 99) = 1.46, p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.08$), but a significant difference was found within the subscale of Your Partner Demands/You Withdraw Communication. This difference was further investigated by conducting ANOVAs.

Table 2

Summary of Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviation for Scores on the CPQ and ECR-Short Form Subscales

Subscale	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Avoidance	---	---	---	---	---	---
2. Anxiety	0.34**	---	---	---	---	---
3. Constructive Communication	-0.29**	-0.23*	---	---	---	---
4. You Demand/Partner Withdraws Communication	0.08	0.20*	-0.57**	---	---	---
5. Partner Demands/You Withdraw Communication	0.29**	0.14	-0.40*	0.34**	---	---
6. Mutual Avoidance and Withholding	0.34**	0.24*	-0.43**	0.43**	0.24*	---
<i>M</i>	2.18	3.59	14.65	9.79	8.46	7.90
<i>SD</i>	1.06	1.13	5.88	5.59	4.32	4.04
<i>N</i> = 106						

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

ANOVAs

ANOVAs were computed on each subscale individually to further investigate the differences between having siblings or no siblings on conflict techniques and attachment

(Table 3). Although some differences in the ECR-Short Form and CPQ subscale scores were found between only child participants and the participants with siblings, the majority of these differences were not statistically significant. The only subscale that demonstrated statistically significant differences was the CPQ subscale of Your Partner Demands/You Withdraw Communication. The only children scored significantly higher than their peers with siblings for this subscale ($F(1, 104) = 4.08, p < .05, \eta^2 = 0.04$). In other words, the only child participants tended to perceive their partner as more demanding than themselves, significantly more than did the participants with siblings. According to Cohen (1988), this effect size of 0.04 is considered to be a small-medium effect, meaning that 4% of the variance within this particular subscale can be accounted for by whether the participant has siblings or not. ANOVAs were also computed to test whether any differences existed between the male and female participants. None of the ECR-Short Form or CPQ subscales demonstrated statistically significant differences based on sex.

Participants were asked to answer questions regarding their own and their partner's family constellation, as well as an open-ended question. For the purpose of testing the specific hypotheses set forth in this study, tests were not conducted on the answers given by the participants for these items.

Summary

In conclusion, no significant differences were found in the majority of the areas of conflict management and attachment between adults who have siblings and adults without siblings. Only one area where the only children participants showed any

statistically significant results were in the area of how they perceived their partners' conflict behaviors, reporting that they perceived their partners to be more demanding than their peer with siblings did.

Table 3

Summary of ANOVAs, Means, and Standard Deviation for Scores on the CPQ and ECR-Short Form Subscales

Outcome Variables	<u>Do you have siblings?</u>		<u>ANOVA</u>
	No ($n = 44$)	Yes ($n = 62$)	F test, p values, effect size
ECR-S			
Avoidance*	2.55 (1.21)	2.28 (1.19)	$F = 1.41, p = 0.24, \eta^2 = 0.01$
Anxiety	3.77 (1.12)	3.37 (1.07)	$F = 3.45, p = 0.07, \eta^2 = 0.03$
CPQ			
Constructive Communication	14.36 (6.04)	14.29 (6.15)	$F = 0.00, p = 0.95, \eta^2 = 0.00$
You Demand/Your Partner Withdraws Communication	9.66 (5.98)	9.89 (5.35)	$F = 0.04, p = 0.84, \eta^2 = 0.00$
Your Partner Demands/You Withdraw Communication	9.45 (5.09)	7.76 (3.57)	$F = 4.08, p = 0.046, \eta^2 = 0.04$
Mutual Avoidance and Withholding	7.59 (3.51)	7.87 (3.96)	$F = 0.14, p = 0.71, \eta^2 = 0.00$

* $N =$ No ($n = 51$), Yes ($n = 69$)

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Conclusions

Within the existing literature comparing only children and individuals with siblings, the studies have shown mixed results (Falbo, 2012). Therefore, it is not surprising that in the present study, some results differed from what would have been expected based on the existing literature. For example, the result that the only child participants did not significantly differ in their levels of avoidance and anxiety when compared to individuals with siblings may seem contrary to the findings in past studies that show only children to have more secure attachment compared to other birth orders (McGuirk & Pettijohn, 2008). In addition, contrary to the author's hypothesis, the only children participants in the study did not display significantly different results from their peers with siblings in the areas of constructive communication and avoidance and withdrawal. This finding may seem inconsistent with the existing research showing that adult only children display differences in the area of partner conflict when compared to their peers in other birth orders (Chen et al., 2006).

One finding that does stand out, though, is that, despite the small sample size, the only child participants' scores for the CPQ Your Partner Demands/You Withdraw Communication subscale were significantly higher than their peers who have siblings. Future research should examine this result further and test whether this result extends to a

larger and more diverse sample. If this result does prove to be true in a larger sample, research should also investigate why only children may rate their partner as being more demanding, considering that it could possibly be due to the autonomy many only children report having due to not having grown up with siblings (Polit, Nuttall, & Nuttall, 1980). Another area that could be considered as a possible reason for this result could be that since only children may lack experience in learning to deal with conflict effectively growing up (Kitzmann et al., 2002), they may misinterpret interactions with their partner as being demanding

The results of this study did not confirm the present hypotheses; most differences between only children and adults with siblings were not statistically significant. These findings are in contrast to the stereotype that many people have of the only child being significantly more dysfunctional and less well-adjusted within their adult relationships (Mancillas, 2006). In the present study, for example, no significant differences in problematic attachment styles were found between adult only children and adults with siblings, contrary to what one might expect based on the prevailing negative stereotypes of only children.

Clinical Implications

As mentioned earlier, it has been found that therapists often believe the negative stereotypes about only children (Stewart, 2004), and the results of this study could imply the negative consequences of letting one's therapy be affected by this stereotype. Stewart (2004) found that clinicians assumed that a hypothetical only child client was more likely to experience problems. In terms of working with couples, this finding could potentially

imply that a therapist may assume that the only child partner in a couple is more likely to experience problems, and therefore, add to the dysfunction and conflict in the couple. If the negative stereotypes of the only child are affecting the way therapists approach partner conflict when working with an adult only child and their partner with siblings, then couples including an only child partner or spouse may possibly feel blamed for the conflict in their relationship based on their not growing up with siblings. But like past research (Falbo, 2012), the results of the present study support the idea that only children do not significantly differ from their peers with siblings. The results of this study show that adult only children do not seem to engage in less functional conflict management strategies; onlies' relationship conflict strategies are not very different than the techniques used by their peers with siblings. Stewart (2004) also asserted that the knowledge of a client's birth order can affect a therapist's judgment as much as race, sex, or age can. If this assertion is true, it may be therapeutically indicated for therapists to take time to consider how a client's birth order, including whether they are an only child or not, affects their therapy in the same way that variables such as gender affect the therapy process.

In addition, it has been asserted that when differences are found in studies comparing only children and siblings, these differences may be accounted for by other variances besides having siblings or not (Falbo, 2012). Therefore, it is important to consider that only children do not fit into one category, just as individuals who have siblings do not all fit into one category. This means that therapists need to make sure that

they are not placing only children clients into a stereotyped view and are considering the other contextual variables that could be affecting the client.

The one significant finding of the study was that the only children participants reported perceiving their partner to be more demanding than the participants with siblings did of their partners. Based on this result, a therapist could potentially take away from the study that it may be important to check in on the demand-withdrawal process that takes place in couples who have an only child partner. It also may be important for therapists to compare the only child partner's perception of their partner's demanding behavior with how the partner describes this same behavior.

Limitations

Due to the low sample size, the results may not hold ample statistical power in order to be generalizable to adult only children and adults who have siblings within the general population. In addition, the sample lacked diversity in terms of the types of individuals that participated. The sample was a relatively educated sample with many of the participants being students in college or graduate school. Also, there were only 8 male participants in the sample. Therefore, the tests run on differences between the male and female participants in this study may not hold much meaning. While differences in partner conflict between male and female only children have been found, (Chen et al., 2006) the present study was unable to effectively test this idea due to the lack of male participants. The results of the study might have differed if the sample had been more diverse in terms of education or sex.

Next, the Chronbach's alpha values for some of the CPQ subscales fell below 0.6, including a value of 0.36 for the Constructive Communication subscale, a value of 0.52 for the Your Partner Demands/You Withdraw, and a value of 0.45 for the Mutual Avoidance and Withholding subscale. More research is needed to determine the consistency of the CPQ and its subscales. Previous research (Christensen & Shenk, 1991) reported only a range of alpha values and a mean of these values, which may have not been very telling of the instrument's consistency. In addition, not all subscales' alpha values have been reported in each study (Christensen & Shenk, 1991).

Finally, some limitations exist in regards to the measurements used in the study. First, the fact that the sample was not dyadic and participants were asked to answer questions about both themselves and their partner's conflict techniques could potentially pose limitations. This could have affected the results of this study in that the results from the Communication Patterns Questionnaire (CPQ; Christensen & Sullaway, 1984) questions may not have been as accurate as they may have been if both the participant and their partner were given the opportunity to answer the questions. Second, since only one measure of relationship processes was used to collect data, there could potentially be additional areas that may be important to measure in order to gain a well-rounded view of only children and conflict.

Future Directions

One potential future direction in this research would be to include both the participant and his or her partner in the answering of the survey in order to get more accurate results about the roles of each individual in the relationship. It might also be

interesting to conduct a qualitative study, where the couples were asked to describe their conflict experiences in their own words. Furthermore, a study similar to the one presented could be carried out on a larger and more diverse sample so as to make the results more generalizable to the population. Finally, it would be interesting to look further into whether the significant results for the subscale of Your Partner Demands/You Withdraw occur in a larger sample, as well as investigate why only children may perceive their partners as more demanding, more so than their peers with siblings do.

Summary

A family systems lens was used in conducting the present study, with the primary idea being that the family constellation affects how adults interact within romantic relationships, specifically whether growing up with siblings or not, affects an individual's attachment style and how he or she engages in partner conflict as an adult. Despite the present hypotheses, only one significant difference was found in the demand-withdrawal process of the participants' relationships, specifically that the participants without siblings perceived their partners to be more demanding than the participants who have siblings. The present findings do not indicate that being an only child causes differences in attachment style or conflict management strategies to occur. Further research in this area could potentially discover whether family constellation is cause for differences in conflict management. The lack of significant findings in the present study may indicate that mental health professionals should be mindful that they are not bringing in their own preconceived notions about the nature of the only child, often stemming from society's

stereotypical view of the only child, into their therapy with couples with an only child partner.

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APPENDIX A
Recruitment Materials

Short Recruitment

We are looking for adults between the ages of 18 and 25 years to participate in a voluntary study being conducted through Texas Woman's University that will explore how adults approach conflict in romantic relationships and the potential differences that may exist between adults without siblings and adults with siblings. Total time commitment is expected to be 25-30 minutes. For more information on the study, you can click on the link below. For questions about the study, you can contact Erica Carpenter at ECarpenter1@twu.edu or her advisor, Dr. Mary Sue Green, MGreen9@twu.edu. Feel free to share this information with others who might be interested.

As with any electronic submission, there is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, and internet transactions. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this research or the way this study has been conducted, you may contact the Texas Woman's University Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at 940-898-3378 or via e-mail at IRB@twu.edu.

[link here]

Long Recruitment

Hello,

We are looking for adults between the ages of 18 and 25 years to participate in a voluntary study being conducted through Texas Woman's University exploring how adults approach conflict in romantic relationships and the potential differences that may exist between adults without siblings and adults with siblings.

For the present study, only children participants can be either biological or adopted only children. In addition, in order to be considered an only child for this study, the participant must have been raised as an only child in their household since the age of three years, either due to being their parents' only child, their sibling dying before the participant was three years old, or their siblings, stepsiblings, or half-siblings living away from the household permanently. Having a sibling living away from the household because of college will not count for this study. Participants with siblings will include any individual who grew up with at least one sibling in their home, either biological, adopted, or step. Total commitment time is expected to be 25-30 minutes. For more information or to participate, click on the link below.

[link goes here]

Feel free to share this information with others who may be interested. If you have any questions, you may contact Erica Carpenter at ecarpenter1@twu.edu or her advisor Dr. Mary Sue Green at MGreen9@twu.edu.

Erica N. Carpenter, B.S.
ecarpenter1@twu.edu
832-524-2898

Advisor: Mary Sue Green, Ph.D., LMFT-S
MGreen9@twu.edu
940-898-2687

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Short Recruitment with IRB-Approved Modification

We are looking for adult only children between the ages of 18 and 25 years to participate in a voluntary study being conducted through Texas Woman's University that will explore how adults approach conflict in romantic relationships and the potential differences that may exist between adults without siblings and adults with siblings. Total time commitment is expected to be 25-30 minutes. For more information on the study, you can click on the link below. For questions about the study, you can contact Erica Carpenter at ECarpenter1@twu.edu or her advisor, Dr. Mary Sue Green, MGreen9@twu.edu. Feel free to share this information with others who might be interested.

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[[link here](#)]

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APPENDIX B

Informed Consent Forms

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of study: Romantic Relationship Conflict Management Techniques of Adult Only Children and Adults with Siblings

Principal Investigator: Erica N. Carpenter, B.S.

Phone: 832-524-2898
ecarpenter1@twu.edu

Faculty Advisor: Mary Sue Green, Ph.D., LMFT-S

Phone: 940-898-2687
MGreen9@twu.edu

Explanation and Purpose of the Research

The purpose of the present research study being conducted through Texas Woman's University is to explore how adults approach conflict in romantic relationships and the potential differences that may exist between adults without siblings and adults with siblings.

For the present study, only children participants can be either biological or adopted only children. In addition, in order to be considered an only child for this study, the participant must have been raised as an only child in their household since the age of three years, either due to being their parents' only child, their sibling dying before the participant was three years old, or their siblings, stepsiblings, or half-siblings living away from the household permanently. Having a sibling living away from the household because of college will not count for this study. Participants with siblings will include any individual who grew up with at least one sibling in their home, either biological, adopted, or step.

Description of Procedures

This study includes an online survey that has questions about broad demographic information (sex, ethnicity/race, sexual orientation, age, education level, and income), siblings, a relationship experience scale, and a scale that measures communication patterns. The survey also has an open-ended question. Participation is voluntary and you can exit the survey at any time. Total time to take the survey is approximately 25-30 minutes.

Potential Risks

One potential risk of participating in the study includes loss of confidentiality. Participant identifying information such as email addresses will be kept separate from survey data. Identifying information will be kept by the principal investigator on a password protected

computer in the investigator's locked home office. Confidentiality will be protected to the extent that is allowed by law. All identifying information will be destroyed at the end of data collection. If you choose to participate in future research, the information you provide will be entered into and kept in a spreadsheet that is separate from your email and kept by the principal investigator on a password protected computer in the investigator's locked home office. There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, and internet transactions. Participation is voluntary, and participants may withdraw from the project at any time without penalty by exiting the online survey.

A second risk of participating in the study is fatigue. Participants may take a break at any time. Participants may stop the research process at any time by exiting the online survey. Participation is voluntary and participants may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. A final risk of participating in the study is loss of anonymity. Participants will choose the time and location to take the survey. At no time will name and contact information be connected to survey data.

The researchers will try to prevent any problem that could happen because of this research. You should let the researchers know at once if there is a problem and they will help you. However, TWU does not provide medical services or financial assistance for injuries that might happen because you are taking part in this research.

Participation and Benefits

Participants will receive no direct benefits from participating in this study. The generalizable benefits of this study include informing family science professionals, including mental health providers, and contributing to the knowledge about how adults approach conflict in romantic relationships and the potential differences that may exist between adults without siblings and adults with siblings. Participants will be given the option at the end of the survey to choose to receive an email reporting the results of the study.

Questions Regarding the Study

If you have any questions about the research study you should ask the researchers; their phone numbers are at the top of this form. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this research or the way this study has been conducted, you may contact the Texas Woman's University Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at 940-898-3378 or via e-mail at IRB@twu.edu.

There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, and internet transactions.

Participant Signature

Your click on the “I Agree” button below indicates that you voluntarily agree to participate in this study, that the study has been described to you, that you have been given the time to read the document, and that your questions have been satisfactorily answered. You can print this page for your records before you proceed.

<Click “I Agree” to proceed>

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH WITH IRB-APPROVED
MODIFICATION

Title of study: Romantic Relationship Conflict Management Techniques of Adult Only Children and Adults with Siblings

Principal Investigator: Erica N. Carpenter, B.S.

Phone: 832-524-2898
ecarpenter1@twu.edu

Faculty Advisor: Mary Sue Green, Ph.D., LMFT-S

Phone: 940-898-2687
MGreen9@twu.edu

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Description of Procedures

This study includes an online survey that has questions about broad demographic information (sex, ethnicity/race, sexual orientation, age, education level, and income), siblings, a relationship experience scale, and a scale that measures communication patterns. The survey also has an open-ended question. Participation is voluntary and you can exit the survey at any time. Total time to take the survey is approximately 25-30 minutes.

Potential Risks

One potential risk of participating in the study includes loss of confidentiality. Participant identifying information such as email addresses will be kept separate from survey data. Identifying information will be kept by the principal investigator on a password protected computer in the investigator's locked home office. Confidentiality will be protected to the

extent that is allowed by law. All identifying information will be destroyed at the end of data collection. If you choose to participate in future research, the information you provide will be entered into and kept in a spreadsheet that is separate from your email and kept by the principal investigator on a password protected computer in the investigator's locked home office. There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, and internet transactions. Participation is voluntary, and participants may withdraw from the project at any time without penalty by exiting the online survey.

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The researchers will try to prevent any problem that could happen because of this research. You should let the researchers know at once if there is a problem and they will help you. However, TWU does not provide medical services or financial assistance for injuries that might happen because you are taking part in this research.

Participation and Benefits

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There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, and internet transactions.

Participant Signature

Your click on the “I Agree” button below indicates that you voluntarily agree to participate in this study, that the study has been described to you, that you have been given the time to read the document, and that your questions have been satisfactorily answered. You can print this page for your records before you proceed.

<Click “I Agree” to proceed>

APPENDIX C

Survey

Survey

For this study, you will answer basic questions about you and your partner, along with questions about the conflict process between you and your partner. If you do not currently have a partner, answer the questions about the last partner you were involved with.

Section 1 – Demographics Questionnaire	
The first set of questions includes basic information about you and your partner.	
1. Your Sex	0 Female 1 Male
2. Your Partner's Sex	0 Female 1 Male
3. Your Age	
4. Your Partner's Age	
5. What is your relationship status?	0 Dating 1 Living together 2 Married
6. Your Ethnicity/Race	1 Asian American 2 Black or African American 3 Hispanic/Latino 4 Native American or Alaskan Native 5 Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

	6 White/Caucasian 7 Mixed race 8 Other _____
7. Your Partner's Ethnicity/Race	1 Asian American 2 Black or African American 3 Hispanic/Latino 4 Native American or Alaskan Native 5 Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander 6 White/Caucasian 7 Mixed race 8 Other _____
8. Your Sexual Orientation	0 Heterosexual 1 Gay or Lesbian 2 Bisexual 3 Other _____
9. Your Partner's Sexual Orientation	0 Heterosexual 1 Gay or Lesbian 2 Bisexual 3 Other _____
10. What is the highest level of education you have completed?	1 Some high school 2 Graduated from high school

	3 Some college 4 Graduated from college 5 Some graduate school 6 Completed master's degree 7 Completed doctoral or professional degree
11. What is the highest level of education your partner has completed?	1 Some high school 2 Graduated from high school 3 Some college 4 Graduated from college 5 Some graduate school 6 Completed master's degree 7 Completed doctoral or professional degree
12. What is your annual income?	
13. What is your partner's annual income?	
14. How long have you been in your current relationship?	Months _____ Years _____
15. Do you have siblings? (If yes, go to question 16. If No, move to question 18.)	0 No 1 Yes

16. If you have siblings, how many?	
17. The next set of questions is about your siblings, sibling position, and family structure.	

Siblings Number	Gender	Position	Relationship	Sexual Orientation	Race/Ethnicity	Education Completed
17a. You	0 Female 1 Male	1 Oldest 2 Middle 3 Youngest				
17b. 1	0 Female 1 Male	1 Oldest 2 Middle 3 Youngest	1 full biological 2 half sibling (same father) 3 half sibling (same mother) 4 adoption 5 Step sibling (via step-dad) 6 Step sibling (via step-mom) 7 Other _____	0 Heterosexual 1 Gay or Lesbian 2 Bisexual 3 Other _____	1 Asian American 2 Black or African American 3 Hispanic/Latino 4 Native American or Alaskan Native 5 Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander 6 White/Caucasian 7 Mixed race 8 Other ____	1 Some high school 2 Graduated from high school 3 Some college 4 Graduated from college 5 Some graduate school 6 Completed master's degree 7 Completed doctoral or professional degree

17c.	0 Female	1 Oldest	1 full	0 Heterosexual	1 Asian	1 Some high
2	1 Male	2 Middle	biological	1 Gay or	American	school
		3 Youngest	2 half sibling	Lesbian	2 Black or	2 Graduated
			(same father)	2 Bisexual	African	from high
			3 half sibling	3 Other _____	American	school
			(same mother)		3 Hispanic/	3 Some
			4 adoption		Latino	college
			5 Step sibling		4 Native	4 Graduated
			(via step-dad)		American or	from college
			6 Step sibling		Alaskan	5 Some
			(via step-		Native	graduate
			mom)		5 Native	school
			7 Other		Hawaiian or	6 Completed
			_____		other Pacific	master's
					Islander	degree
					6 White/	7 Completed
					Caucasian	doctoral or
					7 Mixed race	professional
					8 Other	degree

17d.	0 Female	1 Oldest	1 full	0 Heterosexual	1 Asian	1 Some high
3	1 Male	2 Middle	biological	1 Gay or	American	school
		3 Youngest	2 half sibling	Lesbian	2 Black or	2 Graduated
			(same father)	2 Bisexual	African	from high
				3 Other ____	American	school

			3 half sibling (same mother) 4 adoption 5 Step sibling (via step-dad) 6 Step sibling (via step-mom) 7 Other _____		3 Hispanic/ Latino 4 Native American or Alaskan Native 5 Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander 6 White/ Caucasian 7 Mixed race 8 Other _____	3 Some college 4 Graduated from college 5 Some graduate school 6 Completed master's degree 7 Completed doctoral or professional degree
17e. 4	0 Female 1 Male	1 Oldest 2 Middle 3 Youngest	1 full biological 2 half sibling (same father) 3 half sibling (same mother) 4 adoption 5 Step sibling (via step-dad)	0 Heterosexual 1 Gay or Lesbian 2 Bisexual 3 Other _____	1 Asian American 2 Black or African American 3 Hispanic/ Latino 4 Native American or Alaskan	1 Some high school 2 Graduated from high school 3 Some college 4 Graduated from college 5 Some

			6 Step sibling (via step- mom) 7 Other _____		Native 5 Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander 6 White/ Caucasian 7 Mixed race 8 Other _____	graduate school 6 Completed master's degree 7 Completed doctoral or professional degree
17f. 5	0 Female 1 Male	1 Oldest 2 Middle 3 Youngest	1 full biological 2 half sibling (same father) 3 half sibling (same mother) 4 adoption 5 Step sibling (via step-dad) 6 Step sibling (via step- mom) 7 Other _____	0 Heterosexual 1 Gay or Lesbian 2 Bisexual 3 Other _____	1 Asian American 2 Black or African American 3 Hispanic/ Latino 4 Native American or Alaskan Native 5 Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	1 Some high school 2 Graduated from high school 3 Some college 4 Graduated from college 5 Some graduate school 6 Completed master's degree

					6 White/ Caucasian 7 Mixed race 8 Other _____	7 Completed doctoral or professional degree
17g. 6	0 Female 1 Male	1 Oldest 2 Middle 3 Youngest	1 full biological 2 half sibling (same father) 3 half sibling (same mother) 4 adoption 5 Step sibling (via step-dad) 6 Step sibling (via step- mom) 7 Other _____	0 Heterosexual 1 Gay or Lesbian 2 Bisexual 3 Other _____	1 Asian American 2 Black or African American 3 Hispanic/ Latino 4 Native American or Alaskan Native 5 Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander 6 White/ Caucasian 7 Mixed race 8 Other _____	1 Some high school 2 Graduated from high school 3 Some college 4 Graduated from college 5 Some graduate school 6 Completed master's degree 7 Completed doctoral or professional degree

17h. 7	0 Female 1 Male	1 Oldest 2 Middle 3 Youngest	1 full biological 2 half sibling (same father) 3 half sibling (same mother) 4 adoption 5 Step sibling (via step-dad) 6 Step sibling (via step-mom) 7 Other _____	0 Heterosexual 1 Gay or Lesbian 2 Bisexual 3 Other _____	1 Asian American 2 Black or African American 3 Hispanic/Latino 4 Native American or Alaskan Native 5 Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander 6 White/Caucasian 7 Mixed race 8 Other _____	1 Some high school 2 Graduated from high school 3 Some college 4 Graduated from college 5 Some graduate school 6 Completed master's degree 7 Completed doctoral or professional degree
17i. 8	0 Female 1 Male	1 Oldest 2 Middle 3 Youngest	1 full biological 2 half sibling (same father) 3 half sibling	0 Heterosexual 1 Gay or Lesbian 2 Bisexual 3 Other ____	1 Asian American 2 Black or African American 3 Other American	1 Some high school 2 Graduated from high school

			(same mother) 4 adoption 5 Step sibling (via step-dad) 6 Step sibling (via step-mom) 7 Other _____		3 Hispanic/Latino 4 Native American or Alaskan 5 Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander 6 White/Caucasian 7 Mixed race 8 Other _____	3 Some college 4 Graduated from college 5 Some graduate school 6 Completed master's degree 7 Completed doctoral or professional degree
17j. 9	0 Female 1 Male	1 Oldest 2 Middle 3 Youngest	1 full biological 2 half sibling (same father) 3 half sibling (same mother) 4 adoption 5 Step sibling (via step-dad) 6 Step sibling	0 Heterosexual 1 Gay or Lesbian 2 Bisexual 3 Other _____	1 Asian American 2 Black or African American 3 Hispanic/Latino 4 Native American or Alaskan	1 Some high school 2 Graduated from high school 3 Some college 4 Graduated from college 5 Some

			(via step-mom) 7 Other _____		Native 5 Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander 6 White/ Caucasian 7 Mixed race 8 Other _____	graduate school 6 Completed master's degree 7 Completed doctoral or professional degree
17k. 10	0 Female 1 Male	1 Oldest 2 Middle 3 Youngest	1 full biological 2 half sibling (same father) 3 half sibling (same mother) 4 adoption 5 Step sibling (via step-dad) 6 Step sibling (via step-mom) 7 Other _____	0 Heterosexual 1 Gay or Lesbian 2 Bisexual 3 Other _____	1 Asian American 2 Black or African American 3 Hispanic/ Latino 4 Native American or Alaskan Native 5 Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	1 Some high school 2 Graduated from high school 3 Some college 4 Graduated from college 5 Some graduate school 6 Completed master's degree

					6 White/ Caucasian 7 Mixed race 8 Other _____	7 Completed doctoral or professional degree
18. Does your partner have siblings? (If Yes, go to question 20. If No, move to question 21.)		0 No 1 Yes				
19. If your partner does have siblings, how many?						
20. The next set of questions is about your partner's siblings, sibling position, and family structure.						
Siblings Number	Gender	Position	Relationship	Sexual Orientation	Race/Ethnicity	Education Completed
20a. Your Partner	0 Female 1 Male	1 Oldest 2 Middle 3 Youngest				
20b.	0 Female	1 Oldest	1 full		1 Asian	1 Some high

1	1 Male	2 Middle 3 Youngest	biological 2 half sibling (same father) 3 half sibling (same mother) 4 adoption 5 Step sibling (via step-dad) 6 Step sibling (via step-mom) 7 Other _____		American 2 Black or African American 3 Hispanic/Latino 4 Native American or Alaskan Native 5 Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander 6 White/Caucasian 7 Mixed race 8 Other _____	school 2 Graduated from high school 3 Some college 4 Graduated from college 5 Some graduate school 6 Completed master's degree 7 Completed doctoral or professional degree
20c. 2	0 Female 1 Male	1 Oldest 2 Middle 3 Youngest	1 full biological 2 half sibling (same father) 3 half sibling (same mother)	0 Heterosexual 1 Gay or Lesbian 2 Bisexual 3 Other _____	1 Asian American 2 Black or African American 3 Hispanic/Latino	1 Some high school 2 Graduated from high school 3 Some college

			4 adoption 5 Step sibling (via step-dad) 6 Step sibling (via step-mom) 7 Other _____		4 Native American or Alaskan Native 5 Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander 6 White/Caucasian 7 Mixed race 8 Other _____	4 Graduated from college 5 Some graduate school 6 Completed master's degree 7 Completed doctoral or professional degree
20d. 3	0 Female 1 Male	1 Oldest 2 Middle 3 Youngest	1 full biological 2 half sibling (same father) 3 half sibling (same mother) 4 adoption 5 Step sibling (via step-dad) 6 Step sibling (via step-mom)	0 Heterosexual 1 Gay or Lesbian 2 Bisexual 3 Other _____	1 Asian American 2 Black or African American 3 Hispanic/Latino 4 Native American or Alaskan Native 5 Native Hawaiian or other Pacific	1 Some high school 2 Graduated from high school 3 Some college 4 Graduated from college 5 Some graduate school 6 Completed

			7 Other _____		Islander 6 White/ Caucasian 7 Mixed race 8 Other _____	master's degree 7 Completed doctoral or professional degree
20e. 4	0 Female 1 Male	1 Oldest 2 Middle 3 Youngest	1 full biological 2 half sibling (same father) 3 half sibling (same mother) 4 adoption 5 Step sibling (via step-dad) 6 Step sibling (via step- mom) 7 Other _____	0 Heterosexual 1 Gay or Lesbian 2 Bisexual 3 Other _____	1 Asian American 2 Black or African American 3 Hispanic/ Latino 4 Native American or Alaskan Native 5 Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander 6 White/ Caucasian 7 Mixed race 8 Other _____	1 Some high school 2 Graduated from high school 3 Some college 4 Graduated from college 5 Some graduate school 6 Completed master's degree 7 Completed doctoral or professional degree

20f. 5	0 Female 1 Male	1 Oldest 2 Middle 3 Youngest	1 full biological 2 half sibling (same father) 3 half sibling (same mother) 4 adoption 5 Step sibling (via step-dad) 6 Step sibling (via step-mom) 7 Other _____	0 Heterosexual 1 Gay or Lesbian 2 Bisexual 3 Other _____	1 Asian American 2 Black or African American 3 Hispanic/Latino 4 Native American or Alaskan Native 5 Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander 6 White/Caucasian 7 Mixed race 8 Other _____	1 Some high school 2 Graduated from high school 3 Some college 4 Graduated from college 5 Some graduate school 6 Completed master's degree 7 Completed doctoral or professional degree
20g. 6	0 Female 1 Male	1 Oldest 2 Middle 3 Youngest	1 full biological 2 half sibling (same father) 3 half sibling (same	0 Heterosexual 1 Gay or Lesbian 2 Bisexual 3 Other _____	1 Asian American 2 Black or African American 3 Hispanic/	1 Some high school 2 Graduated from high school 3 Some

			mother) 4 adoption 5 Step sibling (via step-dad) 6 Step sibling (via step- mom) 7 Other _____		Latino 4 Native American or Alaskan Native 5 Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander 6 White/ Caucasian 7 Mixed race 8 Other _____	college 4 Graduated from college 5 Some graduate school 6 Completed master's degree 7 Completed doctoral or professional degree
20h. 7	0 Female 1 Male	1 Oldest 2 Middle 3 Youngest	1 full biological 2 half sibling (same father) 3 half sibling (same mother) 4 adoption 5 Step sibling (via step-dad) 6 Step sibling (via step-	0 Heterosexual 1 Gay or Lesbian 2 Bisexual 3 Other _____	1 Asian American 2 Black or African American 3 Hispanic/ Latino 4 Native American or Alaskan Native 5 Native Hawaiian or	1 Some high school 2 Graduated from high school 3 Some college 4 Graduated from college 5 Some graduate school

			mom) 7 Other _____		other Pacific Islander 6 White/ Caucasian 7 Mixed race 8 Other _____	6 Completed master's degree 7 Completed doctoral or professional degree
20i. 8	0 Female 1 Male	1 Oldest 2 Middle 3 Youngest	1 full biological 2 half sibling (same father) 3 half sibling (same mother) 4 adoption 5 Step sibling (via step-dad) 6 Step sibling (via step- mom) 7 Other _____	0 Heterosexual 1 Gay or Lesbian 2 Bisexual 3 Other _____	1 Asian American 2 Black or African American 3 Hispanic/ Latino 4 Native American or Alaskan Native 5 Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander 6 White/ Caucasian 7 Mixed race 8 Other _____	1 Some high school 2 Graduated from high school 3 Some college 4 Graduated from college 5 Some graduate school 6 Completed master's degree 7 Completed doctoral or professional

						degree
20j. 9	0 Female 1 Male	1 Oldest 2 Middle 3 Youngest	1 full biological 2 half sibling (same father) 3 half sibling (same mother) 4 adoption 5 Step sibling (via step-dad) 6 Step sibling (via step-mom) 7 Other _____	0 Heterosexual 1 Gay or Lesbian 2 Bisexual 3 Other _____	1 Asian American 2 Black or African American 3 Hispanic/Latino 4 Native American or Alaskan Native 5 Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander 6 White/Caucasian 7 Mixed race 8 Other _____	1 Some high school 2 Graduated from high school 3 Some college 4 Graduated from college 5 Some graduate school 6 Completed master's degree 7 Completed doctoral or professional degree
20k. 10	0 Female 1 Male	1 Oldest 2 Middle 3 Youngest	1 full biological 2 half sibling (same father) 3 half sibling	0 Heterosexual 1 Gay or Lesbian 2 Bisexual 3 Other	1 Asian American 2 Black or African American American	1 Some high school 2 Graduated from high school

			(same mother)	_____	3 Hispanic/ Latino	3 Some college
			4 adoption		4 Native	4 Graduated
			5 Step sibling (via step-dad)		American or Alaskan Native	from college
			6 Step sibling (via step- mom)		5 Native	5 Some graduate school
			7 Other _____		Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	6 Completed master's degree
					6 White/ Caucasian	7 Completed
					7 Mixed race	doctoral or
					8 Other _____	professional degree

Section 2 - Experiences in Close Relationships Scale – Short Form

(ECR; Brennan, Clark, & Shaver; 1998)

The following statements concern how you feel in your **current** romantic relationships.

Respond to each statement by indicating how much you agree or disagree with it using the following scale:

Disagree strongly		Neutral/mixed		Agree strongly
1	2	3	4	5
				6
				7

21. It helps to turn to my romantic partner in times of need.	1	2 3 4 5 6 7
22. I need a lot of reassurance that I am loved by my partner.	1	2 3 4 5 6 7
23. I want to get close to my partner, but I keep pulling back.	1	2 3 4 5 6 7
24. I find that my partner(s) don't want to get as close as I would like.	1	2 3 4 5 6 7
25. I turn to my partner for many things, including comfort and reassurance.	1	2 3 4 5 6 7
26. My desire to be very close sometimes scares people away.	1	2 3 4 5 6 7
27. I try to avoid getting	1	2 3 4 5 6 7

too close to my partner.		
28. I do not often worry about being abandoned.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
29. I usually discuss my problems and concerns with my partner.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
30. I get frustrated if romantic partners are not available when I need them.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
31. I am nervous when partners get too close to me.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
32. I worry that romantic partners won't care about me as much as I care about them.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
<p>Section 3 - Communication Patterns Questionnaire (CPQ;</p> <p>Christensen & Sullaway, 1984)</p> <p>In this section you will indicate how you and your partner typically deal with problems in your relation. Respond to each statement by indicating</p>		

<p>how likely it is that you and your partner will interact in the way indicated using the following scale:</p> <p>Very Unlikely Very Likely</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</p>		
<p>A. WHEN SOME PROBLEM IN THE RELATIONSHIP ARISES,</p>		
33. Both members avoid discussing the problem.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	
34. Both members try to discuss the problem.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	
35. You try to start a discussion while your partner tries to avoid a discussion.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	
36. Your partner tries to start a discussion while you try to avoid	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	

a discussion.		
B. DURING A DISCUSSION OF A RELATIONSHIP PROBLEM, You are You		
37. Both members blame, accuse, and criticize each other.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	
38. Both members express their feelings to each other.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	
39. Both members threaten each other with negative consequences.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	
40. Both members suggest possible solutions and compromises.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	
41. You nag and demand while your partner withdraws, becomes silent, or	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	

refuses to discuss the matter further.		
42. Your partner nags and demands while you withdraw, become silent, or refuse to discuss the matter further.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	
43. You criticize while your partner defends themselves.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	
44. Your partner criticizes while you defend yourself.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	
45. You pressure your partner to take some action or stop some action, while your partner resists.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	
46. Your partner pressures you to take	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	

some action or stop some action, while you resist.		
47. You express feelings while your partner offers reasons and solutions.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	
48. Your partner expresses feelings while you offer reasons and solutions.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	
49. You threaten negative consequences and your partner gives in or backs down.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	
50. Your partner threatens negative consequences and you give in or back down.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	
51. You call your partner names, swear at	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	

them, or attack their character.	
52. Your partner calls you names, swears at you, or attacks your character.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
53. You push, shove, slap, hit, or kick your partner.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
54. Your partner pushes, shoves, slaps, hits, or kicks you.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
C. AFTER A DISCUSSION OF A RELATIONSHIP PROBLEM, You are You	
55. Both feel each other has understood his/her position.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
56. Both withdraw from each other after the discussion.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

57. Both feel that the problem has been solved.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	
58. Neither partner is giving to the other after the discussion.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	
59. After the discussion, both try to be especially nice to each other.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	
60. You feel guilty for what you said or did while your partner feels hurt.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	
61. Your partner feels guilty for what they said or did while you feel hurt.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	
62. You try to be especially nice, act as if things are back to	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	

normal, while your partner acts distant.	
63. Your partner tries to be especially nice, act as if things are back to normal, while you act distant.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
64. You pressure your partner to apologize or promise to do better, while your partner resists.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
65. Your partner pressures you to apologize or promise to do better, while you resist.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
66. You seek support from others (parent, friend, children).	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
67. Your partner	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

seeks support from others (parent, friend, children).		
68. Describe in your own words the steps that take place when you and your partner have a conflict or argument. (What do your interactions look like before, during, and after an argument?)		
69. If you would like to receive an email with the results of this study, please click on this link to provide your email address. Your email address will be kept in a separate file than the responses on your survey.	<hr/>	

APPENDIX D

Permission from Author

On 4/8/13 8:32 AM, "Carpenter, Erica" <ecarpenter1@mail.twu.edu> wrote:

Hello Dr. Christensen,

My name is Erica Carpenter, and I am a Master's Family Therapy student at >Texas Woman's University. I am beginning to work on my thesis, in which I will be conducting a quantitative study comparing the partner conflict processes used by adult only-children and adults who grew up with siblings. I am interested in investigating whether growing up with or without siblings has any effect on the way adults interact and engage in conflict within their romantic relationships.

I am interested in using your measure, the Communication Patterns Questionnaire, for this study. My advisor, Dr. Mary Sue Green, and I have been searching for the longer 35-item form of the CPQ. We have been able to find the shorter versions, but we wanted to see if you could possibly provide us with a copy of the 35-item form as we begin designing the Methodology section of the thesis.

I can be contacted at ecarpenter1@twu.edu. I am including my advisor, Dr. Mary Sue Green, in this email as well, and she can be contacted at mgreen9@twu.edu.

Thank you so much for your help, and we look forward to hearing from you!

Erica Carpenter

Family Therapy Master's student (Texas Woman's University)

TWU Student Association for Marriage and Family Therapy-Newsletter Editor
(2012-2013)

B.S. Psychology (Texas A&M University, 2011)

ecarpenter1@twu.edu

Use of e-mail is not a secure form of communication; thus,
confidentiality cannot be ensured. If you received this e-mail message
in error, please immediately notify the sender. Thank you.

From: "Christensen, Andrew" <christensen@psych.ucla.edu>

Date: Mon, 8 Apr 2013 17:16:25

To: Carpenter, Erica<ecarpenter1@mail.twu.edu>

Cc: Green, Mary Sue<MGreen9@mail.twu.edu>

Subject: Re: 35-Item CPQ Questionnaire

Please see attached file for the full CPQ as well as information about the measure and its
scoring.

Best,

Andrew Christensen, Ph.D.

Professor

Department of Psychology

University of California

Los Angeles, CA 90095

On 4/8/13 1:42 PM, "Green, Mary Sue" <MGreen9@mail.twu.edu> wrote:

Dr. Christensen,

Thank you for your prompt response to Erica! I have used the short form of the CPQ in research and am excited that she has chosen to use your scale in her thesis.

Mary Sue

Mary Sue Green, Ph.D., LMFT-S

AAMFT Approved Supervisor

Assistant Professor

Family Therapy Program

Texas Woman's University

P. O. Box 425769

HDB 104-B

Denton, TX 76204

Ph. 940.898.2687

<http://www.twu.edu/family-sciences/green.asp>

Use of e-mail is not a secure form of communication; thus, confidentiality cannot be ensured. If you received this e-mail message in error, please immediately notify the sender. Thank you.

On 4/8/13 2:25 PM, "Carpenter, Erica" <ecarpenter1@mail.twu.edu> wrote:

Dr. Christensen,

Thank you so much for your help, and I appreciate your quick response. I am excited to be able to include the CPQ in my study!

Erica Carpenter

Family Therapy Master's student (Texas Woman's University)

TWU Student Association for Marriage and Family Therapy-Newsletter Editor (2012-2013)

B.S. Psychology (Texas A&M University, 2011)

ecarpenter1@twu.edu

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