THE GENDER AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCE EFFECT OF FAMILY

COMMUNICATION PATTERNS ON SELF ESTEEM AND

RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION OF WOMEN

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BY

JESSICA LYNN BURCHFIELD, B.A.

DENTON, TEXAS

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TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY
DENTON, TEXAS

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY
DENTON, TEXAS

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To the Dean of the Graduate School:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Jessica Burchfield entitled "The Gender and
Cultural Difference Effect of Family Communication Patterns on Self Esteem and
Relationship Satisfaction of Women." I have examined this thesis for form and content
and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
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Jenelle Fitch, Ph.D., Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Daniel C. Miller, Ph.D, ABPP, Department Chair

Accepted:

Dean of the Graduate School

ABSTRACT

JESSICA BURCHFIELD

THE GENDER AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCE EFFECT OF FAMILY
COMMUNICATION PATTERNS ON SELF ESTEEM AND
RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION OF WOMEN

MAY 2012

This research study will examine the relationship of family communication

patterns, self esteem, and relationship satisfaction. This study had 263 participants who

were college students from a public university in the southwest who completed a series of

questionnaires: (a) a Demographic Questionnaire, (b) a family communication patterns

scale, the Revised Family Communication Patterns scale (RFCP; Ritchie & Fitzpatrick,

1990), (c) a self esteem scale, the Rosenberg Self Esteem scale (RSES; Rosenberg,

1965), and (d) a relationship satisfaction measure, a sub-scale of the Perceived

Relationship Quality Components Inventory (PRQC; Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas,

2000). Relationships between family communication patterns, self esteem, and

relationship satisfaction were examined. Results indicated that there was a significant

relationship between self-esteem and relationship satisfaction. However, other data

concluded that family communication patterns do not have a significant impact on

relationship satisfaction or self-esteem.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Communication within a family is the original source of socialization and can
establish an influential foundation for social growth (Bakir, Rose, & Shoham, 2006;
Boothe-Butterfield & Sidelinger, 1997, 1998). Communication patterns are essential in
not only understanding family relationships, but also emotions, behaviors, and future
romantic relationships. Thus, life in its early phases can influence and play an important
role in shaping future patterns of socialization, such as those within romantic
relationships and with one's self (Riggio, 1986). For example, self esteem has been noted
to influence one's communication patterns and socialization skills (Schrodt & Ledbetter,
2007; Schrodt, Ledbetter, & Ohrt, 2007). For that reason, it is important to understand
how much of an impact one's family communication has on his or her levels of self
esteem. Additionally, self esteem and relationship satisfaction are influential
characteristics individuals mention when describing the positive or negative qualities in
their lives (Guerrero, Farinelli, & McEwan, 2009; Rauer, Karney, Garvan, & Hou, 2008).
Therefore, seeing that all three variables have a potentially large impact on an
individual's existence, it is believed that studying how family communication patterns,
self esteem, and relationship satisfaction influence each other can improve the current
understanding of human development and provide proactive suggestions in order for
individuals to achieve optimal functioning.

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Communication patterns within the family have been mainly divided out into two broad categories: an orientation which values open communication in the home, and an orientation which values discipline and parental power (Lin, Rancer, & Kong, 2007). Originally developed by Chaffee, McLeod, and Atkin (1971), these family communication patterns were coined as socio-oriented, which are families that value communication, and concept-oriented, which are families which values parental power. Ritchie (1991) later revised this original theory to identify each orientation as conversation orientation, which valued communication, and conformity orientation, which valued parental control. Conversation-oriented families were reported to teach their children how to express their opinions to others, emphasize the importance of communication, and actively engage in open communication with all family members in the home (Hsu, 1998; Young, 2009). Conformity-oriented families were found to teach their children the power differentiation in the home, the value of discipline, and the ability to listen to others with more power without interjecting personal opinions (Baxter & Clark, 1996). Each type of communication orientation carries various benefits and risks to an individual. In fact, family communication patterns appear to be an integral piece in increasing or decreasing a child's level of self esteem both as a child and an adult (Huang, 1999).

Self esteem has been defined as how people identify whether they are being accepted or rejected by others (Leary, 1995; Mansbacher, 2011; Pyszczynski, Greenberg, Solomon, Arndt, & Schimel, 2004). Researchers have found that individuals with high

levels of self esteem report feeling more self-confident, less anxious, and more open to social environments (Ferkany, 2009; Holmstrom, 2008; Leary, 1999b, 2003). On the other hand, those who report having lower levels of self esteem are more likely to report feeling socially anxious, less self-confident, and continue to seek high self esteem (Pyszczynski et al., 2004). Successful communication skills have been seen to improve individuals' feeling of acceptance by others, thus increasing their self esteem (Riggio, 1986). Because self esteem is so heavily based on one's feelings of social acceptance or rejection, one's family of origin can become fundamental in teaching what it means to be socially accepted or a person of worth (Huang, 1999; Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995). Families who put value on communication in the home have been found to rear children with higher levels of self confidence and self esteem (Huang, 1999). Conformity-oriented families place more value on obedience as opposed to socialization, and are found to rear children who may find it more difficult to socialize with others (Segrin, 1994). This inadvertently affects children's feelings of self-worth, in turn potentially affecting their current or future relationships with others.

How people feel about themselves can play an important role for intimate relationships as well. Researchers have found that individuals who report lower self esteem report less relationship satisfaction and security (Whitton & Whisman, 2010). Individuals who report higher levels of self esteem are seen to report more relationship satisfaction and confidence in their relationship (Finkenauer, Engels, Branje, & Meeus, 2004). When looking at self esteem and relationship satisfaction exclusively, it is

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believed that individuals who report high levels of self esteem may not always identify with coming from a conformity-oriented family. This leaves the opportunity to explore resiliency within individuals and how such resiliency can improve self esteem and relationship satisfaction regardless of one's identifying family communication patterns. Given the influence self esteem may have on relationship satisfaction, it would be beneficial to understand how self esteem can increase or decrease within different individuals. For example, would individuals with lower levels of self esteem benefit from learning how to improve their communication skills with others? Additionally, if an individual's self esteem levels fluctuated, would this increase or decrease relationship satisfaction?

Aside from self esteem, relationship satisfaction has been believed to be correlated with one's upbringing in his or her family or origin (Martinson, Holman, Larson, & Jackson, 2010). For example, researchers have found that individuals who report coming from a family that exhibits open communication, unconditional love, and appropriate and effective discipline also report having more realistic and positive expectations for their future or current intimate relationship (Finkenauer et al., 2004; Martinson et al., 2010). This family type, normally identified as conversation-oriented families, has been found to be more satisfied in relationships which foster open communication (Lin et al., 2007). On the other hand, researchers have found that individuals who report coming from a family of origin that lacked in communication or communicated negatively, such as arguing or fighting, reported feeling more instability in

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intimate relationships and a more difficult time finding relationship satisfaction (Martinson et al., 2010). Overall, it can be concluded that both communication patterns and self esteem can directly affect one's feelings of satisfaction in current and future intimate relationships. However, no research has been done to identify how all these variables impact a person simultaneously.

Due to the strong relationship family communication patterns, self esteem, and relationship satisfaction seem to have, it would be beneficial to further examine the relationship and impact each of these variables has on individuals. Previous researchers and theorists (Leary et al., 1995; Huang, 1999) believed that family communication patterns were directly related with the outcome of an individual feeling socially accepted. This idea of how an individual feels accepted or rejected has been correlated with one's levels of self esteem (Leary, 1999a; 2004; Leary et al., 1995; Pyszczynski et al., 2004). Moreover, one's self esteem levels have been identified to hold strong influence on one's relationship satisfaction (Masbacher, 2011). However, there is no research that ties all of these variables together to identify how each piece can help or hinder an individual. Therefore, the current study hoped to provide new and interesting results that had not yet been identified by looking at self esteem, relationship satisfaction, and family communication patterns together. Further, researchers believed this study might identify various gender and cultural differences which have not yet been determined in previous research by looking at all selected variables together.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact family communication patterns instill on an individual's self esteem and relationship satisfaction. It was hypothesized that individuals reared in a conformity-oriented family would report lower levels of self esteem, and those reared in conversation-oriented homes would report higher levels of self esteem. In addition, it was hypothesized that individuals reared in a conformity-oriented family would report low relationship satisfaction, and individuals reared in a conversation-oriented family would report higher relationship satisfaction. Moreover, researchers believed that individuals who identify with a minority race or ethnicity, such as Hispanic or African American would be more likely to identify being reared in a conformity-oriented home and those who identify as White would report being reared in a conversation-oriented family. Finally, it was believed that self esteem would moderate the relationship between family communication patterns and relationship satisfaction. More specifically, individuals who reported having high levels of self esteem would be more likely to also have reported high relationship satisfaction, and it was hypothesized that these results would be the same when comparing the interaction of self esteem levels and family communication patterns and their interactions effects on relationship satisfaction.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter was to examine and expand the current literature associated with the three variables used in this study. To begin, a background of family communication patterns has been provided, followed by sections conceptualizing self esteem and relationship satisfaction. The chapter ends with the research questions and hypotheses of this study.

Family Communication

Importance of Communication within a Family

Communication within a family "serves as a foundation or basis for socialization patterns" (Bakir et al., 2006, p. 77). There are various ways in which family communication has an impact on individual's future socialization skills and relationships. Therefore, the importance of understanding how communication influences not only relationships, but also emotions, careers, and future relationships is essential.

Family is the original source through which socialization and learning to communicate occurs (Boothe-Butterfield & Sidelinger, 1997, 1998). Family communication is defined as a method of interaction between members which is motivated by four different objectives, which are based on one's perceptions: (a) parent's accuracy, (b) parent's congruency, (c) child's accuracy, and (d) child's congruency (Ritchie, 1991). Perceived parent's accuracy is how much a child believes and understands the thoughts, beliefs, or values presented by the parents. On the other hand,

perceived parents' congruency is the amount of understanding parents have concerning their child's communication and the motivation to understand their children accurately and with support. Perceived children's accuracy is described as how much children believe their parents' behaviors are consistent with their own presentation of thoughts and beliefs. Conversely, perceived children's congruency is children's level of comfort to give their parents alternative views that deviate from the original family norm (Ritchie, 1991). These objectives are important to understand when examining the impact of family communication on socialization.

Family communication holds great importance when understanding the socialization process for children and adolescents. The socialization process is a method where both children and adults learn from each other and from other people in their environments (Lin et al., 2007). Many components impact an individual's identity such as self esteem, social environments, and culture. One's childhood serves as a model for how one learns to socialize with others outside of the family, and impacts the identification of one's values and morals (Dong, 2005; Ledbetter, 2009). Developing socialization skills is an essential link between communication and relationships with others (Fitzpatrick, 2004). For example, children who are reared in families that value communication tend to seek the same values for their own relationships and families whereas individuals who come from a family that does not value communication will again seek the same values in adulthood.

Types of Family Communication

　　To have a better understanding of the influence communication has on children from various family experiences, family communication has been studied closely (Whitton et al., 2008). Social Learning Theory, (SLT) one of many theories which explains communication in the family, describes that individuals learn to communicate and resolve conflict from their family of origin (Whitton et al., 2008). Over time, family communication theories have evolved from theories such as SLT in the explanation of the ways communication is expressed within a family system.

　　Chaffee and colleagues (1971) developed a theory to identify communication patterns within a family and developed the Family Communication Patterns scale (FCP). In the beginning, these researchers identified two different elements of family communication: (a) social-oriented and (b) concept-oriented communication types (Chaffee et al., 1971). The purpose of social-oriented communication in a family system is to accentuate parental control, emphasize discipline, and deflect controversy in the system (Lin et al., 2007). This communication style does not condone children arguing with parents and increases the power differential between parent and child. Within this context, a social order is normally constructed between family members, and children are expected to be submissive and are given little opportunity to participate in family discussions (Dong, 2005). On the other hand, concept-oriented families tend to encourage children to express their own opinions and feelings (Chaffee et al., 1971). Researchers have identified this type of family as one that empowers children to be independent and free to explore their own identity (Dong, 2005). Parents who

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communicate in this way try to teach their children to openly share their ideas with others both inside and outside the family structure (Lin et al., 2007).

Ritchie (1991) revisited Chaffee and colleagues' theory on family communication patterns, and proposed a change resulting in the Revised Family Communication Patterns scale (RFCP). Ritchie (1991) noted that the original instrument reviewed family communication patterns primarily from a parent's perspective, leaving out the importance of the children's perceptions (Ritchie, 1991). Ritchie presented a revision of the two communication types within families to conformity-oriented and conversation-oriented.

Ritchie (1991) stated that the revisions to communication types would make it easier to comprehend how communication works within a family, because the revised model focuses on both child and parent perspectives. Conformity-orientation families are similar to the social oriented families; these systems focus on parental authority and child submissiveness (Baxter & Clark, 1996). This orientation can be described as parents who use their power when discussing topics in the system (Punyanunt-Carter, 2008). For example, parents who identify themselves as the head of the household may use this status as the reason for their children do various chores, "Because I'm the parent and I said so." Family systems who highly identify with this communication type emphasize that the thoughts, actions, and feelings in one's family system must all be the same as the parents to maintain homeostasis (Fitzpatrick, 2004). Parents do not tolerate deviant behavior from their children and strictly enforce authority in the home (Ledbetter & Schrodt, 2008). The goal of this behavior is for family members to have similar beliefs on

values and obedience, and for children not to question their parent's authority (Hsu, 1998). Ritchie (1991) found children in such families may find coercion to be a good tool to use when handling conflict. Lower levels of conformity-orientation within a family produces higher levels of individuality between members and promote higher levels of flexibility within familial rules, and thus are more like conversation-oriented families (Fitzpatrick, 2004; Ledbetter & Schrodt, 2008; Shearman & Dumlao, 2008).

Conversation-orientation families provide children with the openness and flexibility to question family dynamics and express their own thoughts, actions, and feelings (Hsu, 1998; Young, 2009). Researchers describe such families as supportive, accepting, and interested in children's individualistic qualities (Baxter & Clark, 1996; Ritchie, 1991). Parents in such families use encouragement to increase their children's ability to express their thoughts and beliefs and express openness to discussions of any topic within the family system and deeply value family interaction (Ledbetter & Schrodt, 2008; Punyanunt-Carter, 2008). These families put great emphasis and value on opening controversial discussion topics in a conversation (Fitzpatrick, 2004; Shearman & Dumlao, 2008). Families who identify less with this communication type, such as the conformity-orientation type, tend to value family interaction and the discussion of individualistic beliefs less (Ledbetter & Schrodt, 2008).

Burleson, Delia, and Applegate (1995) proposed yet another variation on family communication types. This theory identified the influence parents have on their children's perceptions and personal communication development. The two

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communication types identified were labeled position-centered and person-centered parenting (Burleson et al., 1995). Position-centered parenting places more importance on family conformity, similar to conformity-oriented families, and less on exhibiting individual emotions or beliefs (Burleson et al., 1995). Parents using this style tend to focus more on their children's achievements, beliefs, and expectations, and less on the broader perspective of emotional expression (Young, 2009). On the other hand, person-centered parenting is based on the same values as the conversation orientation family; however, these parents also emphasize nurturance as well as discipline to maintain open communication within the family system (Burleson et al., 1995; Young, 2009). Even further, this type of parenting examines topics from a broader perspective, encouraging children to understand the importance of thought, behavior, and emotion (Young, 2009).

Overall, each of these theories brings a different perspective of how families communicate. Even though there were some differences and similarities, all of the theories on family communication have one component that remained constant; they strive to understand how communication works and how such communication patterns affect children's development of communication skills (Burleson et al., 1995; Chaffee et al., 1971; Ritchie, 1991).

Communication in Different Parenting Styles

The communication types, within the aforementioned theories, have different variations that are further categorized into four different parenting styles. These parenting styles are a mixture of high and low family communication patterns, which also result in four communication types (Fitzpatrick, 2004). Such parenting styles and communication

patterns are further explained through various examples and mixtures of communication characteristics in which one's family may identify.

It has been found that families who identify low on conversation-orientation and high on conformity-orientation are identified as protective families (Allen & Chaffee, 1977; Bakir et al., 2006; Fitzpatrick, 2004). Families of this style emphasize obedience and do not pay much attention to emotions (Fitzpatrick, 2004). Children from protective families are taught to avoid controversial areas of discussion, and they tend to isolate themselves to avoid conflict within the home (Dumlao & Botta, 2000; Zhang, 2008). These children are influenced easily by others outside of the family (Fitzpatrick, 2004).

Systems that identify as low on conversation-orientation as well as on conformity-orientation are seen as laissez-faire family styles (Allen & Chaffee, 1977; Bakir et al., 2006; Fitzpatrick, 2004). Parents in these families do not interact much with their children, and in fact, family members are mostly uninvolved with each other (Fitzpatrick, 2004). If there are any family issues, it has been found that parents and children interact as little as possible (Zhang, 2008). Children in these families tend to seek outside social support and actively avoid parents (Dumlao & Botta, 2000; Fitzpatrick, 2004).

On the other hand, families who have high conversation-orientation and low conformity-orientation are identified as pluralistic families (Allen & Chaffee, 1977; Zhang, 2008). These families encourage open and active conversations within the family (Fitzpatrick, 2004). These conversations have little constraints and children are

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encouraged to express their own thoughts and opinions (Bakir et al., 2006). Conflicts in this family style are normally resolved by examining individual concerns and children are more likely to come to their parents for social support and to resolve conflict (Dumlao & Botta, 2000; Fitzpatrick, 2004). Researchers have suggested that individuals living in this type of family are more likely to have effective conflict management skills (Dumlao & Botta, 2000).

Finally, consensual families rank high both in conversation and conformity-orientation (Allen & Chaffee, 1977; Bakir et al., 2006). These families emphasize both open and active conversation as well as obedience and the importance of agreeing with the values established by the parents (Zhang, 2008). Parents and children tend not to avoid conflict within the family; however, due to high conformity-orientation, parents are less inclined to be as accepting to differing opinions (Dumlao & Botta, 2000). Children in these families normally either follow the values of their families or seek outside social values (Fitzpatrick, 2004).

Communication Values within Families

The values within a family system can be helpful in understanding how each family type can influence their children's beliefs. Values in communication tend to determine the topics that hold meaning to family members (Coontz, 2003). In other words, communication values can be defined as how important either affective or instrumental communication skills are within a family (MacGeorge, Feng, & Butler, 2003). Affective communication skills are those which focus on emotional expression and reception of other's emotions (MacGeorge et al., 2003). Instrumental communication

skills, on the other hand, refer to the individuals' ability, for the most part, to effectively discuss daily events and details (MacGeorge et al., 2003). Children tend to follow their parents belief systems until they are older (Booth-Butterfield & Sidelinger, 1997, 1998). Because of this, children tend to value the communication skills similar to their parents (Avtgis, 1999). Therefore, families that highly value affective communication in the home will have children do well with emotional expression (MacGeorge et al., 2003).

On the other hand, families that value instrumental communication tend not to emphasize the importance of speaking about affect and emphasize the importance of daily events and the details associated with what is happening in each family member's life (MacGeorge et al., 2003). Therefore, children in these families tend not to develop open and understanding communication skills. As a result, the values placed on communication are an important aspect to explore.

Communication Influence

The impact of communication is important to understand, because most individuals are not aware of how much influence they have on the family, as well as how much their family has an impact on their attitudes and behaviors (Boothe-Butterfield & Sidelinger, 1997). Communication patterns, especially those within a family, aid in developing children's attitudes, behaviors, and personality (Boothe-Butterfield & Sidelinger, 1997). For example, conversation-oriented families are found to place more emphasis on emotional expression and work to identify differing beliefs within the family system. This tends to allow more communication regarding family members' thoughts, current events in each individual's life, and plans for the future (Kelly et al., 2002).

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Parents in families who are less open to conversation are inadvertently encouraging their children not to express their emotions, thoughts, or beliefs (Kelly et al., 2002).

Boothe-Butterfield and Sidelinger (1998) proposed and found that adolescents and parents tended to have similar views in areas such as premarital sex and alcohol use. These researchers believed that because of these similar viewpoints in families, children of parents who did not condone underage drinking would be less likely to engage in such behavior due to family communication (Boothe-Butterfield & Sidelinger, 1998). In other words, not only are attitudes affected by family communication, but also one's behaviors can be influenced by how a family interacts and communicates (Lin, Rancer, & Kong, 2007).

Researchers also suggested that a family can model how to handle relationships or conflict with others (Kelly et al., 2002). Families which have little conversation within the home tend not to teach effective conversation skills for family members when they interact outside of the family system, which may lead to aggressive or abusive conflict management (Kelly et al., 2002). In families that have higher levels of conversation in their home, children tend to show higher levels of successful conflict management and other behaviors which promote positive social interaction, such as supportive behaviors, compassion, and empathy (Ledbetter, 2009). As a result, these traits tend to be correlated with closer friendships, relationships, and stronger psychosocial outcomes as opposed to conformity oriented families (Ledbetter, 2009; Schrodt, Witt, & Messersmith, 2008). In

other words, families who place more value on conversation in the home have healthier

relationship development, better conflict management, and overall sense of well-being.

Overall, families have been found to produce different communication behaviors

in their children, and researchers have examined how these patterns predict behavioral

outcomes (Boothe-Butterfield & Sidelinger, 1998). Researchers have found that open

communication in families tends to produce more open affection between family

members and an enhanced ability to share and express emotions to others (Boothe-

Butterfield & Sidelinger, 1997). Additionally, not only is open communication important

to attain such expression of affection and emotions, but children in such families need to

perceive communication in the home to be open and accepting to produce such results.

Furthermore, families that value open communication feel pride in how they allow a

variety of topics to be discussed safely within the family (Boothe-Butterfield &

Sidelinger, 1998). This can encourage all family members to listen actively, to think

critically about an issue, and to have an increased ability to comprehend and share

information (Ledbetter & Schrodt, 2008). For example, Lin and colleagues (2007) found

that individuals who came from consensual or pluralistic families, both family styles

which have some emphasis on conversation orientation, were more equipped to express

how they perceived a situation and tended to involve themselves in more arguments in a

productive fashion. If the child perceived that the family accepted more open

communication, then the child tended to be more involved in positive social activities,

such as being on a sports team and is consequently more accepted by peers (Dong, 2005).

Children who do not perceive communication in the home as open tend to remain closed in conversation (Keaten & Kelly, 2008). In other words, in a home where a child does not feel safe to communicate, he or she is less likely to engage in conversations with others in and outside of the home. These children may even develop feelings of awkwardness or anxiety when trying to engage in a discussion, because of the lack of parental modeling, especially if the topic discussed is against established family norms (Keaten & Kelly, 2008; Kelly et al., 2002). Furthermore, children may begin to develop feelings of anxiety outside of the home when working through complex situations (Ledbetter & Schrodt, 2008). These individuals also have a greater tendency to find support outside of the family and engage in risky behaviors such as consuming drugs or alcohol due to having inaccurate knowledge about the consequences associated with such behaviors and to reduce anxiety (Dong, 2005). Alternatively, in families which are perceived by children as verbally aggressive, children find communication something to be avoided rather than pursued (Boothe-Butterfield & Sidelinger, 1997). Children who come from families who identify as conformity-oriented display such characteristics. As a result, this closed communication style can deeply affect a child's ability to socialize outside of the family (Dong, 2005).

Communication and Socialization

Communication is also influenced by how an individual is socialized in society. In other words, an individual's social values learned from their parents, peers, and friends, are important factors that have an impact on how one communicates with others

(Segrin, 1994). These values impact one's ability and skills to effectively communicate with others (Riggio, 1986).

Social skills are an important aspect of communication; they are the ability of an individual to interact effectively and appropriately with others (Segrin, 1994). Riggio (1986) suggested that some of the most basic social skills, such as giving, receiving, and controlling information, were among the most important skills to understand. The sending and receiving of information can be further defined into three different categories: expressivity, sensitivity, and control (Riggio, 1986). Riggio (1986) used these aforementioned categories to formulate six basic social skills: (a) Emotional expressivity, (b) emotional sensitivity, (c) emotional control, (d) social expressivity, (e) social sensitivity, and (f) social control. These basic social skills are more easily explained in terms of the emotional skill sets and the social skill sets.

One set of the basic emotional skills identified are emotional expressivity, emotional sensitivity, and emotional control. These are skills used to display nonverbal messages (Riggio, 1986). In other words, these skills focus on individuals' ability to express their emotions both consciously and subconsciously, such as using positive and negative facial expressions and body language such as smiling and frowning, having open or closed gestures, culturally appropriate eye contact, etc. (Riggio, 1986). Those who have higher levels of emotional expressivity tend to be seen as energetic and inspiring, but possibly excessively emotional at times because of their consistent use of their face and body to express and emphasize their emotions (Riggio, 1986). On the other

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hand, emotional sensitivity is one's ability to understand other people's presenting

nonverbal emotions (Riggio, 1986). Those skilled in this area have a tendency to observe

other's nonverbal signals and to accurately analyze the emotions displayed. Additionally,

these individuals also have increased levels of sympathy and empathy (Riggio, 1986).

Finally, emotional control is the skill of controlling and altering one's emotions to an

effective level (Riggio, 1986). Individuals who exhibit this skill tend to have better self-

monitoring tactics and better control over their emotions in times of trauma or

spontaneity (Riggio, 1986).

The other set of basic social skills are social expressivity, social sensitivity, and

social control. Social expressivity is the ability of an individual to verbally engage in a

social setting (Riggio, 1986). High levels of social expressivity result in one being

viewed as outgoing and extroverted. On the other hand, at times these individuals can

seem unfiltered and inappropriate with their spontaneous interjections (Riggio, 1986).

Social sensitivity is the ability to understand and be receptive to others' verbal

communication. Socially sensitive individuals are attentive and aware of social norms

(Riggio, 1986). Nonetheless, high levels of social sensitivity can lead to feelings of self-

consciousness and anxiety in social situations due to the feeling of one constantly being

judged by others in social environments (Riggio, 1986). Finally, social control is how one

presents him- or herself in a social situation. Individuals who are socially controlled are

able to present different roles, such as the mediator, the friend, or the aggressor, in social

interactions and are confident and tactful in their behaviors (Riggio, 1986). In other

words, individuals who exhibit social control are aware of how they should act in various social situations, as well as display the proper social behaviors that will help them gain social acceptance. Individuals who exhibit high social control may consequently play roles to make others be attracted to them or to get more attention, which is also known as social manipulation (Riggio, 1986).

These basic social skills are tailored and emphasized in the family system. Individuals who come from families that support open and active discussions, or conversation-oriented families, tend to have more positive social skills to use within relationships outside of the family system (Koesten, 2004). Having positive social skills means an individual would have an equal balance of all of the six basic social skills noted (Riggio, 1986). Having an equal balance of social skills allows an individual to experience an accurate perception of how to act and react in all social environments, thus leading him or her to be accepted socially by others. Exhibiting this balance increases the likelihood that one would have an easier time making friends, less anxiety in social settings, and more self-confidence (Riggio, 1986).

Overall, children who come from a home that values communication and supports a balance of these social skills have been found to feel more interpersonally competent, and consequently, have more friendships (Koesten & Anderson, 2004). Furthermore, a balance of basic social skills would also be helpful in conflict management (Riggio, 1986). Conflict management appears to be stronger in families with a more open communication style, due to having balance between emotional and social expressivity,

sensitivity, and control (Dumlao & Botta, 2000; Riggio, 1986). This could benefit future partnerships. Whitton et al. (2008) found that individuals' reactions towards conflict as an adolescent predicted how these individuals would react towards conflict in marriages and other relationships throughout adulthood. This leads to the idea that one's basic social skills that are learned in the family will lead to how one values communication in the future (Kelly et al., 2002; Riggio, 1986).

Socialization in families who put a lower value on communication, such as conformity-oriented families, is different. Kelly and colleagues (2002) examined reticence, or the behavior of "avoid[ing] communication because . . . it is better to remain silent than to risk appearing foolish" (Keaten & Kelly, 2000, p.168). It was found that parents who did not have good, or little to no communication with their children, resulted in children who did not know how to express their feelings, thus presenting as reticent (Koesten & Anderson, 2004). Even further, children who came from homes where they did not have much conversation exposure have increased stress and lower levels of emotional sensitivity (Keaten & Kelly, 2008). On the other hand, children reared in conversation oriented families were found to have higher levels of emotional intelligence and lower levels of reticence (Keaten & Kelly, 2008). As a result, children who come from conformity-oriented families have been observed to have ineffective social skills and do not feel as comfortable or as competent in making friendships (Koesten & Anderson, 2004; Kelly et al. 2002).

Overall, different family patterns have been examined and seen to produce various characteristics to engage in conversations for children to use in adulthood (Koesten & Anderson, 2004). Thus, it is important to understand how influential family communication can be on children's socialization not only within their family, but also within their outside relationships (Koesten & Anderson, 2004). Additionally, family communication patterns can affect members' internal observation of themselves, affecting their psychological health (Schrodt et al., 2007).

Communication and Psychological Health

Family communication patterns have been found to be a main element in one's psychological well-being (Schrodt et al., 2007). Within the family communication literature, psychological well-being can be defined as when individuals feel content, satisfied, and happy with all or most aspects of their life (Schrodt et al., 2007). Schrodt and colleagues (2008) found that family environments which promoted open communication, had better chances of increasing children's overall psychological well being and health. This is seen through reportedly higher levels of self-esteem, lower levels of perceived stress, higher levels of effective coping skills, ultimately leading to higher levels of self-worth (Schrodt & Ledbetter, 2007; Schrodt et al., 2007). More specifically, confirming behaviors within the system, such as agreement or providing some level of understanding and support during discussions, appeared to be integral to family members' mental health (Schrodt et al., 2007). Furthermore, affection is another factor that contributes to enhanced psychological well-being (Schrodt et al., 2007). Verbal affection can be defined as individuals saying things such as "I love you,"

whereas, nonverbal affection is displayed through giving hugs or some other physical sign of affection (Schrodt et al., 2007). Families who express support and affection are more likely to have healthier family functioning and higher levels of emotional bonding as opposed to families who do not (Schrodt et al., 2007).

Conversely, conformity-oriented families may result in children who have lower psychological well-being and feel they are in the middle of all conflicts and conversations within the system (Schrodt & Ledbetter, 2007). These types of families have been found to place more value on family beliefs than the interests of individual family members, which tends to decrease members' psychological well-being (Schrodt & Ledbetter, 2007). These results are important to be aware of when looking at how a child's experience of communication within the family impacts his or her development into an adult. It has been found that how a child experiences communication is a method he or she will use to socialize in the future, therefore family communication has an impact on a child's future personality attributes (Huang, 1999; Schrodt & Ledbetter, 2007).

Communication and Socializing Traits

Conversation-oriented communication patterns have also been noted to enhance such socializing traits as social desirability, self-monitoring, self-esteem, self-disclosure, desirability of control, shyness and sociability (Huang, 1999). Social desirability is the tendency for a person to express him or herself in a way that would be accepted by others to gain social approval (Huang, 1999). Self-monitoring, on the other hand, refers to the amount one monitors his or her behaviors to gain social acceptance and approval (Huang, 1999). Self-esteem is a characteristic where one evaluates the self (Huang, 1999). Self-

disclosure, or the act of offering personal information to others, can be affected by the levels of comfort one feels in revealing certain thoughts, feelings, or behaviors (Huang, 1999). Desirability of control is how much an individual seeks out leadership roles in different areas of her or his life (Huang, 1999). Shyness is also seen as introversion and sociability as extroversion (Huang, 1999). Most of these socializing traits are seen to result in more effective communication with others, and higher feelings of self worth because they increase ones' feelings of social acceptance; when not developed properly, however, such traits can easily lead to opposite results (Huang, 1999).

These traits can be either hindered or facilitated in different family environments (Schrodt et al., 2007). Parents who validate their childrens' experiences demonstrate that their thoughts and feelings are important (Schrodt, et al., 2007). Children who come from conversation-oriented families that value open communication and acceptance, were found to have higher self esteem and were more likely to trust others outside of the family (Huang, 1999). In addition, a family who holds high value in conversation, produces children who take leadership roles and are comfortable being sociable with others (Huang, 1999). Pluralistic families, who identify highly with conversation-orientation, have been found to aid in the development of socialization traits such as the ability to self-disclose, sociability, and social desirability (Huang, 1999). As a result, children in these families tend to have more friends, feel more socially accepted, have higher levels of self esteem, and enhanced self-monitoring skills (Huang, 1999; Keaten & Kelly, 2008; Young, 2009).

Conformity-oriented families, however, hold less value in open conversation with others and tend to have children who are more shy, having higher levels of self-monitoring, and having lower self-esteem (Huang, 1999). A type of conformity-oriented family, protective families, is susceptible to create such dynamics within family members (Huang, 1999). On the other hand, children of laissez-faire families, individuals who identify low with conformity orientation, were found to have a higher predisposition for both mental and social problems in their lives, such as a lack of communication skills and low self-esteem (Huang, 1999). Overall, traits such as high self-esteem and self-monitoring can become helpful and important in life outside of the family. Individuals who are equipped to work through emotional problems have an easier transition when coping with societal issues. Even further, these individuals have a higher chance of rearing an open family (Austin, 1993). Though such traits aforementioned have been found to impact an individual and his or her effectiveness to socialize with others, other factors have also been researched to delve further into the communication pattern differences within individuals (Hsu, 1998; Huang, 1999).

Multicultural Considerations in Communication

Communication is seen and valued in various cultures around the world. Because cultures have different characteristics and values, family communication patterns can vary from one culture to the next (Lin et al., 2007). The two types of cultures introduced in communication research are collectivistic and individualistic cultures (Lin et al., 2007). Collectivistic cultures can be defined as cultures which place value on interdependence and emphasize the need to focus on the group as opposed to the individual (Bakir et al.,

2006; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005; Shearman & Dumlao, 2008). Because individuals in this culture value a group system more than its parts, communication within the system is used to protect the system by using high context communication, which is indirect communication, and giving messages which have embedded, or hidden, meanings (Shearman & Dumlao, 2008). Collectivistic cultures tend to put less value on uniqueness and more value on self-monitoring skills such as obedience, discipline, and silence (Lin et al., 2007; Shearman & Dumlao, 2008).

In contrast, individualistic cultures place high value and focus on the development of the self as opposed to a group (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005; Shearman & Dumlao, 2008). Individualistic cultures are seen to have low context communication, meaning they value independent, unique thoughts and opinions and are accepting of listening to differing ideas. Children in such families tend to report their parents as equal rather than powerful in their lives (Bakir et al., 2006; Shearman & Dumlao, 2008). Individualistic cultures are seen to produce more consensual and pluralistic family types, given their willingness to have open conversations within the family (Baxter & Clark, 1996; Shearman & Dumlao, 2008). Rhee and colleagues (2003) found that individualistic adolescent participants reported having higher levels of self-esteem and having more frequent conversations with their parents. This open communication style may also be the reason individuals in this culture report having more friends and have an easy time making new friends (Rhee et al., 2003).

Race/Ethnicity and Communication

Rhee, Chang, and Rhee (2003) found that Asian participants demonstrated a higher tendency to be dependent on their parents' decisions regarding romantic relationships, as well as other general matters. Furthermore, adolescents from this culture reported having a difficult time communicating with their parents, reporting not feeling heard. Additionally, individuals who identified as coming from collectivistic cultures, had low levels of assertiveness and taking responsibility skills, meaning they did not identify as being assertive or independently responsible in social and work environments (Zhang, 2008). Other adolescents also reported wanting to seek their parent's approval for their decisions more than individuals from an individualistic culture (Rhee et al., 2003). Collectivistic cultures tend to produce laissez-faire and protective family types, which again are families that do not place value on open communication, due to the lack of open communication within the home (Shearman & Dumlao, 2008). In turn, this lack of open communication could lead to feelings of social rejection and poor self-esteem when communicating with others outside of the family, though such feelings may not even be important to individuals' cultural values (Rhee et al., 2003).

However, even inside individualistic cultures, there are variations in communication styles which are linked to ethnicity. Caucasian and African American individuals have differences when comparing their family experiences (Allen & Chaffee, 1977). For example, Caucasian family members reported more conversation-oriented communication, such as making sure all family members get a say before a decision is made. On the other hand, African American family members reported having less open

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communication when it came to parents' decisions (Allen & Chaffee, 1977). Racial differences were also found on how members of each ethnicity understood and reported answers to questions on the Family Communication Patterns scale (Allen & Chaffee, 1977). Such differences may have skewed the results to be more inclusive of the Caucasian population, and more changes may need to be made in order to accommodate African American cultural values and beliefs in these areas (Allen & Chaffee, 1977). Overall, however, Caucasian individuals reported having a more conversation-oriented communication style within their family, and African American individuals reported more conformity-oriented communication styles (Allen & Chaffee, 1977).

In future research, Shearman and Dumlao (2008) found that though each culture values communication differently within the family, children in both collectivistic and individualistic cultures reported feeling satisfied with their relationships with their parents. Though the results for individuals' relationships outside of the family may have different results, children from both cultures appreciated their parents and the values they presented within the home (Shearman & Dumlao, 2008). Overall, researchers over the years have identified a need to focus more on how to accommodate all cultures regarding family communication instrumentation. It is believe if more attention is given to these differences, the impact of various family communication patterns in different cultures will be less ambiguous.

Communication patterns have a great influence over an individual's thoughts, actions, feelings, and experiences. When looking at how family communication patterns

can strongly affect individuals during their childhood, as well as an adult, it is additionally important to explore the other components which can impact communication.

Gender

Communication can also be affected by gender. Gender differences have shown to affect communication as a parent, as a child, and as an adult (Hsu, 1998). The way women and men are socialized in society has a substantial impact on communication (MacGeorge et al., 2003). For example, women tend to hold greater value on comforting others and managing conflict within relationships (MacGeorge et al., 2003). Koesten (2004) found support for this argument as both men and women preferred to go to women when in need of social and emotional support. This finding may be due to women wanting to keep a sense of harmony in relationships. On the other hand, men hold a greater value on persuasiveness, which may be due to men wanting their relationships to stay the same before and after altercations (MacGeorge et al., 2003). It was also found men have a higher tendency to seek social support at work with men who have similar interests in work tasks or hobbies (Koesten, 2004).

Looking at communication within gender is different than opposite gender communication. For example, women reported being able to self-disclose and seek support in a friendship with another woman, but were more likely to assert themselves negatively in a romantic relationship, such as yelling or making condescending remarks, and in a friendship with a man, while men produced the opposite results (Koesten, 2004). These interesting results were possibly a result of various interaction patterns between

genders in their family of origin's communication patterns, however nothing has yet been proven (Hsu, 1998).

Various family communication patterns are successful when working with children of different genders. Specifically, it is important to examine how mothers and fathers vary in communicating with their sons and/or daughters. For example, Punyanunt-Carter (2008) did a study which examined communication between fathers and daughters. In this research, it was found that fathers and daughters have more positive communication in conversation-oriented families, such as pluralistic and consensual, which value open conversation and discussion within the home. Therefore, fathers and daughters feel higher levels of satisfaction with their relationships if their communication with each other was valued and understood by each party involved (Punyant-Carter, 2008). Furthermore, Dumlao and Botta (2000) also found that families who have fathers who value family communication tend to teach their children the importance of such communication skills, even if they still support the use of authority in the household. On the other hand, more negative relationship communication was found in conformity-oriented family types, such as laissez-faire and protective, which do not place value on open communication within the home. Because father-daughter relationships tend to work better with higher levels of communication, daughters who do not receive such communication with their fathers tend to rebel against the family and seek support from others (Punyant-Carter, 2008).

On the other hand, mothers also have an impact on communication with their children. Kim, Lee, and Tomiuk (2009) found that mothers have an impact on their children's decision making skills. For example, mothers who valued conversation, such as individuals from a conversation-oriented family, tended to rear children who had a more egalitarian approach to decision making. Conversely, conformity-oriented mothers who did not value communication, tended to rear children who had a more difficult time making decisions (Kim et al., 2009). As a result, children from conformity-oriented homes engage in impulsive decision making and other careless decision making tactics, such as reckless behaviors and use of illegal substances (Kim et al., 2009). Interestingly, in this study, fathers appeared to have little or no impact on their children's decision making skills (Kim et al., 2009). This is important because of the direct correlation of how decision making skills directly affect children's present and future friendships and romantic relationships and how they handle conflict (Kim et al., 2009).

Gender differences in communication have been examined and findings have overall focused on mothers' and fathers' impact of their communication values on their children (Dumlao & Botta, 2000; Kim et al., 2009; Punyant-Carter, 2008). Along with the factor of gender, self esteem has also been researched to identify its impact on individuals' communication patterns (Leary, 1995).

Self Esteem

Self esteem is researched widely in many areas of psychology (Leary, 2005). To identify the question of what is self esteem, one must first understand the concept of the self. The self is "the cognitive apparatus that permits self-reflective thought...that

permit[s] people to take themselves as an object of their own thought and to think consciously about themselves" (Leary, 2004, p. 207). In other words, the self has the ability to analyze one's own thoughts and feelings which is a unique characteristic and is valuable to humans (Pyszczynski et al., 2004). The sense of self is necessary for human survival and impacts one's perceptions of self worth, which is also known as self esteem (Leary, 1995).

Definitions of Self Esteem

Rosenberg (1976) defined one's self-concept as "the totality of [an] individual's thoughts and feelings with reference to himself as an object" (pg. 4). His definition was used to help formulate the foundation for what is now known as self esteem. Self esteem can be defined as how an individual perceives that he or she is either included or excluded via interactions and evaluations of others (Holmstrom, 2008; Leary et al., 1995; Pyszczynski et al., 2004). One's perceptions of the self focuses on the capabilities to accomplish challenges, regulate behaviors, cope with social situations, and feel worthy (Mansbacher, 2011; Pyszczynski et al., 2004). Most researchers report that self esteem evolves and develops in childhood and remains more constant in adulthood (Holmstrom, 2008).

Because self esteem has been found to be connected to so many different aspects of the self, it is difficult to miss how it impacts the human condition. Self esteem is fundamentally known as the force which people use to gauge, monitor, enhance, and protect themselves from being harmed by rejection or exclusion (Leary, 1999; 2004; Leary et al., 1995; Pyszczynski et al., 2004). Overall, self esteem is important to

understand because it helps individuals identify and evaluate situations which may increase or decrease their feelings of value (Leary, 1999; 2003; 2005). Pyszczynski and colleagues (2004) found that high self esteem is correlated with positive coping skills and positive mental and physical health. This motivates individuals to search for more accepting environments, resulting in higher self esteem (Leary, 1999; Leary, Cottrell, & Phillips, 2001).

Types of Self Esteem

It is important to understand the types of self esteem because this knowledge will lead to an enhanced understanding of human thoughts, actions, and feelings (Stinson, et al., 2010). For example, every individual may feel pressured to modify her or his self esteem to coincide with different environmental situations (Denissen, Penke, Schmitt, & Van Aken, 2008; Leary, 2002). These fluctuations are defined as state self esteem, also known as the sociometer, according to Leary (2002). How one perceives to be accepted or rejected by others is a characteristic which stays more constant within an individual, and is defined as trait self esteem (Stinson et al., 2010). Levels of self esteem within these types, such as high versus low self esteem, are equally important to understand.

Though individuals may vary in the way they strive for high self esteem, enhancing it is also uniquely tailored to the individual (Leary, 2004; Pyszczynski et al., 2004). Researchers have found that the definition of self esteem can vary widely (Pyszczynski et al., 2004). These varying definitions tend to focus on the different values individuals place on having high self esteem, and the traits individuals identify to raise low self esteem (Pyszczynski et al., 2004).

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Sociometer Theory

Self esteem has been conceptualized by many different individuals (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Leary, 1995; Pyszczynski et al., 2004). One of the most prominently used theories to describe self esteem is the sociometer theory (Leary, 1999a, 2004, 2005). This theory defines self esteem as an indicator, or sociometer, humans use to measure if individuals perceive themselves to be included or accepted, also defined as one's inclusionary status (Leary, 1999a, 1999b, 2004, 2005). This theory identifies individuals' psychological well being as being affected by such inclusionary status (Leary, 1999a, 1999b, Leary et al., 2001). Therefore, the main component of this theory defines self esteem, or self appraisal, as a gauge that determines if an individual's perceived reactions and evaluations by others are socially acceptable or valuable, and helps her or him to find environments where he or she will feel valued (Leary, 1999, 2003, 2004, 2005). For example, an individual can be at a local coffee shop to meet a potential new friend. When entering the shop and identifying this new person, one immediately begins to identify qualities and indicators which will tell him or her whether this new person is more or less likely to accept and value her or him (Stinson et al., 2010). This need for others to evaluate oneself as acceptable or valuable is seen as a desire to stay attached with others socially, inferring that humans place value in relationships, which is also known as relational value (Leary, 2005; Pyszczynski et al., 2004).

Increases in self esteem can indicate that an individual perceives he or she is becoming more included in social interactions, leading to higher levels of coping skills and increased relational value (Leary, 2004). A decrease in self esteem would lead to

feelings of social exclusion and increased social avoidance (Leary, 1999a, 1999b).

Interactions which would be connected to lower self esteem, such as social exclusion and

social avoidance, can be defined as situations that would negatively affect an individual's

inclusionary status (Leary, 1999b).

Inclusionary status is the degree to which individuals perceive themselves to be

included and accepted socially by others (Leary, 1999b). This monitoring system, which

identifies situations as accepting or rejecting can be defined as one's subjective, or

private, self esteem (Leary, 1999a). Individuals have been found to use techniques such

as offering excuses, using defensive language and behaviors, and scapegoating as

attempts to protect this private self esteem (Leary, 1999a). Overall, the sociometer theory

has important components discussed regarding the development and maintenance of

one's self esteem. Other theories also provide differing proposals of how self esteem is

developed and is impacted within one's environment.

State and Trait Self Esteem

State and trait self esteem are two basic components discussed in the sociometer

theory (Leary, 1999). The sociometer theory proposes that self esteem is an indicator of

how much an individual feels accepted or rejected in different social experiences in one's

life (Leary, 1999a, 2004, 2005). This theory also embraces state and trait self esteem to

further support the development of the sociometer. Trait self esteem develops through a

history of an individual's experiences of whether one was more consistently valued or

rejected by others (Leary, 2003). For example, when an individual experiences high trait

self esteem, he or she feels socially satisfied overall (Leary, 2002; Leary & MacDonald, 2003).

On the other hand, state self esteem is how individuals feel about themselves on a daily basis. Overall, trait self esteem is one's average evaluation of how others value one's self on a more long term basis (Leary, 1999a; 2003; Leary et al., 1995). It is influenced by changes in state self esteem, meaning an individual is feeling more social exclusion than before, resulting in lower self esteem (Leary et al., 2001). For example, an individual who has high state self esteem feels a consistent sense of acceptance and inclusion within personal relationships (Leary, 2003; Leary et al., 1995). Interestingly, behaviors focused on enhancing self esteem work to increase feelings of inclusion as opposed to wanting others to think more positively about the self (Leary et al., 1995). In other words, people who already have high trait self esteem tend to be less affected by rejecting situations because they still feel an overall sense of inclusion by others as opposed to those with low trait self esteem (Leary, 2002).

Overall, high self esteem has been seen to be an essential survival characteristic for various reasons (Holmstrom, 2008). Having high self esteem has been correlated with increased feelings of acceptance, social inclusion, pride, self satisfaction, and confidence (Ferkany, 2009; Holmstrom, 2008; Leary, 1999b, 2003). Furthermore, high self esteem is related to more positive and long lasting relationships and friendships (Holmstrom, 2008). Inherently, many have a preference for high rather than low self esteem because of the positive feelings correlated with higher feelings of self worth (Leary, 2005). As a

result, this preference has been found to be a social motive individuals use to obtain self esteem enhancement (Leary, 2005).

Conversely, low self esteem has been identified as detrimental to psychological well-being (Holmstrom, 2008). Individuals who have low self esteem are at a higher risk to engage in delinquent behaviors, detrimental work behaviors, and poorer physical and psychological health, such as receiving a diagnosis of depression or anxiety (Holmstrom, 2008; Leary et al., 1995). A person who has low self esteem, for example, tends to consistently doubt her or his acceptance and inclusion in social and romantic relationships (Leary, 2002). Researchers have found that individuals work to increase low self esteem because of the stress that feelings of poor self worth inflict upon them (Leary, 1999a).

Terror Management Theory

Another theory, which conceptualizes the function of self esteem and its influence on thoughts, actions, and feelings, is Terror Management Theory (TMT; Leary, 2005; Pyszczynsky et al., 2004). Coined by Pyszczynsky and colleagues (2004), TMT has a unique view on the importance of self esteem. TMT identifies self esteem as an essential shield individuals use to combat their death anxiety (Leary, 2005; MacDonald, 2007; Pyszczynsky et al., 2004). TMT is defined as "a culturally derived construction that is dependent on sources of social validation...essentially defensive in nature, and. . . functions to provide a buffer against core human fears" (Pyszczynsky et al., 2004, p. 437).

TMT explains that people fear death because there is no true way to know what happens after one dies, which leaves room for a possibility of complete annihilation of existence, potentially resulting in immense terror (Leary, 2005; MacDonald, 2007; Pyszczynsky et al., 2004). Mortality, or one's susceptibility to death, is identified as the main motive for an individual's fear of death, or mortality salience. According to TMT, because of individuals' mortality salience, the human race evolved and developed self esteem to identify one's values in life, which can vary based on his or her personal definition of self esteem (Pyszczynsky et al., 2004). These values, such as communication and interaction with family and friends, along with other experiences which may be unique to an individual, are important because one may use such values as a buffer from his or her mortality salience. By living up to one's values, according to TMT, individuals would avoid behaviors and environments that would be damaging to their self esteem, and would also avoid behaviors which would draw attention to one's mortality salience (Pyszczynsky et al., 2004). For example, a person who values having positive and constant communication and interactions with loved ones in his or her life may use such experiences to buffer against thinking about his or her mortality salience. On the other hand, if an individual does not have such positive experiences with her or his family, this may leave more room for this individual to think about death, thus increasing one's mortality salience.

Via TMT, it is also speculated that individuals who have high self esteem are easily able to engage in daily activities and interact socially because they are thought to

have a strong buffer against anxiety. A person who has high self esteem is aware of imminent death, but his or her anxiety is less because, according to TMT, he or she knows that by living up to one's values, he or she could be remembered by others forever (Leary, 2005; MacDonald, 2007). Those who have low levels of self esteem are at a higher risk for their mortality salience to impact daily interactions, and thus, tend to exhibit defensive behaviors to try to increase self-esteem levels, such as implementing coping skills or overcompensating for the lack of interactions and positive experiences they miss (Pyszczynsky et al., 2004).

Overall, TMT notes that individuals who are aware of their mortality but do not let it consume their thoughts, actions, and feelings, will have higher self esteem (Leary, 2005; MacDonald, 2007; Pyszczynsky et al., 2004). On the other hand, individuals who let their mortality salience consistently affect their lives are believed to have lower self esteem levels (Pyszczynsky et al., 2004). Though TMT may have an adequate thought process behind such beliefs, there are other perceptions of how one's self esteem is derived, and its impact on daily functioning.

Self Determination Theory

Self Determination Theory (SDT) is yet another theory which addresses the importance of self esteem (Deci & Ryan, 2008). According to SDT, our social environments affect individuals' personality development, motivations, thoughts, actions, feelings, and overall psychological well being (Deci & Ryan, 2008). One's personal motivations are thought to construct the self and influence one's self esteem (MacDonald, 2007).

The differentiation between controlled and autonomous motivation is one of the most studied aspects of SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Controlled motivation refers to an individual feeling external pressure to make decisions, or to think and behave in a certain way (Deci & Ryan, 2008). This motivation is internalized due to individuals wanting to seek approval from others and avoid feeling guilty or shameful (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Individuals with controlled motivation are seen to have an ongoing desire to feel autonomous and independent from others' thoughts and behaviors (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

On the other hand, autonomous motivation is fueled both by a motivation that comes from within, as well as from external factors (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Individuals who are autonomously motivated think and act in ways to achieve self-endorsement rather than external approval (Deci & Ryan, 2008). They have an ongoing feeling of fulfillment of their basic psychological needs and are self-determined to continue to experience these satisfactory feelings (Deci & Ryan, 2008). These two motivations, controlled and autonomous, have been used to define an individual's feelings of self esteem and self worth (Pyszczynsky et al., 2004).

According to SDT, self esteem is an important factor used to drive one's personal motivations. Individuals with a more autonomous motivation have a self esteem which is more internalized (Pyszczynsky et al., 2004). As a result, this can be defined as a more stable self esteem, where one's feelings of self worth do not continuously change based on single accomplishments or the reinforcements of others (MacDonald, 2007). On the other hand, those who have controlled motivation have self esteem which is more

contingent on external forces (Pyszczynsky et al., 2004). Consequently, this self esteem

can be defined as unstable and more likely to change. Thus, when a person has more

contingent self esteem, his or her psychological needs are most likely not being fulfilled

and one's feelings of self worth will begin to plummet (MacDonald, 2007).

Via SDT, each human has three essential psychological needs, which are

identified as competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Competence

is how an individual feels she or he is effectively interacting with others (MacDonald,

2007). Autonomy refers to an individual's belief that he or she is freely choosing his or

her own behaviors (MacDonald, 2007). Finally, relatedness is an individual's drive and

desire to be socially connected with others (MacDonald, 2007). SDT notes that if one has

a balance of competence, autonomy, and relatedness, she or he will believe his or her

actions are self-determined rather than externally driven (MacDonald, 2007). These

factors tend to affect individuals differently based on their motivation and fulfillment of

psychological needs. Nonetheless, SDT believes that all environmental factors affect an

individual's thoughts, actions, feelings and motivations (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

Self Esteem Influence

When identifying different types of self esteem, one should also examine the

other factors that influence changes in self esteem. Self esteem holds within its construct

various aspects of cognitive, behavioral, and affective components (Leary et al., 1995).

Masbacher (2011) presented the idea that if an individual has high self esteem, he or she

is more likely to:

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self-analyze less, feel good most of the time, be friendly, make longer-term relationships, take healthy risks or be independent and autonomous, have a positive effect on others, find others drawn to [him or her], have lots of energy, and [be more resilient] (p. 18).

Others have found information which supports these benefits of high levels of self esteem and the influence self esteem has on one's emotions, behaviors, and environments.

Self esteem and emotions. Anthony, Holmes, and Wood (2007) stated that individuals who consistently display high or low levels of self esteem begin to use it as an influence on one's motivations, emotions, and beliefs. Events which have been linked to lower self esteem tend to involve feelings of rejection, embarrassment, failure, and receiving negative evaluations from others (Leary, 2003, 2005). It is also important to understand that one can have feelings of social rejection, in turn having low levels of self esteem (Leary, 2005). These negative emotions tend to come out as feelings of sadness, anxiety, and anger and can lead an individual to feel he or she will never have a successful or valued relationship (Leary, 1995, 2005). Glauser (1984) identified people who have low self esteem report feeling they are useless in a relationship and not worthwhile of positive interactions with others (Leary, 2004). On the other hand, an individual who believes others think she or he is valuable leads to higher self esteem (Leary, 1999a). Individuals with high self esteem also report different emotions associated with social interactions as compared to those who report lower self esteem levels.

Those who identify with having high self esteem tend to focus on feelings of achievement, acceptance, positive social skills, and motivation to continue having high self esteem (Leary, 2003, 2005). For example, individuals who see themselves as attractive, successful, and socially competent have higher levels of self esteem because they believe they have the qualities to be valued in relationships with others (Leary, 1999b, 2003, 2005). Overall, an individual who feels valued by others tends to have a high and stable self esteem, which will lead to a more positive psychological well being (Leary, 1995; 1999b). On the other hand, when an individual does not feel valued, he or she might work even harder to become accepted, no matter the consequences (Holmstrom, 2008; Leary, 2004, 2005; MacDonald, 2007).

Self esteem and behaviors. Self esteem also has an influence on individual's behaviors and interactions with others. Individuals who have consistently low self esteem tend to present with behaviors that protect his or her current levels of self worth (Leary, 2003). For example, those with low levels of self esteem try to use facts instead of opinions when interacting with others due to their fear of rejection. Leary (2005) reported individuals who have low self esteem conform to social situations in order to become socially accepted, regardless of their own values. For example, an individual who conforms for a goal of higher self worth may involve her or himself in gangs, use of drugs and alcohol, or other deviant, risk taking behaviors (Leary, 1995, 1999a, 1999b, 2003, 2005; Mansbacher, 2011). Though an individual may find some value in these dysfunctional relationships, Leary (2005) found that most people who find relational

value this way tend to be devalued as relationships go on, thus lowering self esteem (Leary, 1999a; 2004). Leary (2003) also proposed that individuals who involve themselves in such situations tend to react more defensively to protect their self esteem, such as becoming verbally or physically aggressive.

Perceived communication is another important behavior that influences self esteem. Those who have high self esteem have been found to identify communication with others more positively, as well as view themselves as a valuable communicator (Pearson, Child, DeGreef, & Semlak, 2007). Individuals with low self esteem tend to identify communication as an event of either success or failure, most of the time expressing communication attempts as unsuccessful (Pearson et al., 2007). This idea of perceived successful communication identifies self esteem as a moderator of how much or how well an individual believes he or she communicates with others (Holmstrom, 2008). If one can increase his or her levels of self esteem, she or he may find more acceptance in social settings, in turn validating one's self-worth (Pearson et al., 2007).

In some situations, individuals may act in a way which appears as exhibiting a high level of self esteem, even when the situation at hand should produce opposite feelings (Leary, 2005). This behavior can be defined as an ego defense, meaning a person refuses to acknowledge and accept the undesirable aspects of himself or herself (Leary, 1999). For instance, an individual who does not have a reason to brag or boast, may do so to portray himself or herself as more valuable than in reality (Mansbacher, 2011). However, when individuals express their self esteem in more appropriate ways, such

expression leads to them feeling more psychologically healthy (Leary, 1999a, 2003). An

appropriate way of increasing self esteem would be for an individual to begin to think

and interact in a social situation more positively, such as actively participating in

conversations or increasing positive self-talk (Leary, 2004). To others, a person who

raises his or her self esteem will be seen as more valuable, in turn wanting others to

include her or him in social engagements more often (Leary et al., 2001; Rill, Baiocchi,

Hopper, Denker, & Olson, 2009).

Self esteem and environments. There are many different environmental factors

which could lower or raise self esteem (Leary, 2005). Depending on an individual's

initial self esteem, one may deem environments as more rejecting if she or he has low self

esteem or more accepting if she or he has high self esteem (Leary et al., 1995).

Consequently, human beings are normally drawn to environments that will garner

acceptance and inclusion from others and avoid situations which harvest opposite

reactions (Anthony et al., 2007; Denissen et al., 2008; Leary 2004). Typically,

environments that produce social rejection lower self esteem, and events that feel more

accepting increase self esteem (Leary, 2003, 2005; Leary et al., 1995; Pearson et al.,

2007). Therefore, environments which decrease an individual's feelings of acceptance

and value are correlated to a decrease in one's self esteem (Denissen et al., 2007; Leary,

2005). When an individual does not successfully overcome a challenge in life, or believes

others' perceptions are negative, this can lead to low self esteem and feelings of failure

(Leary, 1999a, 2003). It is important to understand how an environment can change one's

perceptions of self worth in order to determine what environments will increase or decrease self esteem. If one is not aware of what environments influence her or his self esteem, one may make inaccurate assumptions, leaving his or her self esteem at risk (Anthony et al., 2007; Leary, 2003).

Nonetheless, all individuals may not be affected by single negative environments. Leary (2005) stated that only individuals who had a low relational value were negatively affected by rejecting environments. As defined earlier, relational value is how much an individual places importance on interactions and relationships with others (Leary, 2005). Individuals who have a higher perception of relational value, and subsequently a higher level of self esteem, were affected by social experiences, but still continued to display positive self evaluations and high feelings of self worth (Denissen et al., 2007; Leary, 2005). In short, individuals with high self esteem can evaluate a negative situation and identify if the individuals who were rejecting are people from which he or she wants to feel acceptance. If they are not, an individual with high self esteem has an easier time overcoming a negative event (Leary et al., 1995). Overcoming challenges in one's life is another situation which can increase an individuals' perceived level of relational value and self esteem (Leary, 2003). For a life challenge to fully feel accomplished, however, individuals need to feel like they are being evaluated positively by others who are deemed important in one's life and culture, such as one's family of origin (Ferkany, 2009).

Multicultural Variables in Self Esteem

Self esteem looks differently across cultures. For example, in one culture, high self esteem would be correlated with characteristics such as being outgoing, confident, and powerful (Leary, 2005). Individualistic cultures have been found to hold such values in an individual's ability to exert power and control in social situations (Leary, 2005). These individuals are praised and accepted for various reasons, one being that having such power and control promotes confidence, leading to having more success in social environments and subsequently increasing self esteem (Leary, 2005). However, in a different culture, an individual who has high self esteem may be quiet, courteous, and put others before himself or herself (Pyszczynski et al., 2004). Collectivistic cultures place value on individuals who are self-sacrificing and obedient. As a result, individuals who display such qualities in a collectivistic culture are seen to be more valuable, more accepted, and more included, thus having higher levels of self esteem (Leary, 2005). These differences are important to understand when identifying self esteem differences, especially when using self esteem scales across different cultural populations (Leary, 2005). It is also important to identify varying cultural values so individuals can understand these potential differences in order to increase his or her self esteem (Ivers, Ivers, & Ivers, 2008).

Marginalized groups have been identified as having subcultures of their own (Leary, 2005). Individuals in a particular culture find value in connecting with others in their culture, and using the power of these relationships to increase self esteem (Leary, 2005). This shows humans' ability to find refuge in a society that rejects them because of

their minority status. Humans can find environments which are more accepting, inviting, and socially inclusive even when the majority of the population presents as uninviting (Ferkany, 2009; Ivers et al., 2008).

Self Esteem and Relationships

Relationships and communication within a relationship are also affected by self esteem. It has been previously stated that individuals tend to evaluate themselves based on social interactions with others (Leary et al., 1995). Individuals in relationships also tend to look for acceptance and inclusion from their partners in order to evaluate their own self worth (Rill et al., 2009). Individuals in relationships tend to report their level of self esteem is based on how their partner perceives them (Leary, 2002; Rill et al., 2009). Those who believe they are valued in a relationship tend to report higher levels of self esteem and tend to worry less about the commitment of their partner and more about the level of appreciation in the relationship (Leary, 2002). Rill and colleagues (2009) noted that individuals in relationships who feel their partner is committed to maintaining connection report having higher levels of self esteem.

Overall, self esteem is influential in how individuals identify themselves in society. Self esteem can help or hinder social growth, thus resulting in individuals who report high levels of self esteem seemingly having an advantage over those with low levels of self esteem to become successful in life due to their feelings of social acceptance. One's self esteem also plays a pivotal role in what an individual can offer in a relationship due to how one perceives her or his self when interacting with others.

Therefore, relationship satisfaction is another component to be explored in order to understand the influence of communication patterns and self esteem in one's life.

Relationship Satisfaction

Relationship satisfaction can be defined as the extent to which an individual feels content and happy within the context of an intimate relationship (Anderson & Emmers-Sommer, 2006). Individuals who identify as satisfied in their relationship report more positive interactions with their partners, such as experiencing happiness when with their partner, and feel their relationship has more benefits than personal costs in comparison to being alone (Cramer, 2004; Rauer et al., 2008; Sprecher, Metts, Burleson, Hatsfield, & Thompson, 2001). Many different aspects of relationship satisfaction are important to understand in order to gain perspective on how such satisfaction plays either a positive or negative role on communication and longevity of an intimate relationship.

Relationship Satisfaction Importance

Relationship satisfaction is important for intimate relationships on a variety of levels. Individuals who report having a satisfactory relationship tend to display more positive emotions and interactions with each other, physical health and higher levels of satisfaction with his or her life (Guerrero et al., 2009; Rauer et al., 2008). More specifically, Whitton and Whisman (2010) found that relationship satisfaction is correlated with an increase in an individual's mood and a decrease in depressive symptoms. Other components have been emphasized when discussing the importance of relationship satisfaction.

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Guerrero and colleagues (2009) identified one variable that is integral to an individuals' relationship satisfaction: positive evaluation by the partner (Conley, Roesch, Peplau, & Gold, 2009). In addition, many individuals report their partners evaluate them less favorably than what is actually reported by the partner due to negative self evaluation. Additionally, these individuals also feel an increase in relationship satisfaction when they hear a more positive reaction than expected from their partner (Conley et al., 2009). This may be due to previous environmental factors, such as one's childhood and the relationships with his or her family of origin (Martinson et al., 2010). Individuals who come from different families of origin, such as a conversation oriented family for example, have been found to value relationships with others through open and active communication (Lin et al., 2007).

Individuals who report having a positive experience, such as open communication, unconditional love, and appropriate discipline with their family of origin tend to have more positive expectations when in an intimate relationship, meaning that these individuals have an easier time maintaining stability and satisfaction with their partner as opposed to others who had negative family of origin experiences (Finkenauer et al., 2004; Martinson et al., 2010). Such satisfaction leads to an increase in the longevity and commitment of both partners in an intimate relationship (Finkenauer et al., 2004). Individuals who have had negative experiences, such as fighting and lack of communication in their family of origin, report having a more difficult time believing their partner is satisfied with their relationship, thus producing feelings of relationship

instability and dissatisfaction. These feelings of instability have been found to coincide with individuals separating or divorcing more often that those who were more satisfied with their relationship (Martinson et al., 2010).

Individuals who are not as satisfied with their relationship report more dissatisfying interactions, such as arguments, and experiences of anger and depression within the context of their relationships (Guerrero et al., 2009). It was also found that individuals who report having less satisfaction in their relationship also report continuously fluctuating feelings of satisfaction and doubt with their partner (Whitton & Whisman, 2010). At times, individuals who feel lower levels of relationship satisfaction may project their partner to be the ideal fit for them to compensate for negative feelings and the dissonance they feel due to remaining in the relationship (Conley et al., 2009). This is done in an attempt for an individual to identify the reasons why he or she would stay in a relationship that is not satisfying. Therefore, relationship satisfaction is an important factor in the maintenance of intimate relationships (Sprecher et al., 2001). Overall, relationship satisfaction has many different important variables, which have been examined differently over the years to learn how individuals identify what is satisfactory in their relationships. Various theories have been identified to further define the importance of relationship satisfaction.

Relationship Satisfaction Theories

Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory (SLT) has been extensively explored when looking at how behaviors are acquired and learned by individuals (Mihalic & Elliot, 1997). In SLT,

Bandura (1978) proposed that behaviors are learned by reciprocal determinism. Reciprocal determinism is when an individuals' behaviors influence, and are influenced, by personal experiences, personal reactions, and environmental factors (Bandura, 1978). Reciprocal determinism can be obtained in four different ways: (a) from direct, personal experience, (b) from witnessing others' experiences, (c) from listening and identifying with others' judgments of an experience, and (d) from using one's previous experiences to assess, compare, and contrast to the presented event (Bandura, 1978).

According to SLT, humans model and learn from behaviors they were exposed to during childhood (Mihilac & Elliot, 1997). This is also known as vicarious learning, when an individual learns behaviors by witnessing another's reactions and behaviors (Abbassi & Aslinia, 2010). From a relationship standpoint, many people learn how to act in an intimate relationship from their parents or primary caregivers (Abbassi & Aslinia, 2010). If an individual is reared in a home in which their caretakers were violent and displayed lower levels of relationship satisfaction, it was found that such children have a more difficult time identifying satisfactory behaviors in intimate relationships, or do not know how to appropriately display negative behaviors, such as conflict, when they are in intimate relationships as an adult (Abbassi & Aslinia, 2010).

When an individual learns from a direct, or personal, experience, this would include cognitive factors, such as how an individual may internally think and assess a situation, and previous experiences, which may influence one's reaction to a specific event (Bandura, 1978; Burke, 1983). It is important to understand each individual's

unique cognitive factors in order to understand how one learns socializing behaviors (Bandura, 1978). For example, one's physical appearance may influence self esteem due to societal messages one receives about the ideal body type, in turn affecting how he or she presents the self in society. If a person presents himself or herself in a defensive manner, this can increase feelings of low self esteem (Bandura, 1978).Thus, each individual's cognitive factors may produce different perceptions of and reactions to environmental factors, in turn varying one's behaviors.

Environmental factors, on the other hand, are defined as external stimuli that formulate a reaction within an individual (Bandura, 1978). From a social perspective, environmental factors are experiences such as family interactions, as well as experiences with peers, friends, and acquaintances (Abbassi & Aslinia, 2010; Bandura, 1978). Some environmental factors may lead one to recall and react with childhood responses, even as an adult. For example, if an individual is reared in a home that is open and accepting to all types of people, one may have a strong reaction to individuals who present as discriminatory to other races or cultures (Abbassi & Aslinia, 2010; Mihilac & Elliot, 1997). Additionally, violence is an environmental factor continuously studied by social learning theorists to understand how such factors influence future behaviors (Abbassi & Aslinia, 2010; Mihilac & Elliot, 1997). Social learning theorists suggest that violence, when directly or indirectly experienced during one's childhood, can be a factor individuals recall and either initiate, or have an intense reaction to, as an adult (Mihilac & Elliot, 1997). On the other hand, one can also have an intense reaction to a partner who

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abhors violence in the relationship (Mihilac & Elliot, 1997). This can have detrimental

effects on an individual's intimate relationship, family, and one's relationship satisfaction

(Mihilac & Elliot, 1997). Therefore, individuals who have been exposed to negative

environmental factors, such as violence, have a more difficult time not engaging in

violent behaviors and tend to either continue displaying the negative behaviors, or have to

work to learn more positive reactions to experiences which had previously initiated a

violent reaction within their family or origin (Abbassi & Aslinia, 2010).

In addition to environmental factors, SLT theorists report that individuals may

identify their relationship as satisfactory or unsatisfactory based on how they manage

problems within the relationship (McNulty & Russell, 2010). Partners who reported

having satisfactory problem solving skills within the relationship reported feeling more

satisfied (McNulty & Russell, 2010). On the other hand, individuals who consistently

used defensive behaviors in their daily reactions to their partners resulted in avoidance

behaviors, such as decreased levels of communication and time spent together. This

evidence has been found in both intimate and social relationships (Bandura, 1978).

SLT theorists have many suggestions to help researchers understand how learned

behaviors can affect one's intimate relationships and relationship satisfaction. This theory

overall identifies learned behaviors as being influenced by a combination of

environmental factors, personal experiences and reactions (Bandura 1978). However,

there are other theories that report relationship satisfaction is based on other contextual

factors besides environmental and personal experiences.

Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory (SET) is another theory that can be applied to relationship satisfaction (Emerson, 1976; Nakonezny & Denton, 2008). Social exchange theorists propose that individuals decide to establish and maintain relationships if they believe it will correspond to or exceed their expectations of what they want in a relationship (Nye, 1978; Sabatelli, 1988). Additionally, researchers in SET believe that many decisions made to be in a relationship are based on how much an individual will benefit as opposed to how much he or she will have to give if in a relationship with a specific partner (Emerson, 1976; Nakonezny & Denton, 2008). A direct exchange, or interaction, is deemed the most important experience between partners in an intimate relationship (Markman, 1978; Sutphin, 2010). During a direct exchange, each person is expected to provide services or rewards to each other that are deemed beneficial (Sutphin, 2010). In other words, all relationships in which an individual decides to participate, whether intimate or social, are chosen based off a cost and benefit analysis of the potential outcome of the partnership (Emerson, 1976; Nakonezny & Denton, 2008).

There are many different components SET suggests are important to an individual regarding one's relationship satisfaction. Regarding intimate relationships, individuals reported looking for factors such as comparison levels, profit, and rewards in satisfactory relationships (Nakonezny & Denton, 2008). In social exchange theory, satisfaction can be defined as an individual receiving all or more rewards than he or she expected from their partner's behaviors and interactions (Sabatelli, 1988). Comparison levels are defined as how an individual will assess if a potential relationship will be beneficial or costly, as

compared to previous relationships (Nakonezny & Denton, 2008). For example, physical attractiveness and a sense of humor are factors through which an individual might compare potential partners to decide if various individuals would fulfill their expectations. If one feels that his or her expectations could be met with a potential partner, an individual may find this to be rewarding enough to initiate a relationship (Sabatelli, 1988). If the individual believes he or she will gain more profit from a different relationship alternative, they will most likely decide to terminate a relationship with a current, less beneficial partner (Markman, 1978; Miller & Bermudez, 2004; Sabatelli, 1988).

Additionally, profit refers to the difference between the benefits and risks one identifies in a relationship (Nakonezny & Denton, 2008). For example, if an individual has a fight with her or his partner once a week and the other days they spend more quality time together, one might identify the days of quality time as a profit in one's relationship. To profit in a relationship, one must believe they are benefiting more out of a relationship than they are giving. Individuals tend to want more profit in most types of relationships, especially in intimate relationships. When this profit is received, individuals normally report more satisfaction with their partner (Nakonezny & Denton, 2008; Sabatelli, 1988). An individual calculates the profit she or he is receiving in their relationship based on comparison levels and expectations they had for their relationships, as well as the benefit and risk analysis of staying with their partner (Nakonezny & Denton, 2008). On the other hand, when individuals do not feel they are gaining any profit from their relationship, or

they believe the direct exchanges with their partner are not as rewarding, individuals

report less satisfaction and less commitment to stay in their relationships (Markman,

1978; Nakonezny & Denton, 2008). Nakonezny and Denton (2008) found that

individuals who did not gain any profit from their relationships eventually stopped

rewarding their partners, and subsequently ended their partnerships. When one stops

rewarding his or her partner, many times the relationship is deemed unsatisfactory and a

waste of time and energy (Nakonezny & Denton, 2008).

Reward power refers to an individual's ability to reward her or his partner

(Nakonezny & Denton, 2008). In other words, reward power can be defined as an

individual's ability to produce a positive interaction with their partner (Nakonezny &

Denton, 2008). Individuals with high reward power in their relationship report more

satisfaction with their partner, leaving less room for coercive power. Coercive power is

an individual's ability to punish their partner (Nakonezny & Denton, 2008). Coercive

power is used when the partner in power does not feel he or she is gaining the same level

of benefit from the relationship. The use of coercive power has been correlated to higher

levels of dissatisfaction within a relationship (Nakonezny & Denton, 2008). According to

social exchange theory, when individuals do not feel as satisfied in their relationship,

believing they could be happier with someone else, or even single, this initiates a loss of

commitment to and consequently the termination of the relationship (Nakonezny &

Denton, 2008).

Overall, aspects of both social learning theory and social exchange theory present important factors that can help or hinder the establishment of relationship satisfaction. Other components have also been found to influence the amount of relationship satisfaction partners report. Such factors can be detrimental or instrumental to relationship satisfaction and longevity.

Factors that Influence Relationship Satisfaction

Relationship satisfaction can be influenced by both environmental and personal factors (Levine et al., 2006). Researchers have supported the idea that many intimate partners initiate relationships and report satisfaction in their relationship if both partners are similar in terms of demographics, values, and personalities (Levine et al., 2006). In addition to these aforementioned similarities, other components have also been found to influence one's relationship satisfaction such as communication, perceived regard, interactions, psychological health, and self esteem.

　　　　Relationship satisfaction and communication. Communication within a relationship is one of the key components to relationship satisfaction (Egeci & Gencoz, 2006). Individuals who are satisfied with the communication they have with their partner are more likely to report greater relationship satisfaction (Anderson & Emmers-Sommer, 2006; Byers, 2005). People in intimate relationships tend to identify their communication as satisfying when they believe their partner listens and engages in conversation about individual and relationship needs and expectations (Byers, 2005). Individuals reporting poor communication in their relationships, meaning they do not believe their partners are living up to their communication expectations, express lower levels of relationship

satisfaction (Byers, 2005). Relationships have been noted to take effort from both partners to maintain a satisfying relationship (Rauer et al., 2008). Individuals who report having their partner acknowledge and appreciate their efforts of trying to reward their partners have more relationship satisfaction (Rauer et al., 2008). This positive communication can be an integral element to an individual feeling satisfied with his or her partner.

Additionally, Guererro and colleagues (2009) identified that constructive communication leads to greater relationship satisfaction than destructive communication. Constructive communication is a partner's ability to communicate in a positive, confident, clear, and supportive manner in his or her relationship. Constructive communication has been shown to increase an individual's self esteem and level of personal investment in the relationship (Guererro et al., 2009). When individuals in a relationship use communication as a constructive tool in their relationship, expressing their emotions in assertive but supportive way, they report more satisfaction and investment in their partner (Guererro at al., 2009; Sprecher et al., 1995). People also report that when they feel their partners share a sense of involvement and understanding, there is more satisfaction within the intimate relationship (Conley et al., 2009). When individuals feel that their efforts are acknowledged and valued by their partner, they will report more satisfaction with their relationships (Sciangula & Morry, 2009).

On the other hand, destructive communication is when a person presents as dismissive to her or his partner's needs, and uses negative and angry interactions to

identify their frustrations (Guererro et al., 2009). For example, when an individual

conveys her or his feelings only in an angry manner, or shuts down when his or her

partner tries to explain her or his needs or concerns, partners report feeling less

satisfaction with the relationship (Conley et al., 2009). This can lead to problems in

conflict resolution and consequently increase relationship dissatisfaction (Egeci &

Gencoz, 2006).

Furthermore, communicating anger is another influence on relationship

satisfaction. Researchers have noted that conflict is inevitable in romantic relationships

(Egeci & Gencoz, 2006). Learning how to express or perceive anger can date back to

when individuals witnessed, or were involved, in arguments within their family of origin

(Feeney, 2006). For example, children may have learned to perceive anger and conflict in

future relationships to be either detrimental to a relationship, or as a chance to develop a

relationship even more, depending on how they were taught conflict management within

their family of origin (Pistole & Arricale, 2003) Individuals who are more constructive in

their approach to expressing anger, meaning they stay calm when discussing frustrating

events or experiences, tend to have higher relationship satisfaction (Guererro et al.,

2009).

Individuals, on the other hand, who have more destructive ways of

communicating anger, such as yelling, criticism, or violence, tend to report lower levels

of relationship satisfaction (Guererro et al., 2009). Criticism, which can be used both

constructively and destructively, is typically used to express some form of dissatisfaction

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in an intimate relationship, and is presented to expose a need for change (Levine et al.,

2006). When an individual feels such requests were acknowledged, partners feel their

relationship is more satisfying (Mitnick, Heyman, Malik, Slep, 2009). Criticizing one's

partner can be harmful when communication is emotionally charged and helpful when a

partner discloses in a non-attacking manner (Levine et al., 2006). Other than criticism,

there are other ways of communicating within a relationship as well, which leads to

higher levels of relationship satisfaction.

Disclosure is another communication influence on one's satisfaction in his or her

relationship (Finkenauer et al., 2004). Disclosure is when individuals express how they

are feeling, or what they are thinking in an honest but engaging way, such as

communicating how one's day was, as well as being able to speak with one's partner

about expectations that are or are not currently being fulfilled (Finkenauer et al., 2004).

Relationships that have mutual self-disclosure, meaning each partner is open and honest

with each other, report greater satisfaction as well as higher levels of love and

commitment (Levine et al., 2006; MacNeil & Byers, 2009).   On the other hand,

individuals who are more apprehensive about disclosure, tend to avoid communication

with their partners, specifically communication about feelings, resulting in lower levels

of relationship satisfaction (Levine et al., 2006). Depending on how partners

communicate, communication can be a sole function that can build or destroy a

relationship (Egeci & Gencoz, 2006). Another important influence on relationship

satisfaction is how an individual perceives his or her partner to be satisfied or dissatisfied with the relationship.

Relationship satisfaction and perceived regard. Perceived regard can be defined as an individual believing others view and evaluate them positively (Sciangula & Morry, 2009). Individuals report more satisfaction in their relationships when they perceive their partner evaluates them more positively than they would themselves (Conley et al., 2009; Sciangula & Morry, 2009). In other words, when an individual perceives their partner to love and care about them, they are more likely to report greater relationship satisfaction (Forward, Sansom-Livolst, & McGovern, 2008; Sciangula & Morry, 2009). On the other hand, partners who report being dissatisfied in their relationship are more likely to perceive and distort messages their partner expresses as more negative and destructive (Noller & Feeney, 1994). For example, if a dissatisfied individual perceives their partner loving or caring about them, they are more likely to perceive conversations within with their partner as intentionally destructive (Forward et al., 2008). These perceptions can impact the behaviors displayed throughout a relationship.

Relationship satisfaction and behaviors. In an intimate relationship, how one reacts to events or experiences can influence his or her relationship satisfaction (Linville et al., 2010). Individuals who spend more time together and have more positive interactions with their partner report higher levels of relationship satisfaction (Sprecher et al., 2001). These positive interactions can be defined as interactions in which partners are

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both engaged and present as cooperative and invested in the relationship when expressing

their concerns or emotions (Cramer, 2000; Sprecher et al., 2001).

Emotional expression and conflict management are some of the behaviors that

have been studied and linked to relationship satisfaction (Cramer, 2004; Feeney, 2006;

Sprecher et al., 2001). Cramer (2000) found that for most relationships, it is not the

reason for the conflict, but the way in which the conflict is managed that is associated

with relationship satisfaction. For example, an individual who constructively reacts to

emotions such as anger or shame reports having higher levels of relationship satisfaction

(Guererro et al., 2009; Van Dourn, Branje, Hox, & Mecus, 2009). When partners report

having severe problems in their relationship, improving those problems in a constructive

manner, such as using criticism constructively and having positive conflict management

skills, has been associated with more relationship satisfaction (McNulty & Russell,

2010).

Conflict, as well as conflict management, within a relationship can also produce

negative behaviors (Feeney, 2006). Negative conflict management involves one or both

partners becoming verbally or physically aggressive, or either partner avoiding emotional

exploration and expression (Feeney, 2006). For example, partners who have feelings of

jealousy may express such emotions aggressively and exhibit increased anger and

withdrawal towards their partner (Horne & Biss, 2009). Additionally, partners may avoid

having conversations with each other in an attempt to forget the problem, or a partner

might shut down when the other partner attempts to engage in a conversation about the

conflict at hand. Partners who exhibit negative conflict management have been found to have lower relationship satisfaction (Bippus, Boren, & Worsham, 2008; Cramer, 2000; McNulty & Russell, 2010; Van Doorn et al., 2009). How one behaves in his or her relationship can be an influential factor in the way he or she communicates with his or her partner, as well as how one's partner perceives his or her love and commitment to the relationship. These factors also are important when evaluating one's own feelings of self worth, in turn influencing one's self-esteem.

     Relationship satisfaction and self esteem. Self esteem is yet another component which has been found to influence relationship satisfaction (Egeci & Gencoz, 2006; Guererro et al., 2009; Hinnen, Hagedoorn, Ranchor, & Sanderman, 2008; Sciangula & Morry, 2009). Self esteem is important because it is a source of confidence for each partner. In most relationships, this sense of confidence comes out when working through problems in their relationship, as well as when assessing the perception of a partner's commitment to the relationship (Egeci & Gencoz, 2006; Sciangula & Morry, 2009). Confidence is important in a relationship because when an individual is confident, he or she will spend less time focusing on his or her own insecurities, thus leaving more time for the individual to focus on growing and developing his or her current partnership. Egeci and Gencoz (2006) found that individuals who had higher levels of self esteem and were more confident in their relationships reported believing their partner was equally committed to the relationship, thus reporting higher levels of relationship satisfaction (Guererro et al., 2009; Sciangula & Morry, 2009). When individuals report feeling

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confident in their problem solving skills and being able to effectively manage conflict

within their relationships, individuals reported having higher levels of relationship

satisfaction (Egeci & Gencoz, 2006).

On the other hand, some individuals also report low levels of self esteem, even

when with a partner. Some individuals who identified having lower levels of self esteem

expressed low levels of confidence in their relationship and were more reluctant to

express their emotions or thoughts during conflict with their partner (Hinnen et al., 2008).

In addition, Sciangula and Morry (2009) found that individuals with lower levels of self

esteem reported perceiving their partners as less committed and expressed more feelings

of doubt and rejection in their relationship (Guererro et al., 2009). Furthermore, these

individuals with low self esteem expressed lower levels of relationship satisfaction

(Sciangula & Morry, 2009). The findings in these studies express how influential self

esteem is on an individual's perceptions of their partner's feelings, and relationship

satisfaction (Sciangula & Morry, 2009). Additionally, other factors are also influential

towards whether partners feel satisfied with each other.

Multicultural Variables in Relationship Satisfaction

Culture is also influential to relationship satisfaction. The cultural context is

defined as individuals' beliefs and values which are supported by their family, social

system, or another group in which an individual identifies (Busby, Holman, & Taniguchi,

2001). Culture additionally includes varying races, ethnicities, values, traditions,

communication patterns, as well as other unique aspects included in one's family or

origin, and all these factors can influence how partners assess their relationship

satisfaction (Busby et al., 2001).

Individuals who come from different cultures may have different views on what is

satisfying within a relationship (Busby et al., 2001). For example, one partner may come

from a collectivistic family of origin that values being connected and engaged in each

other's lives, while the other partner comes from an individualistic family which values

independence (Busby et al., 2001). If the partner from the individualistic background

wants to show he or she is committed and happy in a relationship, he or she may express

such satisfaction in a manner which may be perceived differently to his or her partner

from a collectivist background. In fact, his or her partner may feel overwhelmed or

unsure of how to recognize such expressions if these types of experiences were not

shared in one's family of origin. Therefore, each partner may experience relationship

satisfaction due to the differences in their values (Busby et al., 2001).

Relationship satisfaction and race/ethnicity. Other cultural differences can be

seen in partnerships where each partner is a different race or ethnicity. Interethnic couples

also face difficulties within their relationships (Hohmann-Marriot & Amato, 2008).

Interethnic couples are defined as a couple in which each member is from a different

ethnic background. Hohmann-Marriott and Amato (2008) found that many interethnic

couples have lower relationship satisfaction because of the varying, and at times

conflictual, backgrounds from their family of origin. Specifically, it was found that

interethnic couples where the members of the couple identify as Black and White,

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respectively, may face more challenges than couples where the members identify as Hispanic and White couples (Hohmann-Marriott & Amato, 2008). These challenges were related to more Black and White individuals having more complex and different family histories, a lack of shared values between each culture, and a lack of familial and social support, potentially due to reasoning associated with value differences (Hohmann-Marriott & Amato, 2008). These societal and cultural challenges impact relationship satisfaction because the partners may work so hard to find a common ground between their families and each other, leaving less time to focus on the building of their relationship (Hohmann-Marriott & Amato, 2008). Other aspects of culture can be influential on relationship satisfaction as well. One's sexual orientation, specifically, has been studied in association with relationship satisfaction.

Relationship satisfaction and sexual orientation. Like heterosexual couples, individuals who identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual (GLB) have varying experiences of relationship satisfaction (Conley et al., 2009). Even so, individuals who identify as GLB experience discrimination and prejudices, not experienced by many heterosexual couples, which further impacts their relationships. For example, the level of outness of each of the members of a couple affects overall relationship satisfaction. Consequently, partners who differ on how they choose to express their sexual orientation report lower levels of relationship satisfaction due to various factors, specifically due to a lack of support (Conley et al., 2009). For example, same-gendered partners who believed their partner presented with a different level of outness may express more fear of rejection and doubt,

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thus reporting lower levels of relationship satisfaction (Horne & Biss, 2009). Individuals who fear the stigmatization, and are less likely to be open about their sexual orientation for fear of being labeled, may perceive lower levels of support from their partner and subsequently lower levels of relationship satisfaction as opposed to those who report being more comfortable with their sexual orientation (Henderson, Lahavot, & Simoni, 2009).

On the other hand, individuals who experience the same level of outness reported no differences in their relationship satisfaction when compared to heterosexual couples (Conley et al., 2009). Not surprisingly, individuals who identified as GLB reported the same feelings as heterosexual couples regarding communication, perceived regard, and self esteem (Conley et al., 2009). Similarly, individuals especially expressed relationship satisfaction when they felt that their partner loved and supported them, maybe even more than they love and support themselves (Conley et al., 2009). Same-sex couples, who were satisfied with their relationship, also reported feeling supported by their partners and less worry about outside stigmatization (Henderson et al., 2009). This suggests that when partners share the same ideas regarding expressing their sexual orientation, they also report high levels of relationship satisfaction (Conley et al., 2009). Overall, sexual orientation is important in determining ones relationship satisfaction, especially regarding perceived support and expressing one's sexual orientation. Another final factor that can influence one's satisfaction in his or her relationship is gender roles and gender differences.

Relationship satisfaction and gender. One's gender is yet another factor that can influence how one feels satisfied within his or her relationship. Men and women in relationships, both in heterosexual and same-sex relationships, differ in the values they seek and desire in a relationship (Rochlen & Mahalik, 2004; Sprecher et al., 1995). Sprecher and colleagues (1995) found that women, for example, have a higher relationship satisfaction when they experience companionship. In other words, women tend to value being with their partner and spending quality time together.

Emotional expression was also related to relationship satisfaction for women (Rochlen & Mahalik, 2004). Women who felt they could express their emotions with their partner reported feeling more satisfied with their relationship. In other words, when women perceived their partners as respectful, willing to listen, and acknowledging of their emotions and concerns, they experienced higher levels of relationship satisfaction (Mitnick et al., 2009; Noller & Feeney, 1994). On the other hand, women who were in a heterosexual relationship and reported their partner did not feel comfortable with emotional expression, reported lower levels of relationship satisfaction (Rochlen & Malik, 2004). Researchers also found that women who did not believe their partner to be supportive of emotional expression or companionship concluded that their male counterparts were not as satisfied with the relationship, which resulted in these women feeling more depressed and rejected (Whitton & Whisman, 2010). Whitton and Whisman (2010) had many different explanations as to why men may not show such qualities women may seek in a relationship. Rochlen and Malik (2004) reported such differences

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in relationship values to be correlated with men being taught to be powerful, assertive, and emotion-free, and women being taught to be sensitive, compassionate, and supportive. There are other differences as well between women and men gender roles and their influence on relationship satisfaction.

Men, however, have been found to identify physical intimacy as a source of relationship satisfaction (MacNeil & Byers, 2009). Men have reported that when they have a strong physical intimacy with their partner, they are more likely to report higher levels of relationship satisfaction (MacNeil & Byers, 2009). It was also found that men who were comfortable expressing their desires with their partner were more likely to increase their intimacy satisfaction. Additionally, when intimacy levels were satisfactory, men also reported wanting to spend more quality time with their partner, which increased overall relationship satisfaction (MacNeil & Byers, 2009).

Men also report being taught certain masculine gender roles throughout their lives by their family of origins, as well as others in society (Rochlen & Mahalik, 2004). These masculine roles, which are emphasized within relationships and aligned with success, are power and competition (Rochlen & Mahalik, 2004). These gender roles, which are socially constructed, impact what a partner provides and expects within a relationship (Rochlen & Mahalik, 2004). Men who believed they had such characteristics reported being more satisfied with their life and their relationships (Rochlen, McKelley, Suizzo, & Scaringi, 2008). Women, on the other hand, report being taught different values throughout their lives, such as learning to be compassionate and sensitive

(Rochlen & Mahalik, 2004). Therefore, it was found that most women value companionship and quality time with their partner relationships. Men, alternatively, value physical intimacy, success, and feelings of masculinity as key to their relationship satisfaction. Many researchers reported that when both individuals in a relationship, both same-sex and heterosexual couples, believe they are receiving the expectations they wanted in their relationship, they are more satisfied (Byers, 2005; MacNeil & Byers, 2009; Rochlen & Mahalik, 2004).

Relationship satisfaction is again important for individuals to feel happy, confident, and invested in their relationship. Though different cultures or genders may identify relationship satisfaction differently, individuals who have a satisfactory relationship also have more life satisfaction. This satisfaction is yet another component that is important when looking at how communication and self esteem are influential factors in someone's life.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between self esteem and relationship satisfaction?

H1: Self esteem will be positively correlated to relationship satisfaction.

Research Question 2: How are family communication patterns, self esteem, and relationship satisfaction interrelated?

H2: Family communication patterns will be associated with levels of self esteem.

H2a: Individuals who report being reared in a conversation-oriented family will report higher levels of self esteem.

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H2b: Individuals who report being reared in a conformity-oriented family will report lower levels of self esteem.

H3: Family communication patterns will be associated with levels of relationship satisfaction

H3a: Individuals who report being reared in a conversation-oriented family will report more relationship satisfaction.

H3b: Individuals who report being reared in a conformity-oriented family will report less relationship satisfaction.

H4: Different family communication patterns will be reported based on race and ethnicity.

H4a: Individuals who identify with a minority culture, such as African American or Hispanic, will be more likely to report coming from a conformity-oriented family.

H4b: Individuals who identify as White will be more likely to report coming from a conversation-oriented family.

Research Question 3: How do family communication patterns correlate to self esteem and relationship satisfaction?

H5: Self esteem will moderate the relationship between family communication patterns and relationship satisfaction.

H5a: High levels of self esteem will result in high relationship satisfaction, regardless of one's family communication patterns.

H5b: Low levels of self esteem will result in low relationship satisfaction, and will be dependent on family communication patterns.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Participants in this study were students from a public university located in the Southwest. Student participants were enrolled in an Introduction to Psychology or a Developmental Psychology course. All students who participated in this study were 18 years of age or older. In addition, to prevent any kind of exclusions in this study, men and women of all ages, races, and ethnicities were eligible to participate. For the purpose of this study, participants were asked about their current romantic relationship satisfaction. This factor excluded some participants from data analysis due to some students who had never been involved in a romantic relationship, or individuals who were not currently in a romantic relationship. Additionally, this study focused on examining the aforementioned variables on women. Therefore, only the scores of the women were used in data analysis.

A total of 283 individuals participated in this study. Due to the need to exclude men and missing data, only 263 participants' data was used for this study's analysis. All other cases were deleted from the record. The mean age of participants was 20.85 years old ($SD = 5.43$) and a range of 18-53 years. Other frequency distributions were conducted and can be found in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Relationship Status, Year in School, Income, Ethnicity, and Sexual Orientation

		Frequency	Percent
Relationship Status			
	Divorced	4	1.5
	Prefer No Response	110	41.8
	Living With Partner	66	25.1
	Married	27	10.3
	Separated	6	2.3
	Single	45	17.1
	Other	5	1.9
Total		263	100.0
Year in School			
	First Year	155	58.9
	Sophomore	66	25.1
	Junior	27	10.3
	Senior	7	2.7
	Other	8	3.0
Total		263	100.0
Income			
	$0-$20,000	90	34.2
	$20,001-$40,000	53	20.2
	$40,001-$60,000	48	18.3
	$60,001-$80,000	32	12.2
	$80.001-$100,00	19	7.2
	Over $100,000	20	7.6
Total		262	99.6

(cont'd)

(cont'd)

	Frequency	Percent
Ethnicity		
African American	78	29.7
American Indian	3	1.1
Asian/Pacific Islander	25	9.5
Hispanic	69	26.2
White	82	31.2
Other	6	2.3
Total	263	100.0
Sexual Orientation		
Bisexual	9	1.9
Gay/Lesbian	11	4.2
Heterosexual	241	91.6
Other	2	.8
Total	263	100.0

Note: Data not adding up to a total of 100 are reflective of missing data.

Instrumentation

The study participants completed four psychometric measures in the following order: (a) a Demographic Questionnaire, (b) a family communication patterns scale, the Revised Family Communication Patterns scale (RFCP; Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990), (c) a self esteem scale, the Rosenberg Self Esteem scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965), and (d) a relationship satisfaction measure, a sub-scale of the Perceived Relationship Quality Components Inventory (PRQC; Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas, 2000).

Demographic Questionnaire

The Demographic Questionnaire (Appendix A) was created specifically for this study by the primary investigator. This questionnaire is composed of 9 questions, specifically asking about the participants' age, gender, sexual orientation, relationship status, ethnic background, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation.

Revised Family Communication Patterns Instrument

The Revised Family Communication Patterns instrument (RFCP; Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 2000) is a 26-item scale that measures participants' beliefs and experiences they hold about their parents' communication styles (Appendix B). Participants were asked to answer questions on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Participants were scored based off a median split of the scale, the top half as conversation orientation (i.e., how open they perceive communication with their parents) and the bottom half as conformity orientation (i.e., how much participants believe communication with their parents as neither equal nor open). Scores can range from 30 (low conformity orientation) to 130 (high conversation orientation). The conversation orientation questions in the scale were 15 items associated with an individual's perception of his or her parents feeling comfortable with any and all conversations such as "My parents often ask my opinion when the family is talking about something" and "My parents encourage me to express my feelings." The conformity orientation questions were 11 items measuring how an individual perceives her or his

parents to be either accepting or rejecting of certain conversations such as "My parents

often say, 'There are some things that just shouldn't be talked about'" and "My parents

sometimes become irritated with my views if they are different from theirs." Participants'

scores were identified by implementing a median split to identify the segregation between

conversation and conformity oriented families. For this study, the median score was set at

82, so conformity oriented participants were identified as individuals who had scores of

26 to 82. Conversation oriented participants had scores of 82 to 130. Participants were

asked to answer questions based off past and current experiences with their parents. In

previous research, the RFCP has shown internal consistency and test-retest reliability

with a Cronbach's alpha score ranging from .73 to 1.00 (Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990,

2000). Ritchie and Fitzpatrick (2000) identified that this scale has been found to be a

good scale to use if a researcher is looking for flexibility within the item wordings. The

current study also had good internal consistency and reliability with a Cronbach's alpha

score of .80 (See Results; Table 2).

Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale

The Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965) is a 10-item measure

widely used to assess an individual's level of self esteem (Appendix C). The scale is

comprised of five positive questions and five negative questions. Items vary with

wording from "At times, I feel I am no good at all" to "On the whole, I am satisfied with

myself." Items are scored with a dichotomous scoring system, meaning scores are entered

into a formula that makes a possible scoring range of 10 (low self-esteem) to 40

(extremely high self esteem) (Davis, Kellett, & Beail, 2009; Sinclair et al., 2010). In other research, the RSES has shown good internal consistency and reliability with a Cronbach's alpha score ranging from .84 to .95 (Sinclair et al., 2010). The current study also had good internal consistency and reliability with a Cronbach's alpha score of .89 (See Results; Table 2).

Perceived Relationship Quality Components Inventory

Participants' relationship satisfaction was measured using the relationship satisfaction sub-scale of the Perceived Relationship Quality Components Inventory (PRQC; Fletcher et al., 2000). The full scale measures six constructs, such as relationship satisfaction, commitment, intimacy, trust, passion, and love. For the purposes of this study, however, the relationship satisfaction sub-scale was the only scale used. This sub-scale is composed of three items (e.g., "How satisfied are you with your relationship?") (Appendix D). Participants answered items using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (extremely) to identify their feelings or experiences in relation to their current intimate partner. Total scores for the measure can range from 3 (very low relationship satisfaction) to 21 (extremely high relationship satisfaction). Fletcher and colleagues (2000) identified that a shortened version of the PRQC is an accurate assessment of relationship satisfaction when utilizing a sub-scale for self-reporting one's evaluation of his or her relationship. Reliability coefficients for all sub-scales in the PRQC range from .80 to .96, with the relationship satisfaction sub scale ranging from .73

to .95 (Fletcher et al., 2000). The current study also had good internal consistency and reliability with a Cronbach's alpha score of .96 (See Results; Table 2).

Procedure

Participants in this study were recruited from Introduction to Psychology and Developmental Psychology classes. Once IRB approval was obtained, the primary researcher contacted the Director of Undergraduate Psychology to obtain permission for this study to be a part of the research class requirement needed. This study was created on the Psychdata website so students were able to easily access and participate in this study. All individuals who decided to participate in this study had access to the study online, were able to read the directions and an informed consent for the study, electronically signing to identify they accepted the risks (Appendix F), and filled out all necessary scales. Other students who did not wish to participate in this study had alternate choices to gain research credit for their classes, such as participating in other research studies or analyzing research articles. As part of the informed consent, all participants were ensured that all information they disclosed would be kept anonymous and confidential. All information was kept confidential via keeping information on a separate thumb drive stored in a locked drawer. Participants finished this study in approximately 20-30 minutes. The instruments were listed in the order as noted in the instrumentation section. Once all the scales were completed, participants were provided the email address of the primary investigator to have the ability to obtain any results found at the conclusion of this study, if interested. All participants were redirected to a different survey which they

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completed in order to gain class research credit. This information still kept participants'
information provided in the study anonymous, but also gave the primary investigator the
ability to give each participant's professor information on who completed, or did not
complete, the study. Finally, all participants were given a list of local mental health
providers in the event of becoming emotionally distressed when participating in this
study.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Statistical Analyses

Preliminary and Descriptive Analysis

Prior to conducting data analyses, this study's dataset was examined for missing
and exclusionary data. Participants who completed less than 85% of the items on the
scale were removed from data analyses. Those who completed at least 85% were given
mean substitution scores for any missing items. Data was substituted if the majority of
the items were completed in order to avoid losing too many participants. Because there
are no specific guidelines available on how to handle missing data, data was screened to
ensure normality of distributions (i.e., skewness and kurtosis). Correlation matrixes were
also used to screen for strength of the relationship between variables.

Preliminary analyses were completed in order to accurately examine the data of
this study (see Tables 1 and 2). Additionally, data obtained from male participants and

individuals who were not currently in a relationship were excluded from this study's data

analysis due to the study's primary focus on women. Results indicated that various

quantitative demographic variables were approximately symmetric (ethnicity,

relationship status) and right-skewed (classification, SES, sexual orientation, age). This

suggests that some variables could be described using means and standard deviations,

while others would be more accurately described by using median and inter-quartile

range values. Given the sample size of this study, it is assumed that the population from

which the data came was skewed.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics and Internal Consistency Reliabilities for Scales and Subscales

Measure	Scale Range		M	*SD*	α
	Minimum	Maximum			
RFCP	38.00	116.00	81.15	13.99	.80
RSES	11.00	30.00	22.98	2.612	.89
PQRC	3.00	21.00	16.52	4.76	.96

Note: RFCP = Revised Family Communication Patterns Instrument; RSES = Rosenberg
Self Esteem Scale; PQRC = Perceived Relationship Quality Component Inventory
Relationship Satisfaction subscale.

As previously addressed, the RFCP, RSES, and PQRC subscale were investigated

for internal consistencies (See Results; Table 2). Coefficient alphas for the RFCP, the

RSES, and the PQRC subscale ranged from .80 (RFCP) to .96 (PQRC subscale),

indicating high reliability and fairly good integrity. Due to the reliability being high in

each scale, no items were eliminated.

Descriptive Analysis

Scale ranges, means, standard deviations, and internal consistencies are shown in

Table 2. In addition, correlations were computed to assess relationships between

measures (See Results; Table 3). For categorical demographic variables, frequencies and

percentages were calculated (See Results; Table 1).

Table 3

Intercorrelations between Measures

	RFCP	RSES	PQRC
RFCP	--	.008	.041
RSES		--	.120*
PQRC			--

Note:. RFCP = Revised Family Communication Patterns Instrument; RSES = Rosenberg
Self Esteem Scale; PQRC = Perceived Relationship Quality Component Inventory
Relationship Satisfaction subscale *$p < .05$, one-tailed.

Analysis of Hypotheses

The five hypotheses that were examined within this study looked at the relationship

between family communication patterns, self esteem, and body dissatisfaction.

Additionally, relationships between participants' demographics and the dependent

variables were examined to see if they needed to be examined as co-variables for the

study.

Hypothesis 1. The first hypothesis examined the relationship between self esteem

and relationship satisfaction. It was hypothesized that there would be a significant

positive correlation between an individual's levels of self esteem and relationship

satisfaction. A Pearson Product Moment correlation was calculated examining the

relationship between participants' self esteem (RSES) and relationship satisfaction

(PQRC sub-scale) and a weak positive correlation was found (r (261) = .120, p = .03),

indicating a significant linear relationship between relationship satisfaction and self

esteem and supporting Hypothesis 1 (See Results; Table 3).

Hypothesis 2. Hypothesis two examined the correlation between family

communication patterns and self esteem. It was hypothesized that individuals who

reported being reared in a conversation-oriented family would report higher levels of self

esteem. While individuals who reported being reared in a conformity oriented family

would report lower levels of self esteem. The relationship was identified by scoring the

Revised Family Communication Patterns instrument (RFCP) to place participants into

either a conversation-oriented or conformity-oriented family background, and the

Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSES) by running a one-way ANOVA (Ritchie &

Fitzpatrick, 2000; Rosenberg, 1965). No significant difference was found (F(1,261) =

.506, p = .48) meaning that participants of different family communication patterns did

not differ significantly in levels of self esteem (See Results; Table 4). Participants who

reported being conversation oriented had a mean score of 23.09 (SD = 2.514).

Participants who reported being conformity oriented had a mean score of 22.86 (SD =

2.717).

Table 4

Summary of One-Way ANOVA of Self Esteem and Family Communication Patterns

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Conformity Oriented	3.461	1	3.461	.506
Conversation Oriented	1784.402	261	6.837	
Total	1787.863	262		

*Note: *p < 0.05*

Hypothesis 3. Hypothesis three examined how family communication patterns were associated with relationship satisfaction levels. More specifically, it was hypothesized that individuals who reported being in a conversation-oriented family would report more relationship satisfaction and individuals who reported coming from a conformity-oriented family would report less relationship satisfaction. This relationship was also identified by scoring the RFCP and the relationship satisfaction sub-scale of the Perceived Relationship Quality Components inventory (PRQC; Fletcher et al., 2000). A one-way ANOVA was also used and found no significant differences between family communication patterns and relationship satisfaction ($F(1,261) = .005$, $p = .94$) (See Results; Table 5). Participants who reported being conversation oriented had a mean score of 16.5 ($SD = 4.68$). Participants who reported being conformity oriented had a mean score of 16.55 ($SD = 4.85$).

Table 5

Summary of One-Way ANOVA of Relationship Satisfaction and Family Communication Patterns

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Conformity Oriented	.122	1	.122	.005
Conversation Oriented	5923.467	261	22.695	
Total	5923.589	262		

*Note: *p < 0.05*

Hypothesis 4. The fourth hypothesis examined the relationship between family

communication patterns and race and ethnicity. Researchers believed that individuals

who identified with a minority culture, such as African American or Hispanic, would be

more likely to report coming from a conformity oriented family. Additionally, individuals

who identified as White would be more likely to report coming from a conversation

oriented family. This was measured by identifying various race and ethnicities via the

demographic questionnaire, and scoring the RFCP. The researcher used a chi-square test

of independence to compare ethnicities and family communication patterns (See Results;

Table 6). No significant relationship was found (χ^2 (6) = 2.496, p = .87). Therefore,

ethnicities appear to be independent when compared to family communication patterns.

Table 6

Crosstabulation of Family Communication Patterns and Ethnicity

	Communication Patterns			
Ethnicity	Conformity	Conversation	χ^2	p
African American	36	42	2.496	.869
	(38)	(40)		
American Indian	2	1		
	(1.5)	(1.5)		
Asian or Pacific	11	14		
Islander	(12.2)	(12.8)		
Hispanic/Latino(a)	36	33		
	(33.6)	(35.4)		
White	39	43		
	(39.9)	(42.1)		
Other	3	2		
	(2.4)	(2.6)		

Note: p > .05 Adjusted standardized residuals appear in parentheses below group
frequencies

Hypothesis 5. The final hypothesis examined the association of self esteem and family communication patterns on relationship satisfaction. It was hypothesized that self-esteem would moderate the effect of communication styles with one's family on overall relationship satisfaction. More specifically, it was believed that individuals who reported high self-esteem would also report high relationship satisfaction, regardless of one's family communication pattern, and individuals who reported low levels of self esteem would also report low relationship satisfaction, and this result would be more dependent on family communication patterns (Baron & Kenny, 1986). This was tested by conducting a 2 x 2 Factorial ANOVA.

The main effect for self-esteem was significant ($F(1, 259) = 5.56$, $p = .02$, $\eta^2 = .02$). The main effect for family communication patterns was not significant ($F(1, 259) = .11$, $p = .74$, $\eta^2 = .00$). Finally, the interaction effect was also not significant ($F(1,259) = .66$, $p = .41$, $\eta^2 = .003$). Therefore, hypothesis five was not supported and self-esteem is not a significant moderator for family communication patterns on overall relationship satisfaction.

<center>**Summary**</center>

The following is a summary of the results found in this study. A more detailed summary of findings will be addressed further in the chapter.

Hypothesis 1

The results concluded that Hypothesis 1 was supported, indication that levels of self esteem are positively correlated with relationship satisfaction. Thus, it can be

concluded that an individual with high levels of self esteem is more likely to report high relationship satisfaction, and someone with low levels of self esteem is more likely to report low relationship satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 was not supported in this study, meaning there is not a significant difference between communication patterns and self esteem. Thus, individuals who come from a conversation-oriented family are not more or less likely to have high or low levels of self esteem than individuals who report coming from a conformity-oriented family. Results indicate that these two variables are independent of one another.

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 was also not confirmed. Based on the research of this study, there seems to be no significant relationship between family communication patterns and relationship satisfaction. Therefore, individuals who identify as conversation-oriented have an equal chance of having high or low relationship satisfaction with their partner, as do individuals from a conformity-oriented communication style.

Hypothesis 4

Next, Hypothesis 4 was examined and not confirmed. The researcher found that ethnicity and family communication patterns are independent of one another, meaning that individuals of different ethnicities did not demonstrate specific family communication patterns.

Hypothesis 5

Finally, Hypothesis 5 was also examined and not confirmed. A main effect was found between self esteem and relationship satisfaction. This finding corresponds to the findings discovered in Hypothesis 1. No main effects were found for family communication patterns, or the interaction of communication patterns and self esteem, and relationship satisfaction.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The discussion on this study's results will be included in this chapter. Preliminary research and analyses will first be reviewed. Then, hypotheses will be further examined as well as a discussion of the results. Third, a discussion of this study's strengths, limitations, ideas for future research, and implications will be provided.

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact family communication patterns on individuals' self esteem and relationship satisfaction. It was believed that individuals reared in a conformity-oriented family would report lower levels of self esteem, and those reared in conversation-oriented homes would report higher levels of

self esteem. In addition, it was hypothesized that individuals reared in a conformity-oriented family would report low relationship satisfaction, and individuals reared in a conversation-oriented family would report higher relationship satisfaction. Moreover, individuals, who identified with a minority race or ethnicity, such as Hispanic or African American would be more likely to identify being reared in a conformity-oriented home and those who identified as White would report being reared in a conversation-oriented family. Finally, it was believed that self esteem would moderate the relationship between family communication patterns and relationship satisfaction. More specifically, individuals who reported having high levels of self esteem will be more likely to also report high relationship satisfaction, and these results would be the same when compared to the

interaction of self esteem levels and family communication patterns and these interactions effects on relationship satisfaction.

Summary of Findings

To observe the relationship between family communication patterns, self esteem, and relationship satisfaction, preliminary analyses were performed.

Hypothesis 1

Results for the first hypothesis indicated that women showed a significant positive correlation between self esteem and relationship satisfaction, meaning high self esteemed women were more likely to report high relationship satisfaction, and low self esteemed women were more likely to report low relationship satisfaction. This finding is consistent

with prior research (Egeci & Gencoz, 2006; Guererro et al., 2009; Hinnen et al., 2008; Leary, 2002; Rill et al., 2009; Sciangula & Morry, 2009), thus providing further support for the relationship between self esteem and relationship satisfaction. Therefore, based on the findings in this research and previous literature, women who feel accepted and confident within themselves are more likely to feel satisfied with their relationship. This is an important finding to support previous literature because it adds to the research about social acceptance and partnership compatibility (Egeci & Gencoz, 2006; Leary, 2002; Sciangula & Morry, 2009). By understanding that there is a link between self esteem and relationship satisfaction, clinicians as well as individuals can use such information to help develop treatment plans, coping skills, and work to increase individual self esteem to increase relationship satisfaction in both a couple and individual therapy setting.

Hypothesis 2

With the supported hypothesis came other hypotheses that were not directly supported in this study, one being that family communication patterns did not show significant differences when compared to self esteem. It was found that women who reported either being conversation- or conformity-oriented also reported high and low levels of self esteem equally between communication patterns. Previous research has shown more evidence that communication patterns within a home can be more impacting on self esteem. More specifically, individuals who are reared in families that value open communication report feeling more socially accepted and higher levels of self esteem,

and individuals who report coming from families that do not value communication tend to have a harder time feeling accepted, leading to feelings of insecurity and low self esteem (Hsu, 1998; Huang, 1999; Keaten & Kelly, 2008; Rhee et al., 2003; Young, 2009). It is speculated that because previous research focused on both men and women, when taking one gender out of analysis, differences in communication patterns and self esteem are not supported. This may be due to differences in gender roles between males and females, this changing how communication may impact one gender more than another. It is also speculated that previous research samples were different from this study's sample, and results were different because either sample may have not been truly representative of the population at large.

Hypothesis 3

Additionally, no significant differences were found between family communication patterns and relationship satisfaction. Based on the findings of this study, women who reported coming from either a conversation- or conformity-oriented communication pattern also had a equal chance of having high or low relationship satisfaction with their intimate partner. Previous research states that communication in a relationship has an impact on the satisfaction of each partner (Egeci & Gencoz, 2006). More specifically, individuals who report being satisfied with communication in their relationship also report higher relationship satisfaction (Anderson & Emmers-Sommer, 2006; Byers, 2005). However, no specific research was found regarding conversation versus conformity family communication patterns in relationship satisfaction. Given the

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findings of this study, this type of communication pattern may not be influential on relationship satisfaction. More importantly, it may be more important for partners to match in communication patterns they prefer in order to have relationship satisfaction, which is something that would be beneficial to explore in future research (Anderson & Emmers-Sommer, 2006; Guererro et al., 2009).

Hypothesis 4

It was also found that participants' ethnicity was not related to their family communication patterns. Individuals who reported being different ethnicities did not show significant differences in the communication patterns with which they were reared. This was slightly incongruent with previous research, which stated that individuals from ethnicities such as African American are seen to present more behaviors associated with conformity oriented communication patterns, and Whites are more linked to conversation oriented communication patterns (Allen & Chaffee, 1977; Socha & Diggs, 1999). Because previous findings are dated, this might be reason why findings in this study differ from prior literature. Meaning, socialization processes may be different today than they were a few decades ago, and parents may be more willing to speak with their children about topics which may have been deemed unacceptable in the past. Given that it may be easier today to feel more accepted in society, regardless of one's race/ethnicity, families may be more apt to share the same openness and acceptance in the home through communication. Also, the sample for this study, participants' race may not have mattered regarding communication due to other variable outweighing this demographic. Finally,

given the demographics of this samples in previous research, it is speculated that this could also be a contributing factor to differences in the results (Allen & Chaffee, 1977; Socha & Diggs, 1999).

Hypothesis 5

Finally, it was found that family communication patterns do not have an effect on self esteem or relationship satisfaction overall. Thus, since there is not a significant effect, self esteem does not moderate the relationship between family communication and relationship satisfaction. The main effect that was found, however, was that self esteem had an effect on relationship satisfaction, which was covered in the first hypothesis. Previous research suggests that self-esteem and communication are variables that correlate with relationship stability and satisfaction (Larson, Anderson, Holman, & Neimann, 1998). However, no known research has been previously identified self esteem being a moderating variable for relationship satisfaction and family communication patterns. Therefore, it is believed that further research could help to gain knowledge on this area of study.

Strengths, Limitations, and Directions for Future Research

This study had a few strengths and limitations worth mentioning. One strength this study had was that all scales used to collect data had been proven reliable and acceptable to use in the population selected. This was further supported with the data collected in this study, thus strengthening the reliability of all scales for future research. Another strength was the large sample size obtained for this study. Having such a large

sample size gave the study adequate power for the researcher to accurately formulate assumptions and conclusions on the data collected (VanVoorhis & Morgan, 2007). A final strength found in this study was that the sample had a good representation of various ethnicities and relationship statuses. This can be helpful when comparing this study to the overall population.

Along with strengths in a study, there are also limitations. One of the biggest limitations of this study was that only women participants were used when examining data and formulating conclusions. Men's family communication patterns, self esteem, and relationship satisfaction were not further examined in this study. This was done because the population in which participants were being recruited was predominately women, and the number of men available within this specific population was not representative of the entire population at large. However, it is important to examine family communication patterns, self esteem, and relationship satisfaction in men as well, and would be worthy information to obtain in future research. This information would also be helpful to compare and contrast gender differences in these variables, and potentially look at how different genders in the same environment perceive communication within their families. For example, previous research has made mention that men and women hold different communication traits valuable (Koesten, 2004; MacGeorge et al., 2003). It was also mentioned that men and women's show differing patterns of both self esteem and relationship satisfaction (MacNeil & Byers, 2009; Rochlen & Mahalik, 2004; Sprecher et al., 1995; Whitton & Whisman, 2010). Therefore,

there is good reason to further pursue examining men in future research on these variables.

Another limitation identified in this study was that only individuals currently in a romantic relationship were eligible to participate. Individuals who were not in a current relationship were not eligible to complete information on their family communication patterns, self esteem, and relationship satisfaction. This was done in order to have data surrounding relationship satisfaction to be current and accurate. Previous research has stated that individuals feel satisfied in their relationship when they feel both parties are happy, confident, and invested in the relationship (Rochlen & Malik, 2004). When one, or both, parties are lacking these feelings, or when the feelings are not there due to separation, it is difficult to accurately identify relationship satisfaction (Whitton & Whisman, 2010). On the other hand, future research could be helpful in comparing and contrasting such assumptions to identify if an individual can accurately rate his or her relationship satisfaction in a previous relationship. This could also produce different outcomes when comparing previous relationship satisfaction with self esteem. Thus, future research may be beneficial to support previous findings on self report measures of previous relationship satisfaction (Rochlen & Malik, 2004; Whitton & Whisman, 2010).

A third limitation worth noting was that all participants of this study came from a university in the Southwest. This could possibly effect the results of this study when compared to the entire population given it may not be completely representative of all cultures. In addition to this, participants of this study were predominately heterosexual,

undergraduate women. The sample's mean age was 20.85, thus limiting the results given they are not completely generalizable to the population due to a lack of variation in age, education level, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and relationship status. Regarding relationship satisfaction, many previous researchers examined married couples as opposed to non-married couples (Finkenauer et al., 2004; Mitnick et al., 2009; Noller & Feeney, 1994; Shimkowski & Schrodt, 2012). This study was comprised of 91.6% heterosexual participants, and only 10.6% identified as being married. Therefore, the findings in this study shall be examined with caution when comparing the findings to previous research where sample demographics differ. In future research, it may be beneficial to attempt this study across the nation, at varying ages and education levels, and also across varying relationship statuses. This would increase the diversity and generality of this study, making the findings potentially more beneficial for all cultures, genders, and ages.

Another limitation encountered was that participants used self report measures, which can result in receiving biased information about participants and not completely representative of how participants actually behave (Fletcher et al., 2000; Ritchie, 1991; Sinclair et al., 2010). Because many questions in this study honed in on self esteem and social acceptance, participants may have tried to answer questions in a more desirable light as opposed to their actual experiences (Leary, 1999, 2003). Another way to attempt to keep biases out of the study would be to use a qualitative approach to gain information on family communication patterns, self esteem, and relationship satisfaction.

This study did not intensely examine different multicultural variances in family communication patterns, self esteem and relationship satisfaction. Also, no significant differences were found between ethnicities on any of the variables examined. Future research would benefit from further exploring these differences to get a more accurate explanation of culture and ethnic differences in the variables studied (Allen & Chaffee, 1977; Busby et al., 2001; Hohman-Marriot & Amato, 2008; Leary, 2005; Lin et al., 2007; Pyszczynski et al., 2004; Rhee et al., 2003; Shearman & Dumlao, 2008). Also, since the study was so heavily populated with heterosexual participants, information gained from this study may not be relevant to LGB populations. Because of the lack of minority population representation in the sample obtained for this study, future research should be done to expand on the knowledge and representation of these populations in order to gain more accurate knowledge on these individuals and to potentially modify current assumptions of marginalized individual's family communication patterns, self-esteem, and relationship satisfaction (Hohman-Marriot & Amato, 2008; Leary, 2005; Rhee et al., 2003; Shearman & Dumlao, 2008).

<div align="center">

Research, Theoretical, and Clinical Implications

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Research Implications

This study's findings are important for a few reasons. First, the results of this study validated previous research on the relationship between self esteem and relationship satisfaction, specifically that individuals with high levels of self esteem are more likely to report high relationship satisfaction, and those who report low levels of

self esteem are likely to also report low relationship satisfaction. This has been researched and supported in the past (Egeci & Gencoz, 2006; Guererro et al., 2009; Hinnen et al., 2008; Leary, 2002; Rill et al., 2009; Sciangula & Morry, 2009), further supporting that there is a connection between relationship satisfaction and self esteem within women.

Though all hypotheses of this study were not confirmed, the findings offer further support that research in the area of family communication patterns is much needed to compare this study's findings to different pieces of the population in its entirety. Overall, this study found that family communication patterns to not have a significant impact on self esteem and relationship satisfaction in women. This provides insight that family communication patterns may not be a contributing factor to self esteem levels and current or future relationship satisfaction. Future research should examine if this finding is consistent with other diverse populations (Allen & Chaffee, 1977; Busby et al., 2001; Hohman-Marriot, 2008; Leary, 2005). Also, the findings in this study indicate family communication patterns are not directly tied to ethnicity. Therefore, future research could also examine whether this holds true in various populations (Allen & Chaffee, 1977). Though the hypotheses were not all supported, it is encouraging to potentially find that family communication is not directly tied to future self esteem levels and relationship satisfaction. This implies that, individuals of all communication orientations have an equal opportunity to have high self esteem and be satisfied in their relationships.

Theoretical Implications

Theoretically, communication within a family has been identified as a variable that directly impacts various social aspects of an individual's life (Bakir et al., 2006, Boothe-Butterfield & Sidelinger, 1997, 1998). This study supports previous findings that self esteem impacts relationship satisfaction, and can be a contributor to feelings of acceptance and satisfaction (Egeci & Gencoz, 2006; Leary, 2002; Sciangula & Morry, 2009). Additionally, this study provides new insight that communication patterns within a family do not necessarily have to moderate an individual's self esteem and relationship satisfaction. This could help expand all current knowledge of family communication patterns to include the idea that previous communication styles within one's family may not be a factor that contributes to future levels of self-esteem and relationship satisfaction (Le Poire, 2005). By continuing to explore this idea, and being more aware of this possibility throughout the population, family communication pattern, self esteem, and relationship satisfaction theories can help guide therapists to provide clear understanding of the independence family communication patterns have to clients who are battling with issues related to self esteem and relationship satisfaction (Le Poire, 2005).

Clinical Implications

Regarding clinical implications, it is important for therapists to know that self esteem and relationship satisfaction are correlated (Egeci & Gencoz, 2006; Guererro et al., 2009; Hinnen et al., 2008; Leary, 2002; Sciangula & Morry, 2009). Additionally, it is important for clinicians to gain awareness that family communication patterns can be a non-contributor to self esteem and relationship satisfaction, per findings of this study.

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Because family communication patterns do not seem to impact self esteem and satisfaction of relationships, therapists can use such information to guide therapeutic interventions with clients, specifically clients who may come in and attribute self esteem levels or relationship satisfaction to family communication. Clinicians could also gain knowledge to better conceptualize clients in reference to factors that may contribute to low self esteem or low relationship satisfaction (Leary, 2002; Leary et al., 1995; Masbacher, 2011; Rill et al., 2009). Given that this information could be beneficial for individual or couples clients, the information found in this study would be beneficial with helping therapists work with clients to diminish any predetermined beliefs that family communication patterns have a direct impact on self esteem and relationship satisfaction.

Additionally, given the results found pertained to women of almost all ethnicities, it is important for therapists to know and understand that women's self esteem and relationship satisfaction are correlated (Guererro et al., 2009; Hinnen et al., 2008), but independent of family communication orientation and race/ethnicity. Because this finding is one of the first to be reported, future research should continue to examine the relationship of family communication, self-esteem, and relationship satisfaction (Finkenauer et al., 2004; Martinson et al., 2010; Whitton & Whisman, 2010). Future research may find that communication patterns are not associated with self esteem and relationship satisfaction, but having partners who have the same communication orientation may have even more relationship satisfaction as opposed to partners who do not.

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This research may also provide guidance for direction of therapy with women, individually or in couple's therapy, and could provide new insight to the impact of family communication on adult self esteem and satisfaction with romantic partners (Egeci & Gencoz, 2006; Leary et al., 1995). In addition, the findings of this study provide a different and new perspective on family communication patterns and their impact, or lack of impact, on other aspects in people's lives.

Further clinical implications explore how therapists can benefit from the findings in this study. Psychology examines how humans develop and adapt to psychological and emotional life stressors, and how these stressors can be explored and repaired using therapy and the therapeutic alliance (Flückiger et al., 2012). For example, some popular stressors often examined within therapy are depression, anxiety, relationship problems, communication deficits, adapting to changes in life, and any other aspect that may cause an individual psychological discomfort. Family communication patterns, for example, have been linked to many of these difficulties, as well as how such difficulties decrease individual's social growth, self esteem, and current or future relationship satisfaction (Bakir et al., 2006; Boothe-Butterfield & Sidelinger, 1997, 1998; Guerrero et al., 2009; Rauer et al., 2008; Riggio, 1986). Understanding more about family communication patterns and the impact, or lack of impact, on self esteem, relationship satisfaction, and even other variables surrounding child and adult development can be extremely useful in therapy, especially to help clinicians better conceptualize clients in current and future work.

Additionally, many clients who are seen by therapists identify social issues and psychological discomfort surrounding self-image and self-esteem (e.g., depression, anxiety, self-loathing, self-injurious behaviors). Using the results of this study can increase knowledge of how to work with clients battling such issues by learning that how a client's communication with others may not lead to feelings of acceptance in social environments (Leary at al., 1995; Leary, 2005). This study also provides a rationale for utilizing therapeutic techniques in treating problems in self esteem and communication, such as understanding that each variable is unique and independent from one another (Anthony et al., 2007; Denissen et al., 2008). By examining the differences between conversation-oriented and conformity-oriented communication patterns, and normalizing the patterns of communication, clinicians can help shed light on various methods of communication their clients have been exposed to, and how to reshape client's communication patterns, as well as increase their feelings of self-worth and overall self esteem in a potentially more efficient method than the past (Boothe-Butterfield & Sidelinger, 1997; Kelly et al., 2002; Lin et al., 2007). This may help develop a therapeutic alliance in session, thus leaving room for increased self esteem and psychological well being (Flückiger et al., 2012; Lin et al., 2007).

This research can increase knowledge of how to work with couples in conceptualizing their satisfaction or dissatisfaction by examining self esteem with each individual. It is hoped that future research will show a clearer relationship between the variables of relationship satisfaction, self esteem, and family communication patterns

enough that therapists can utilize this research to use more justified techniques with couples in identifying the underlying issues in their relationship (Koesten, 2004; Leary, 2005; Rill et al., 2009; Segrin, 1994). With this increased understanding and more efficient utilization of therapeutic techniques, it is hoped that clinicians can provide a positive emotional environment and use more creative ways to teach clients to interact differently and increase relationship satisfaction (Cramer, 2000; Linville et al., 2010; Sprecher et al., 2001).

Taking all previous aspects into consideration, this study could also help increase more accurate and effective treatment planning in future therapy with clients who experience personal and relational difficulties. For example, if clients come in with concerns of self esteem and also reports having poor communication with their family throughout their lives, counselors may benefit from challenging such clients to look at each problem individually and explain how such variables can be treated separately in order to gain an overall increase in communication confidence and self-esteem (Levack et al., 2006). Goal planning could entail working on developing more active communication skills with the therapist, and potentially increase the therapeutic alliance (Flückiger et al., 2012). By working on communication patterns within the therapeutic setting, clinicians may see an increase in self confidence and self esteem with their clients who suffer with such characteristics, and can work with their clients to compare the therapeutic relationship to other relationships in the client's life, and to use such techniques that are seen as positive in therapy in their social environment to help increase feelings of

acceptance (Leary, 2003). Therefore, the knowledge that clinicians could gain through this research will not only help in understanding client's issues presented, but also help them understand the impact family communication patterns, self esteem, and relationship satisfaction have on one another.

Conclusions

This study explored the relationships and differences in family communication patterns, self esteem, and relationship satisfaction, which helped support that further research is needed regarding the variables. Though some variables supported findings of previous research, future research could continue to explore the relationship of self esteem and communication patterns, as well as how culture plays a role in communication of women and men. Though all hypotheses were not supported, this study can help guide future research to further examine the independence of variables such as ethnicity, self esteem, and relationship satisfaction when compared to communication patterns. This study also provides further evidence on the importance of communication with others, given its independence, and can influence therapeutic work of clinicians to help tailor their therapeutic techniques and treatment plans to uniquely fit their clients.

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APPENDIX A

Demographic Questionnaire

Demographic Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions in relation to yourself.

1. Are you currently in a romantic-partner relationship?

_____ Yes

_____ No

What is your age? _____

3. What is your gender?   Female   Male   Transgendered

4. What is your current year in school?

_____ First Year

_____ Sophomore

_____ Junior

_____ Senior

_____ Other

5. What is the most representative of your annual household income?

_____ $0 - $20,000

_____ $20,001 - $40,000

_____ $40,001 - $60,000

_____ $60,001 - $80,000

_____ $80,001 - $100,000

_____ >$100,000

6. What Ethnicity would you identify yourself?

_____ African American

_____ American Indian

_____ Asian or Pacific Islander

_____ Hispanic/Latino(a)

_____ White/Non-Hispanic/Caucasian

_____ Other:_____ (Please Specify)

7. How would you describe your sexual orientation?

     _____ Bisexual

     _____ Gay/Lesbian

     _____ Heterosexual

     _____ Other:_____ (Please Specify)

Please answer the following questions in relation to your most recent or current romantic partner. Please think of only one specific individual whom you have been or are involved with when answering the following questions.

8. What is your current relationship status?

     _____ Divorced

     _____ Living with partner

     _____ Married

     _____ Separated

     _____ Single

     _____ Widowed

     _____ Prefer no response

9. How long have you been in your current or most current romantic relationship?

     _____ Years   _____ Months

APPENDIX B

The Revised Family Communication Pattern Instrument

The Revised Family Communication Pattern Instrument

Instructions: Please answer all questions in relation to your past and current experiences with your parents.

Strongly Disagree		Neutral/Mixed		Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

_____1. In our family we often talk about topics like politics and religion where some

persons disagree with others.

_____2. My parents often say something like "Every member of the family should have

some say in family decisions."

_____3. My parents often ask my opinion when the family is talking about something.

_____4. My parents encourage me to challenge their ideas and beliefs.

_____5. My parents often say something like "You should always look at both sides of

an issue."

_____6. I usually tell my parents what I am thinking about things.

_____7. I can tell my parents almost anything.

_____8. In our family we often talk about our feelings and emotions.

_____9. My parents and I often have long, relaxed conversations about nothing in

particular.

_____10. I really enjoy talking with my parents, even when we disagree.

_____11. My parents like to hear my opinions, even when they don't agree with me.

_____12. My parents encourage me to express my feelings.

_____13. My parents tend to be very open about their emotions.

Strongly Disagree   Neutral/Mixed   Strongly Agree

1_____2_____3_____4_____5

_____14. We often talk as a family about things we have done during the day.

_____15. In our family we often talk about our plans and hopes for the future.

_____16. My parents often say something like "You'll know better when you grow up."

_____17. My parents often say something like "My ideas are right and you should not question them."

_____18. My parents often say something like "A child should not argue with adults."

_____19. My parents often say something like "There are some things that just shouldn't be talked about."

_____20. My parents often say something like "You should give in on arguments rather than risk making people mad."

_____21. When anything really important is involved, my parents expect me to obey without question.

_____22. In our home, my parents usually have the last word.

_____23. My parents feel it is important to be the boss.

_____24. My parents sometimes become irritated with my views if they are different

from theirs.

_____25. If my parents don't approve of it, they don't want know about it.

_____26. When I am at home, I am expected to obey my parents' rules.

APPENDIX C

Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale

Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale

Instructions: Please strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D), or strongly disagree (SD) to the following questions. Additionally, please answer all questions in relation to your current feelings and experiences.

SA | A | D | SD

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with my life……………………….. 1   2   3   4

2. At times I think I am no good at all……………………………... 1   2   3   4

3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities……………………. 1   2   3   4

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people…………….. 1   2   3   4

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of………………………... 1   2   3   4

6. I certainly feel useless at times………………………………….. 1   2   3   4

7. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with

    others...………………………….1   2   3   4

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself…………………….. 1   2   3   4

9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure………………. 1   2   3   4

10.   I take a positive attitude toward myself…………………………. 1   2   3   4

APPENDIX D

Perceived Relationship Quality Components Inventory:

Relationship Satisfaction

Perceived Relationship Quality Components Inventory

Relationship Satisfaction

Instructions: Please rate each question in relation to your current or most current intimate

relationship with your current or most current partner.

Not at all   Neutral/Mixed   Extremely

   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

_____1. How satisfied are you with your relationship?

_____2. How content are you with your relationship?

_____3. How happy are you with your relationship?

APPENDIX E

Informed Consent

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title: The Gender and Culture Difference Effect of Family Communication Patterns on
Self Esteem and Relationship Satisfaction of Women

Investigator: Jessica Burchfield, B.A…….....…………………………....903/819-2253
Advisors: Jenelle Fitch, Ph.D.……………………………………….940/898-2312

Explanation and Purpose of the Research

You are being asked to participate in a research study for Ms. Burchfield's thesis at Texas
Woman's University. The purpose of this research is to examine the impact of family
communication patterns on self-esteem and romantic relationship satisfaction. You will
receive 3 of your required class experiential credits for your participation in this study.

Research Procedures

For this study, you will be asked to fill out a series of questionnaires related to your
experiences of communication in your family, your feelings of self-esteem, and your
personal relationship satisfaction. You will also be asked about your current relationship
status (i.e. single, partnered, married etc.). Your maximum total time commitment in the

study is estimated to be approximately 20-30 minutes. You will be able to fill out the questionnaires at your own convenience, but be aware that your answers will not be saved to come back to complete at a later time. Thus, it is required that you complete the entire set of questionnaires at one time. Once you submit your questionnaires you will be provided with a participant number. Print out the page with the participant number and bring it to Room (TBD) during the appropriate time (TBD) to receive your credit.

Potential Risks

Potential Risks related to your participation in this study include the possibility of a release of confidential information. Confidentiality will be protected to the extent that is allowed by law. There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, and internet transactions. A participant code number will be used instead of your real name. Only the investigator and her advisor will have access to the data collected. All files will be stored on a blank flash drive that will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the investigator's residence. All data will be deleted within 5 years of the conclusion of this study. It is anticipated that the results of this study will be published in the investigator's thesis as well as in other research publications and local and national presentations. However, no names or other identifying information will be included in any publication.

Another risk of participating in this study is possible emotional discomfort due to the material in the surveys. If you do experience any emotional discomfort regarding any aspect of any of the questionnaires, you may stop answering the questions at any time. Additionally, a mental health services list will be provided for all participants of this study.

The researchers will try to prevent any problem that could happen because of this research. You should let the researcher know at once if there is a problem and she 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.

A third possible risk is your loss of time. The instruments were chosen to be quick, using likert scales as opposed to other methods of data collection. As mentioned previously, the entire packet should take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete. However, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

A final risk relates to any coercion or pressure you may feel for participating in this study. Please know that your participation in this study is completely voluntary and will not affect your grade in any particular class. Should you feel any pressure please notify the primary investigator and she will make appropriate arrangements to facilitate your comfort. Should you feel that you would like to withdraw from the study, you are free to do so at any time.

Participation and Benefits

Your involvement in this research study is completely voluntary, and you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty. Your participation in this study will help you meet a class requirement for participation in research studies. If you are interested, you may receive a summary of the results of this study, which will be mailed or e-mailed to you upon request.

Questions Regarding the Study

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

By clicking the "Yes, I agree" button below, you acknowledge that you have read this information and are giving your informed consent to participate in this study.

APPENDIX F

Mental Health Services Contact List

Mental Health Services Contact List

<u>Referral Agencies</u>
Dallas – Ft. Worth area:

Texas Woman's University Counseling Center
Denton, Texas
(940)-898-3801

Galaxy Counseling Center
Garland, Texas
(972)-272-4429

Timberlawn Trauma Program
Dallas, Texas
(800)-426-4944

Counseling Institute of Texas
Garland, Texas
(972)-494-0160

Friends of the Family
Lewisville and Denton, Texas
(940)-387-5131

The Family Place
Dallas, Texas
(214)-599-2170

Outside of the Dallas- Ft. Worth area:
American Psychological Association Referral Service
1-800-964-2000
http://locator.apahelpcenter.org/

National Register of Health Service Providers in Psychology
http://www.nationalregister.org/