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SELF AND COMMUNICATION IN LONG-TERM ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

BY

FARSHAD MICHAEL SADR

THESIS APPROVED:


Chair, Advisory Committee


Member, Advisory Committee


Member, Advisory Committee


Dean, Graduate School

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SELF AND COMMUNICATION IN LONG-TERM ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

BY

FARSHAD MICHAEL SADR

BACHELORS OF SCIENCE
IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
AMES, IOWA

Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
Eastern Kentucky University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

2019

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mother and fiancé. Without the incredible kindness, both of you have given me, this would not have been possible. I love you both.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to first acknowledge Dr. Jonathan Gore for being incredibly patient with me and providing the opportunity for me to grow as a researcher and person. I want to thank my cohort for making Kentucky my second home. I want to acknowledge Dr. Susan Cross and her Cross-Cultural Psychology Lab for shaping my psychological research interests.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to further our understanding of how individuals in heterosexual romantic relationships resolve conflict and why the identified persuasion attempts are occurring. This study proposes a two-pathway model of how socialization predicts conflict communication strategies through self-construal and relationship goals. It is hypothesized that a) gender socialization and romantic relationship power influence the dominant type of self-construal an individual holds, b) parenting goals are more strongly predicted by relational interdependent self-construal than physical self-construal and that mating goals are more strongly predicted by physical self-construal than relational interdependent self-construal, c) direct conflict communication strategies are more strongly predicted by mating goals. Indirect conflict communication strategies are more strongly predicted by parenting goals. Participants ($n=241$) completed an online survey of self-construal, gender socialization, romantic relationship goals, and conflict communication strategies. The results identified two pathways from gender socialization to conflict communication strategies with the feminine pathway producing better long-term strategies.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The importance of communication within romantic relationships has long been a study of both clinical and research psychologists. The variety of communication strategies that individuals employ within their romantic relationships are numerous. This provides a challenge for researchers attempting to organize these strategies. A simple solution for researchers has been to organize many similar strategies into categories that provide information regarding their attributional features, making classifications easier. A next logical step of thought proceeding the question of what communication strategies are, is perhaps why are certain communication strategies chosen over others? Are the different categories of established conflict communication strategies explained by how a person defines themselves and their personal romantic goals? The purpose of the current study is to provide an integrative model that examines the associations among self-definition (referred to as self-construal), relationship goals, and conflict resolution patterns in romantic relationships. We will also examine potential moderators of these associations.

CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender Socialization

Gender socialization teaches individuals about the behaviors and attitudes which are normatively appropriate for a male or female to possess. Often, this is expressed through the constructs of masculinity and femininity. Masculinity generally includes giving large amounts of effort, being brave, being strong so you can enact your will, protecting loved ones from physical harm, and hiding emotions considered weak. A few of the common traits considered to be feminine include having intimate emotional bonds, being kind, and having high agreeableness. The process of gender socialization is commonly theorized to begin almost immediately after birth, with males and females being treated differently. A basic example of gender socialization may be observed in the different types of decorations which parents may decorate their baby room. It is much more common for an infant male's room to be decorated with construction vehicle toys than more feminine princess toys. Besides the immediate environment around young children, how caretakers interact with their children has been shown to have a strong effect on the socialization process (Chafetz, 1999). Between children and caretakers of the same sex, if the caretaker exhibits highly stereotypical gendered behavior, their children later in life are more likely to exhibit highly stereotypical gendered behavior (Chafetz, 1999).

How strongly an individual is socialized to be masculine or feminine can serve as a predictor of their adult behavior. For example, male teenagers who more commonly reported experiencing stress from failing to exhibit the expected gender norms set by society are at greater risk of engaging in psychical or sexual violence (Reidy et al., 2015).

Exposure during childhood to gender socialization has been shown to significantly predict numerous adulthood outcomes, including occupation and attitudinal outcomes. Lawson, Crouter, and McHale (2015) conducted a 15-year long longitudinal study examining the occupational outcomes for children. Boys that spent the most time with their fathers were found to hold more gender-typed occupations in adulthood. Furthermore, daughters that spent the most time with their fathers were found to have occupations within less gender-typed roles. Additionally, boys were more likely to hold a more gender-typed occupation if their mother held traditional attitudes towards a woman's role in the family unit (Lawson et al., 2015). At a more intimate scale for individuals raised with strongly stereotypical gendered behaviors, their feelings of satisfaction within a romantic relationship were found to be strongly related to how masculine or feminine the individual feels when interacting with their romantic partner (Luo & Yu, 1997). In other words, the most masculine men are happiest when they can express their masculinity. Of course, the same is true for the most feminine women when expressing their femininity.

As children grow older, differences between masculine and feminine behaviors become more explicit. Young males cyclically reinforce each other to play rougher, not to cry, and to display general masculinity. Similarly, young females are cyclically reinforcing each other to be more relational, less aggressive, and to be feminine (Chafetz, 1999). Amongst teens, the beginnings of desire for romantic interactions further reinforce divisions between normative gendered behaviors. The approaches to romantic interactions which teens engage are sourced from reference points, such as their caretakers or from media (Daniels & Layh, 2016). These findings combined all suggest how an individual has been socialized to fit within their gender has a significant impact on many aspects of their adult life.

Romantic Power

At the very beginning of newly formed romantic relationships, romantic partners begin with processes that create attachments, linking the two people into a singular couple. As partners then become more settled into their relationship, differences in power between two romantic partners become clearly noticeable. The power within romantic relationships is thought of as the ability to both influence and resist influence from a romantic partner (Traeder & Zeigler-Hill, 2019). When in a disagreement with a romantic partner, the individual who is better at resisting persuasion attempts is considered to have greater power. Since individuals within romantic couples are still separate individuals, they will have their own personal goals which may not always align well together. While power is often observed manifesting as a deciding factor for which set of goals a romantic couple pursues at an impasse, this is not the only role power plays (Traeder & Zeigler-Hill, 2019). There are three main constructs for which power is known to be strongly related: decision making, emotional involvement, and equity (Felmlee, 1994). Often as romantic partners begin to settle into a romantic relationship, they become interdependent with each other. As their interdependence grows, the dependency on their romantic partner for their needs expands as well. According to interdependence theory, eventually one partner will have a greater reliance over the other in the romantic relationship to provide basic needs. However, the rate for which one becomes more dependent is not often equal between romantic partners. This gap is related to the amount of power an individual possesses (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978).

The romantic partner who is more emotionally involved is considered to have less power between the two individuals. Being more emotionally involved is a sign of dependency; the more dependent person has more to lose if the romantic relationship

fails. A common reason that an individual may hold less power is that they provide fewer physical resources than their partner to the romantic relationship (Felmlee, 1994). Resource theory argues the power a person holds is considered to be a function of the amount of resources that the individual provides for the romantic couple; power gravitates towards the provider. The individual that is more dependent on their partner for food, money, shelter, or other needs has less power. Consequently, those with less power have more to lose if the romantic relationship ends. Having more to lose from the ending of a romantic relationship is a critical component of resource theory, as it helps explain why often being more flexible towards a more powerful partner is an often viable strategy.

For the less powerful partners, conceding in arguments can become more about preserving the relationship over giving up or admitting to being wrong (Felmlee, 1994). If one partner in a romantic relationship provides most of the household's income, the loss of said income is significant. A loss is even more significant for the less powerful individual if they do not hold an occupation when the partners separate. These types of circumstances setup favorable conditions for the occurrence of an enormous inequality in power to occur. When power inequality does then occur, the less powerful are observed to not only relinquish their own independent goal pursuits but to then adopt the goals of their more powerful romantic partner (Felmlee, 1994). These behaviors can work well towards preserving the stability of the romantic relationship by increasing their romantic partner's overall happiness (Felmlee, 1994). For the more powerful romantic partners, there is much less to lose. Having less to lose allows for more freedom to impose their own will over their romantic partner. Research has found that the more powerful individuals in these skewed relationships are more overt and aggressive when influencing their

partners (Bentley, Galliher, & Ferguson, 2007). In order to enact their will, individuals that hold more power are also more likely to commit relational and physical aggression against their romantic partner (Bently et al., 2007).

When beginning a romantic relationship, both partners may have equal power. However, power more frequently moves towards the more masculine individual within the relationship (Bently et al., 2007; Felmlee, 1994). This is in part due to gender socialization. Previous research has shown power to be a gendered construct (Bently et al., 2007). Power within romantic relationships is indirectly socialized to males and females through many avenues. For instance, males are taught to always be leaders while females should be helpers. For the adults that are strongly attached to these gender socialization, being in a relationship that does not fit their norms can be distressing. Within romantic relationships where the female partner earns significantly more income than their male partner, males raised with more conservative attitudes report feeling they have less power than males with less conservative attitudes. Furthermore, those same males are less satisfied with their romantic relationship and they reported they felt less masculine than their less conservative peers (Coughlin & Wade, 2012).

All of this evidence suggests an interaction between power and gender socialization is occurring; being more strongly socialized as masculine increases the power an individual will hold in their romantic relationship, whereas being more strongly socialized as feminine decreases the amount of power held within their romantic relationship. Both power and gender socialization are argued in this present work to be moderators of a more encompassing construct that filters how an individual defines him/herself in context of his/her surrounding world.

Self-Construal

Self-construal is the way in which individuals define and make meaning of the self. It is the answer to the question “Who am I?”, which is often a confusing question for people to answer. Self-construal was originally defined by Markus and Kitayama (1991) as a construct to describe differences found between the way Japanese and Americans define themselves. The processes influenced by the self-construal are both implicit and explicit, including the psychological processes of cognition, emotion, and motivation. Specifically, self-construal plays a strong role in any processes that are perceived to be involved with targets of oneself or targets where the self is used as a referent. The researchers found that the individuals of the two cultures had fundamental differences in the content which is used to construal the self (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

Independent Self-Construal

Independent self-construal focuses on the individual attributes individuals hold, which makes them uniquely different from the persons around them. It can be considered the best way to strategically determine how to express or assert the internal attributes that represent the self. For example, a randomly sampled Western Euro-American asked to describe the self would use vocabulary terms that are grammatically paralleled with items such as “compassionate; adventurous; or a psychologist”. The most salient answers are vocabulary used to convey the internal traits which are stable markers of difference between themselves and others. Perhaps this is not a surprise when considering that Western Euro-American cultures hold a norm that defines success as independence, autonomy, and separateness from others. To successfully meet that norm, people should exhibit stable behaviors that show both an organized and meaningful understanding of your own internal thoughts, feelings,

and goals. This, however, is not implying that people who subscribe to a culture of independent self-construal do not highly value and incorporate their in-groups into their self-construal. These relationships are still immensely important and often Western Euro-American cultures normalize finding a romantic partner and having a family. The romantic partner to the individual of high independent self-construal is framed such that the romantic partner serves as a means for self-enhancement. The romantic partner to the same individual is possibly the resource which accomplishes the basic drive for sex and children. Or maybe they are the unwavering emotional support outlet which can satisfy the individual from being too stressed out. Either way, our own needs are a top priority (Cross, Bacon, & Morris, 2000; Cross, Hardin, & Berna, 2011; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1989).

Interdependent Self-Construal

Within Eastern Asian cultures, the most common type of self-construal is interdependent *self-construal*. Markus and Kitayama (1991) suggest that these cultures exhibit a fundamental connectedness amongst the population, implying a normative imperative is the maintenance of interdependence among individuals. That imperative is the product from how interdependent self-construal operates. It primarily relies upon the surrounding context and it is the "other" or the "self-in-relation-to-other" that is focal within individual experience (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Thus, this self-construal is constructed interdependently with important relationships, group memberships, and the social roles held (Cross, Hardin, & Gercek-Swing, 2011).

The integration of the self and the others around an individual plays a dynamic role in the ways in which a person with a highly interdependent self-construal navigates the world. To these individuals, regulating emotional expression,

maintaining group harmony, and fitting into the group are important qualities for members of these groups to possess (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). In interdependent cultures, being able to adapt to fit into groups is considered essential. Thus, there is no great utility in having stable traits across social settings. The behaviors of individuals with highly interdependent self-construal are motivated by situational factors over personal trait factors. Some of the most common groups which people incorporate into the self are family relations, work relations, and practiced faith or religion. These collective groups or relationship ties are essential for defining just who a person is. In comparison to the independent self-construal, individuals that hold a strong interdependent self-construal often views themselves as less differentiated from their in-groups. In these cultures, the groups surrounding the individual are the reference point for how individuals define themselves. This includes the roles they must fill, the behaviors they exhibit, and the attitudes they express, if not also internally held (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Given how intertwined with the self that these relationships are, it is no surprise that the influence of others influences the goals a person has. Individuals within interdependent self-construal cultures will give more credence to pursuing goals that are more beneficial for the group while sacrificing benefits for the self (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The motivations for these goals are commonly group-oriented. Motivations for finding a romantic partner might be to appease parents or to increase their family's prestige. The individual needs are subordinated to the needs of the many.

Relational Interdependent Self Construal

Relational Interdependent Self Construal (RISC) is derived from the original interdependent self-construal as defined by Markus and Kitayama (1991). However, it is discussed as a subcomponent of interdependent self-construal. Originally, the

construct of RISC was introduced into psychological literature by Cross and Madison (1997) as a Euro-American equivalent of the interdependent self-construal construct to measure the extent to which American women defined themselves in terms of their close relationships. RISC was later formally defined in psychological literature by Cross, Bacon, and Morris (2000) as the extent to which people define themselves in terms of close relationships. RISC a subcomponent of the construct interdependent self-construal. the dimensional extent to which a person conceptualizes themselves as defined by their close relationships. It was then proposed that the construct of interdependent self-construal comprises two components: the relationship orientated RISC and the group orientated collective interdependent self-construal (shortened as Coll-InterSC) (Cross, Hardin, & Gersek-Swing, 2011).

The theoretical differences between RISC and Coll-InterSC are present empirically, and the two components exist differentially across culture and gender. Cross, Hardin, and Gercek-Swing (2011) note that East Asian interdependent self-construal is largely orientated towards close relationships (RISC), but Euro-American interdependent self-construal is largely orientated towards in-groups (Coll-InterSC). Amongst American men and women, men were more likely to possess a Coll-InterSC while women more commonly possessed RISC (Cross, Hardin, & Gersek-Swing, 2011).

Physical self-construal

At a basic level, psychology suggests there is a universal schema of the body that provides an anchoring point for understanding the self as a physically distinct object from the people around us. This schema, titled the ecological self, is formally defined as the self as perceived with respect to the physical world. Our body is distinctly different from the clothes we wear and the others we interact with; the

phones we carry are not actually physically attached to our hands. The ecological self allows us to know that we are physically interacting with the world by engaging in action. There is also a universal awareness that everyone has his or her own private thoughts and feelings. It was originally proposed that this universal awareness of unshared experiences allows individuals to formulate a sense of an inner, private self. It is from the syntheses of these universal constructs that the definition of the self diverges off into different types of construal across cultures.

Physical self-construal (PSC) is the last component of self-definition that the current study is interested in examining. Physical self-construal is defined as a tendency to define oneself terms of one's own physical body and how well it functions. A highly physically construed individuals will formulate their own self-definition as the body they live in and its functionality to accomplish tasks. Highly physically construed individual perceives more value in actions over words. The highly physically construed father expresses his love for his child more through the activities they do together more so than the infrequent long talks about feelings. For highly physically individuals, the physical body is considered the agent through which one can enact their will. For example, consider an athlete who has achieved her goals through her own body's ability to perform at a high level. If she has a strong physical self-construal, she would define her physical body as the agent through which she can achieve her dreams. In the example, the physical body and the self are synonymous. However, physical self-construal is distinctly different from the constructs we hold which describe our body. For example, body image and physical attractiveness have been determined to be different through discriminatory analysis to be distinctly different from physical self-construal (Gore, Dean, & Ryan, 2019). How sexually attractive a person believes him/herself to be is certainly a significant covariate if or

how a person attempts to attract a romantic partner. However, a person's physical attractiveness is still an external tool that the body itself has. The same is true for internalized constructs, such as body image. While a positive body image does certainly provide a lot of information about behavior, the construct is an effect felt about the body. Therefore, the construct of body image is nested inside the physical self-construal.

Physical self-construal is similar to all other types of self-construal in that it is connected to one's culture. A prime example of physical self-construal is the acculturation of males in independent cultures to be taught that talking is a mechanism for getting tasks accomplished. Women on the other hand, in independent cultures, are socialized to believe that talking is a vehicle to create social bonds and perform relationship maintenance (Burlenson, 2003). A stronger positive association is argued to exist between the frequency of an individual using their own body as the reference point to explain the world around them and the strength of their physical self-construal (Gore et al., 2019). Individuals with a high physical self-construal may more strongly agree with the statements: "Being able to get the job done with my own hands is important to me"; "What I can accomplish with my hands is the way of showing what I can do"; and "My sense of pride comes from knowing what I can do with my body."

The cultural constructs of masculinity and femininity correspond with PSC and RISC. Gore et al. (2019) found that when controlling for the variables sex, independent self-construal and interdependent self-construal, RISC is a significant predictor of femininity and physical self-construal is a predictor of masculinity. These results provide a statistical grounding for the notion that PSC and RISC explain variation in gendered characteristics which both individual and interdependent self-

construal cannot (Gore et al., 2019). This grouping of femininity by RISC and masculinity by physical self-construal is evident within various cultural norms. The qualities of social, outgoing, and gossiping are all presumed qualities of the feminine women and all three are for relationship maintenance. The same is true for physical self-construal and masculinity. The masculine man is a strong protective leading figure who is not afraid to use physical violence to protect his family. Here once again, all the traits are physically orientated and indicative of an encapsulation of the self as a physical entity.

Self-Construal and Romantic Relationships

Cross-cultural psychology has also helped inform psychologists how individuals behave within romantic relationships and their functions which become variable when examining across the many facets of self-construal. When comparing dating romantic couples from Hawaii and South Korea, Yum (2004) found that the Asian participants were both more accommodating (through their voice and loyalty) with their romantic partners while simultaneously exhibiting less non-accommodating behaviors (such as neglect or contempt). Yum (2004) suggests that strongly interdependent self-construed individuals are more aware of their partner's feelings. Individuals with robust RISC are generally more successful in their long-term romantic relationships than those with weaker RISC. These individuals are better suited in romantic relationships since they have the best tools for the job. Cross, Morris, and Gore (2002) described how individuals who were strongly relational were more likely to consider the needs of close others before deciding upon important decisions. Those who are relational are also more in tune with the needs of their close others and are more acutely aware of the similarities between the intimate similarities they share with those close others (Cross, Bacon, & Morris, 2000). They are more

likely to experience the adoption of their romantic partner's interests and goals when experiencing self-expansion, including expansion into new goals which are an integrative combination of their own previously held goals and the goals of their close others (Cross, Hardin, & Berna, 2011). These studies serve to amplify the idea that specifically, RISC is the most efficient vehicle for the creation of secure romantic partners.

On the other hand, individuals with strong physical self-construal are likely to be less in tune with the commonly unspoken needs of their romantic partner. Instead, these individuals may be more inclined to focus on the physical aspects of their romantic relationships, such as handholding or having intercourse. Situations requiring strong relational ability are often less traveled because just as with everything else, the physically self-construed are lending success through their own physical body, displaying their values through actionable behaviors. There is still a strong desire to be emotionally intimate with your romantic partner, however, conversing about emotion is often not PSC's forte.

Romantic Relationship Goals

The goals and strategies to obtain these goals within romantic relationships are of immense importance when attempting to discern how romantic partners interact. Goals are considered the typical over-arching pathway from the start to finish, but strategies are specific means by which people reach that destination. Trivers (1972) presented the first widely accepted model of goals and strategies within romantic relationships.

The Beginnings of Modern Mating Theory

Trivers (1972) differentiated parental and mating activities. These two strategic types of activity are regarded in a trade-off fashion, implying give-and-take

strategy where both types are analogous to different effortful behaviors we exhibit when acting towards romantic relationships. Parental investment are behaviors where a parent both adds to the odds of their offspring successfully surviving, but also simultaneously inhibits the parent's ability to invest in other offspring. Alternatively, mating activities are any behaviors that allow the possibility for the creation of more offspring (Gangstead & Simpson, 2000). These ideas mark the beginning of the operationalization of goals in romantic relationships through a Darwinian framework, suggesting that parental and mating behaviors are evolution-driven investments to increase the fitness of a lineage. It would not be until 1993 that Buss and Schmitt would publish the next widely accepted romantic relationship theory which would be based upon Triveres's work.

Sexual Strategy Theory

Buss and Schmitt (1993) first defined the strategic goal-directed nature of mating within a romantic relationship in their Sexual Strategy Theory (SST) (1993). The authors explicitly define all human mating as an inherently strategic activity, where individuals are actively seeking mates who provide help in solving the systemic adaptive problems which they themselves and their ancestors have faced. SST defines the word "goal" to describe the romantically directed nature of the behaviors exhibited by persons in a romantic relationship. SST describes the term "strategy" as goal-directed and problem-solving behaviors which are not premeditated or consciously planned (Gangstead & Simpson, 2000). Building off these definitions, SST then argues that mate-seeking behaviors are integrated sets of inherited strategies that direct reproductive efforts such as how much effort is put towards initiating sexual experiences, the amount of effort put towards parental efforts, or effecting the strength of desire for having a child (Buss & Schmitt, 1993). Consequently, both mate

preferences and mating behaviors were hypothesized to be strategic products of evolution to increase fitness. To this extent, the authors suggest all behaviors intended towards one's romantic relationships are motivated by mate-seeking goals.

Bush and Schmitt (1993) specifically identified several scenarios where the sex of an individual affects the conflicts and mating strategies that individual faces to achieve his/her long- and short-term romantic goals (Eastwick, et. al, 2018). For women entering new romantic relationships, they face two main problems. One is an immediate need for resource extraction. Can they count on their romantic partner to possess efficient abilities in providing needed resources? Another problem is if their romantic partner will engaging in mate-switching or if they have mate back-ups. For long-term relationships, women must identify romantic partners who are worth investing in. Men must overcome the short-term problem of identifying which women are sexually accessible. Men also must be able to decide the optimal number of romantic partners to pursue. Some long-term problems are problems of parental confidence and problems with commitment (Buss & Schmitt, 1993). Just as the theories preceding SST, a strong basis in evolutionary psychology is identifiable throughout SST.

The Structural Pluralism Model

Gangestad and Simpson (2000) argued that their proposed Strategic Pluralism Model (SPM) is a better operationalization of the goals and goal pursuit in romantic relationships. SPM also bases parts of its arguments in the Good Gene Sexual Selection Theory (GGST) proposed by biologists Hamilton and Zuk (1982). GGST argues that the traits possessed by men that females pursue are honest indicators of the male's fitness. Meaning that the male will pass on genes that will help increase the probability of reproductive success for her children (Hamilton &

Zuk, 1982). For these women who successfully reproduce with good gene males, their children should have both those good genes and inherited preferences for the good genes. GGST is essentially the idea that good health is positively associated with sexual attractiveness. GGST is also the theoretical origins for suggesting more symmetrical men that display culturally confident behaviors are perceived as more attractive.

SPM argues that the effort invested by men in a short-term romantic relationship through strategic mating behaviors across their evolutionary histories should be determinable by their individual ability to satisfy the short-termed needs of a women's mating partner through GGST. The men that are more successful at attracting women are more successful because of their specific genetic fitness. However, their potential for increased mating success is coupled with an inverse relationship between propensity to invest in exclusive long-term romantic relationships and their genetic fitness (Gangstead & Simpson, 2000). In simpler terms, SPM is arguing that the men who can have more success in producing progeny with short-term romantic relationships are going to have more sexual partners. These same men are, however, less likely than those same peers to form long-term romantic bonds. The ability to create short-term romantic relationships influences the ability to overcome conflicts of parenting, physical protection, and resource protection for their female sexual partners.

Parental and Mating Goals in the Structural Pluralism Model

SPM argues that parental and mating goals are dependent on the environment individuals live in. For example, within environments where resources are limited, healthy markers for males are orientated toward successful parental potentiality. For women in these limited environments, engaging in an understood short-term romantic

relationship is risky due to the resource demand of child-rearing. This can result in males possessing genetic markers orientated towards mating finding less reproductive success in limited environmental conditions. This is all to say that a resource-limited environment can have a diminishing effect on mating goals and parental goals should be more salient (Gangstead & Simpson, 2000). The operationalization of SPM is also observable on a cultural level. For example, the same genetic markers that are attractive within limited resource environments are attractive in cultures that hold negative norms towards sex and divorce. A woman not in a romantic relationship becoming pregnant could result in ostracization for both romantic partners, therefore diminishing the value of short-term genetic markers. In all types of culture or environment, SPM is argued to influence the parental and mating goals individuals hold. SPM could possibly partially explain how cultures develop a dominant style of self-construal. For men and women within limited resource environments, self-construal could be influenced by their cultural and environmental affordances. The culture may encourage an interdependent collectivistic self-construal, by encouraging resource-sharing through the high value placed on close others and encouraged group-oriented self-definition. The outcome for this type of culture may result in more individuals reaching adulthood, therefore helping to maximize the population's genetic fitness.

Gangstead and Simpson (2000) provided further evidence for SPM's role in parenting and mating goals by examining how strongly heterosexual males invest in their romantic relationships. When controlling for men's anticipated future salary, women's rated physical attractiveness, and women's level of investment in the romantic relationship, males possessing more symmetrical bodily features provided less investment into a romantic relationship than less symmetrical men did. Plus, the

symmetric men were more likely than their less symmetrical peers to lie to their romantic partners and they spent less time with their partner. These results suggest that men with more salient mating goals and diminished parental goals were not invested in their fledgling romantic relationships (Gangstead & Simpson, 2000).

A Two Type Classification Scheme

A two-type classification scheme of parenting and mating goals should provide enough breadth to allow statistical analysis while also being compact enough to make the discussion of parenting versus mating goals simple. This dichotomization of romantic goals is exactly what is suggested in Eastwick et al. (2018). The authors discuss that often these constructs of parenting and mating goals are assumed to fit under the typical romantic relationship progression. When the attraction between two individuals is physical; goals are grounded in mate-seeking behaviors theorized from an evolutionary schema. In that case, mating goals are manifested through sexual desire and achieved through evolutionary adapted mate-seeking strategic behaviors. These goals are immensely important in all starting romantic relationships. Mating goals encourage the initial engagements with potential partners and help keep the individuals with the romantic partner (Eastwick et. al., 2018). For any individual entering a new romantic relationship, mating goals such as mate-seeking can completely dominate the relationship for the entire length of the relationship. For romantic partners that decide they are wanting to invest in their romantic relationship, they begin to bilaterally prioritize mate-retention over mate-seeking, goals turn away from mating into a parental system. As noted by Buss and Schmitt (1993), parental investments. Except the term parental goal is a bit more encapsulating; meaning that parental goals also include long term romantic relationship preservation including mate-guarding, active mate-retention, and other general maintenance behaviors. In

this parenting goal-based system, behaviors are guided by the goals that involve retaining their long-term romantic and providing resources to better the fitness of their offspring (Eastwick et al, 2018). While mating goals are often the strongest drivers of fledgling romantic relationships, individuals that have strong parental goals may enter a romantic relationship for an attractive resource. Findings by Regan et. al. (2000) suggested a large portion of romantic partners evaluate entering a new romantic relationship with equal amounts of focus on their potential partner's sexual desirability and the partner's long-term parenting potentiality.

Distinguishing what exactly determines how researchers differentiate between long- and short-term romantic relationships has long been an area of contention. Eastwick et al. (2018) argue that romantic relations goals will differ upon how romantically satisfied the individual is with the said romantic relationship. The authors suggest a normative model of relationship development (ReCAST) in which the following distinctions between short and long-termed romantic relationships can be made: romantic interest is initially similar between both types (long- and short-term romantic relationships); as time passes, the average romantic interests in the long and short term relationships begin to diverge away each other with the long- slowly leveling off while the short-term function plateaus and then drops significantly. Lastly, effect sizes for caregiving, attachment, and parenting motivations showed little variance between types of relationships at the beginning of heterosexual romantic relationships. Detectable differences in the mentioned effect sizes only became apparent during a phase when short- and long-term romantic relationships began to diverge in romantic interest (Eastwick et. al., 2018). The findings fit nicely with the idea that mating goals are more strongly associated with newer relationships in the beginning stages of a typical romantic sequence. Mating goals should be aligned with

the standard evolutionary psychology framework for romantic relationships. Conversely, parenting goals are described by Eastwick et, al (2018) to become more important to the romantic relationship partners as time passes, being associated with the middle and later stages of love. A successful transition between a focus on parenting strategies over mating seeking seems to be the critical envelope that the romantic relationship must breakthrough to survive.

Communication in Romantic Relationships

Communication is unquestionably an important global aspect for many aspects of human life. Communication also plays a significant role in romantic relationships. Communication is defined as the individual verbally and proverbially interacts with others to share how literal meanings should be understood (Norton, 1978).

A Brief Introduction of Conflict Communication

French and Raven (1962) are accredited as being among the first to define communicative strategies individuals use to influence each other. The researchers studied how random participants would attempt to influence the other in face-to-face conversations and concluded with a six-part typology consisting of the methods titled reward, coercion, referent, legitimate, and expert. This list grew to twelve types over time with additions from other psychologists, now reshaped into the strategies of evasion, verbal manipulation, demand, laissez-faire, telling, asking, bargaining, positive affect, reasoning, persistence, negative affect, and stating importance (Dunbar & Burgoon, 2005). Norton (1978) proposed ten different dimensions of communication (dominant, dramatic, contentious, animated, impression leaving, relaxed, precise, attentive, open, and friendly). Through the ten dimensions of communication is how Norton (1978) proposes individuals produce all forms of in-person communication. These ten categories are dynamic as well, allowing us to

create whatever the social situation requires. The style for which one communicates is critically dependent on the time, context, and situation of the instance; individuals are constantly mixing-and-matching different styles of communication which are appropriate for each instance. In addition, Kapoor, Hughes, Baldwin, and Blue (2003) argue these ten styles are certainly influenced by gender and cultural differences.

Spitzberg (1987) distinguished three types of strategies romantic partners would use to influence behavior in the relationship. The determined categories of persuasive behaviors are integrative strategies, distributive tactics, and avoidance strategies. Integrative strategies are ones that are cooperative in nature, they attempt to solve a conflict in a manner that benefits both partners. Distributive tactics are behaviors that are competitive and aggressive in nature. Lastly, the avoidant strategies are ones that attempt to minimize conflict and diffuse the situation as quickly as possible (Dunbar & Burgoon, 2005). From these three categories, a common theme of valiance. Behaviors are classified in terms of cultural positivity, where the more mannerly of strategies are of a stronger positive valiance. Valiance became a commonplace descriptor in future classification schemes.

High and Low Context Communication

Across different cultures, people communicate differently. Hall (1976) suggested that people learn which pieces of communication are important through three main areas, the family unit, the immediate environment, and by social networks (Kapoor, Hughes, Baldwin, & Blue, 2003). These three critical sources teach individuals how to filter out the unimportant sensory cues we engage with when communicating. Thus, this filtering of information allows people to efficiently process stimuli and appropriately react to the origin of the communication (Kapoor, Hughes, Baldwin, & Blue, 2003). The idea of high and low context communication is born

from the notion that three critical sources of learning exist across all cultures. Hall (1976) used his research with Indians and Americans to describe how within each culture, individuals employ a filter on the sensory cues experienced when communicating with another person. This filtering allows individuals to efficiently process and formulate an appropriate response (Kapoor, Hughes, Baldwin, & Blue, 2003). Just as with the many types of self-construal, all cultures contain elements of both types of communication. The strength of utility for high and low context communication dynamically changes in each variant of communication, but the different cultures are more often to use one over another (Kapoor, Hughes, Baldwin, & Blue, 2003).

High-context communication (HCC) requires the listener to understand the more implicit aspects of a message which is being communicated. Messages from speakers are to be interpreted through implied meanings, knowledge of cultural and contextual factors, and how the speaker is presenting the information, such as the tone of voice or gestures. For example, the statement “Maybe you should start doing some outside chores now that the weather is starting to become warm” is long and ambiguous. The statement provides little detail besides the environment being outside. HCC is more prevalently engaged within collectivistic cultural countries. Greater confidence is placed upon the target’s ability to recognize the non-verbal aspects of communication and expecting the targets to understand indirect modes (Kapoor, Hughes, Baldwin, & Blue, 2003). HCC may require the targets to learn more background information about the topic being conversated. Listeners must synthesize all these environmental cues, cultural norms, and previous knowledge to decipher meanings (Kapoor, Hughes, Baldwin, & Blue, 2003; Neese, 2016). Within HCC cultures, it is expected that individuals communicate only in a high context style; not

being brash in their words and hiding their true intentions (Kapoor, Hughes, Baldwin, & Blue, 2003).

The cultures which find more utility in HCC are often more collectivistic. In Chinese culture, giving a gift of a lotus is an act of glorification for the receiver's integrity because the lotus is a cultural symbol of purity (Li, 2011). Furthermore, being straight-forward and going against the HCC is considered disrespectful because the act is considered aggressive and overbearing towards the target (Li, 2011). These examples serve as descriptors for the great value of indirectness in both the communication and the culture itself. These findings are not suggesting that people from East Asian cultures only communicate using riddles. In most interactions, individuals mainly use a form of low-context communication. However, HCC is more often used in respectable settings such as when among close family members and within high-level business conferences (Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, & Nishida, 1996).

Low-context communication (LCC) is almost the exact opposite of High Context Communication. LCC is direct in nature. The information inside a communication is explicit and is meaningfully hard to misinterpret because the meanings of the words are surface level. So much are the meanings at a surface level, that LCC is also known as "explicit code". For example, the statement "I want you to start mowing the lawn" is a concrete example of LCC language. It is completely unambiguous. A large benefit of LCC is that it affords the users the ability to not only relay information much more quickly than in HCC but also affords individuals to change their minds and efficiently communicate updated ideas (Li, 2011)

Conflict Communication Strategies within Romantic Relationships

Within romantic relationships, the idea of the two partners communicating is rudimentary. Being able to communicate will inevitably lead to individuals

disagreeing. Thankfully though, communication also allows us to solve our disagreements. Conflict communication strategies are how romantic partners attempt to sway each to resolve an occurring conflict. Conflict occurs in a state when one or both romantic partners are in an emotionally charged interpersonal interaction because of a belief that their romantic goals are being blocked by their partner (Young, Bippus, & Dunbar, 2015).

Six types of persuasive communication strategies are identified within psychological literature concerning romantic communication by Overall, Fletcher, Simpson, and Sibley (2009). Shown in *figure 1*, The authors conclude communication behaviors can be measured orthogonally on two distinct continuums, directedness, and valence. The authors found this orthogonal approach to provide a good working model and provided a good fit for their collected data. Valence is simply if the communication strategy is considered positive or negative.

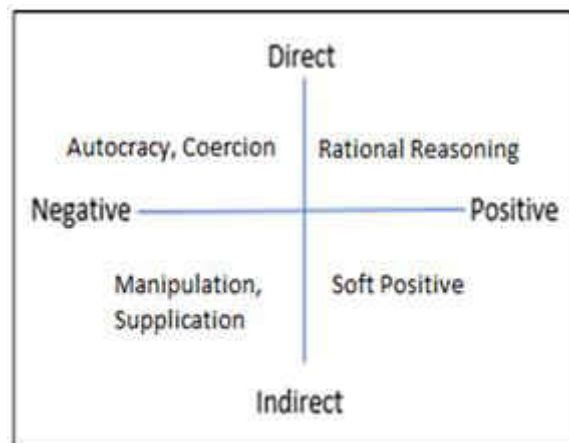


Figure 1: The 6 Identified Conflict Communication Strategies

Strategies that disparage or are rooted in ill-will are considered negative. A romantic partner threatening violence is a very negative strategy. Inversely, positive strategies safeguard the sanctity of the relationship, using behaviors that evoke either positive or neutral affect within their romantic partner and themselves (Overall et al., 2009).

Directedness is the degree to which a persuasive attempt is an unambiguous and explicit act which directly engages the romantic partner (Overall et al., 2009). An example could be a partner verbally expressing disdain for visiting the in-laws and

demands instead of visiting, the couple stays home. There is no ambiguity for the wishes of the partner that wants to stay home and directly communicates the persuasion. Other examples of direct communication strategies are an open discussion, solution proposal, or demanding.

Indirect communication strategies are passive and vague. These types of strategies fit within the contextual and implicit expectations which HCC cultures have for communicators. These strategies can often be ambiguous regarding the valence of an expression. Also, these strategies are not always directly pointed toward the speaker's true intentions. Unsurprisingly, indirect strategies are likely to be much less efficient in generating desired outcomes (Overall et al., 2009). The usage of sarcasm or humor are just a few strategies considered as indirect communication. LCC cultures encourage speakers to make their communications easily understandable. Communication that is highly directed and unambiguously either positive or negative is expected. It is expected then that romantic partners within LCC cultures will abide by cultural norms, using conflict communication strategies that are unambiguous in valence and highly directed.

Direct Strategies

Positive-direct strategies are the archetypal strategies that are explicit and proud. For example, a direct strategy for a fictional couple would be an individual simply telling their romantic partner how much they appreciate it when their partner does a kind task. The key feature in this combination is the ability to calmly persuade with reason. Hence, rational reasoning. More concretely, rational reasoning is an attempt that confronts a problem, explicitly explains all concerns, possible causes and solutions of the problem are identified, and is all packaged as a persuasive argument (Overall et al., 2009).

Negative-direct strategies, such as coercion and autocracy, actively pursue desired changes by derogating and blaming the partner, rigidly demanding change, and offering little room for negotiation. As with a positive direct approach, these tactics are explicit. Except now the speaker is expressing discontent and directly impresses a need for change upon the listener. Targeted partners quickly become acutely aware of their partner's dissatisfaction and the severity the romantic partner feels for this problem. An example of this is when one individual within a couple is overly demanding or threatens physical force to influence their romantic partner (Overall et al., 2009).

Indirect Strategies

Positive-indirect strategies are ones that attempt to soften a persuasion attempt. Called soft positives, these strategies are trying to be perceived as less demanding all the while still sharing a desire for action. For example, individuals in conflict with their romantic partners are utilizing soft positives when they attempt to minimize the severity of a problem. Combining a suggestion for change with humor or compliments is also considered a soft positive strategy. Positive-indirect strategies are conveying that a conflict between the partners is occurring, but the speaker attempts to make the issue itself is only trivial. These strategies are less stress-inducing and in the short term are easier to handle due to less importance being placed on an issue. Positive-indirect strategies are less effective at solving problems because of their tendencies to ignore the issues (Overall et al., 2009).

Negative-indirect strategies are engaged through an indirect induction of negative affect in the target. These strategies are often considered as underhanded and produce change through guilt or sympathy by portraying the actor as powerless or a victim of circumstance. One of the strategies given as an example by the authors is

supplication. Supplication is the usage of emotional expressions to convey hurt, a debasing of the self, or emphasizing the negative consequences that the target will bring upon themselves in deciding. Another example is manipulation. These strategies leave their targets with clear problems, but relatively unambiguous solutions to the problems. Thus, negative-indirect strategies, similarly to their other indirect counterpart, positive-indirect, are only partially effective in short-term, and even less effective in producing long-term change (Overall et al., 2009).

Conflict Communication Strategies and Self-Construal

Members of Eastern Asian cultures often have highly interdependent self-construals, and their communication strategies are often indirect. HCC demands indirect strategies involve a constant reflection of the self onto who an individual is communicating with (Cross, Bacon, Morris, 2000; Kapoor, Hughes, Baldwin, & Blue, 2003). These cultures that highly value relationships make HCC optimal over LCC because of the constant cultural duty to promote social harmony (Cross, Bacon, Morris, 2000). This also would seem to disfavor the development of a strong physical or independent self-construal, instead of promoting RISC or Coll-Inter SC values. Interdependently self-construed cultures that promote proactive maintenance of social harmony will place much value on a conflict communication strategy which is negative-direct. Negative-direct strategies are perhaps most harmful to romantic couples within interdependently construed cultures because of how interconnected spousal families are. This likely discourages the usage of negative-direct strategies by people who are interdependently self-construed.

Within individualistic Euro-American cultures, self-construal is largely independent. The culture promotes a low-context communication where conflict strategies are direct (Cross, Bacon, Morris, 2000; Kapoor, Hughes, Baldwin, & Blue,

2003; Ryan & Gore, in work). Knowing these things, it is expected that the cultures promoting individualistic self-construal should more often encourage positive direct communication strategies with negative direct communication strategies being an unfortunately common by-product of the cultural values. This may also suggest that independent cultures are more strongly associated with physical self-construal.

Gender Socialization and Communication Strategies

Canary (2003) discusses how gender socialization in western cultures endorse strong effects on the ways in which different genders communicate with each other. Women more often than men have stronger indirect communication abilities. While in public, women are smiling more often than men, making eye contact with conversational partners, and present exaggerated facial expressions when interacting. Additionally, these indirect communications women use are more often interpreted correctly by their targets. However, when women are conversating with men, they are talking less than the male, doing more listening, and were more accommodating than males. Men were found to be more direct in the communication strategies displayed, more frequently using “expansive gestures” and were not attempting to hide feelings of restlessness or boredom when communicating with a female partner (Canary, 2003). These results could be evidence for gender socialization being a possible explanatory variable for women possessing strong indirect communication skills while men possess stronger direct communication skills.

The effects of gender socialization on how people communicate influence romantic interactions as well. As individuals begin to enter settings with a goal to find a romantic partner, similar patterns described by Canary (2003) are observed. Within the very first steps of any romantic relationship, gender socialization often dictates interactions. When approaching a person with intention to engage in a mating goal,

males more often report they would engage direct tactics, such as initiating conversations and demonstrating resources. Women report they are more frequently employing indirect strategies to communicate their feelings back, such as flirting. Clark, Shaver, and Abrahams (1999) examined romantic partners within fledgling romantic relationships and found a normative pattern in the strategies romantic partners enacted in pursuit of mating and parenting goals. Males often used direct strategies and their goals centered around mating. Women in these fledgling relationships were more likely to use indirect strategies to achieve mating goals. Women participants also reported significantly less motivation to initiate the pursuit of a romantic partner (Clark, Shaver, & Abrahams, 1999). A large problem for these dichotomies is that the effect of gender socialization on communication strategies is being found in seemingly random order. Researchers have always had trouble consistently finding significant relationships between gender socialization and communication strategies (Morita, 2003). One possible reason for this could be due to power inequities between romantic partners confounding the results.

Romantic Power and Conflict Communication Strategies

Romantic power is shared between the individuals within a romantic relationship. Often this leads to one partner holding more power than the other. Since the beginning of conflict communication research from French and Raven's (1959) bases of power, heterosexual men and women were never consistently found to differ by the variable of gender alone in the employment of conflict communication strategies. Kelley and Thibaut (1978) suggested women were only more often observed utilizing indirect strategies while holding femininity constant. Researchers soon decided that gender differences were a product of imbalances in interpersonal power between romantic partners. Often as romantic partners begin to settle into a

romantic relationship, they become interdependent on one another. As their interdependence grows, the dependency on their romantic for their needs expands as well. This is what is argued by interdependence theory, eventually one partner in the heterosexual romantic relationship will have a greater reliance over the other for their basic needs. This results in a power imbalance where the romantic partner less reliant on the relationship has a greater influence on both the small and large decisions the couple makes (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978).

Jean Miller (1976) found that women who more often utilized indirect strategies became confounded by the inclusion of power inequalities. Falbo and Peplau (1980) found that the more powerful partner utilized more positive and negative valence direct conflict communication strategies, such as bargaining or demanding, over the lower power partner who would employ positive and negative indirect strategies such as soft positives and withdrawal. Howard, Blumstein, and Schwartz (1986) factor-analyzed 24 conflict communication strategies into six categories: manipulation, bullying, disengagement, supplication, autocracy, and bargaining. When analyzing the gender variable across their results, the authors found no effects of sexual orientation or gender differences on the communication strategies being employed. The authors found that individuals who are partners to men would more commonly employ strategies of manipulation and supplication (Howard, Blumstein, and Schwartz, 1986). Frieze and McHugh (1992) found a similar outcome, except women were more often using positive-indirect strategies (soft positives, such as suggestions) and men were more likely to use direct strategies. Once again, power was the primary driving factor in the type of conflict communication strategy utilized (Frieze & McHugh, 1992). Within romantic relationships, individuals often are mismatched in power and most commonly the more masculine individuals will be the

wielders of more power in their romantic relationships (Frieze & McHugh, 1992). This individual which constantly holds more power is more likely to use negative direct strategies to maintain control, exerting a dominant influence over conflict resolutions (Dunbar & Burgoon, 2005). Furthermore, Voyer and Franks (2007) suggest that through self-agency, an individual's own perceived power can moderate the expression of their own affordances and warp how a target perceives someone else's affordances. The romantic partner who holds less power will not perceive their own affordances to be the same as their romantic partner's within the shared environment, modulating the types of communication strategies that may be perceived as most powerful.

Proposed Integrative Model

Gender Socialization and Power on Self-Construal

The results by Gabriel and Gardner (1999) and Gardner, Gabriel, and Hochschild (2002) provide a starting point for determining the connection between gender socialization and self-construal. How gender socialization affects how romantic partners' communication strongly aligns with how self-construal is understood to influence their communication (Canary, 2003). Feminine women are more attentive in conversations, possessing stronger ability to decode emotions or meanings from communication, and are stronger encoders than the men of topics discussed during a conversation. Women are shown to be better judges and possess deeper understandings of their male romantic partner's conflict communication strategies (Hojjat, 2000). Perhaps it is not by chance that these benefits western women are enjoying are the same advantages in communication which interdependent self-construal cultures hold over independent self-construal cultures. For the feminine, RISC provides the most efficient baseline for inferences requiring self-evaluation.

Since through RISC the self is already organized in terms of close others, the appropriate types of feminine behavior or abstract thoughts can be quickly expressed to fit the cultural manners. RISC simply equips individuals with stronger skills to fully understand the interdependent relationship people hold more than individuals utilizing PSC (Canary, 2003; Cross & Morris, 2003). This same type of advantage has only recently been found to exist between masculinity and PSC. The most masculine men are thought to be leaders who speak their mind and do not take challenges to their dominance lightly. This socialization to be masculine has been shown to correlate with beliefs defining the self in terms of bodily ability to perform laborious tasks and enact the will (PSC). Again, PSC and masculinity align well. This idea was found by Gore et al. (2019), where masculinity was found to be significantly associated with PSC, and femininity was found to significantly associated with both RISC and Coll-Inter SC.

Findings by Gabriel and Gardner (1999) provide evidence for masculinity and femininity lining up with their respective self-construal. Gabriel and Gardner (1999) found gender effects to moderate the processes through which individuals connect the self to their romantic relationships. Specifically, women of Euro-American cultures are more focused than men on the relational aspects of their romantic relationships. Women also hold stronger RISC than men, as they use their romantic partner as stronger reference points than males when evaluating self-definition (Gardner, Gabriel, & Hochschild, 2002). Imbalanced power within romantic relationships perhaps accounts for some of the relationships observed between gender socialization and self-construal. Although many individuals enter romantic relationships with quite salient PSC or RISC, perhaps power can act as a moderating variable. Knowing that masculinity positively correlates with PSC and that femininity positively correlates

with RISC, an interactive relationship is likely to exist with the power each individual holds within their romantic relationship. These expected relationships between gender socialization, power, and self- construal are shown in *figure 2*.

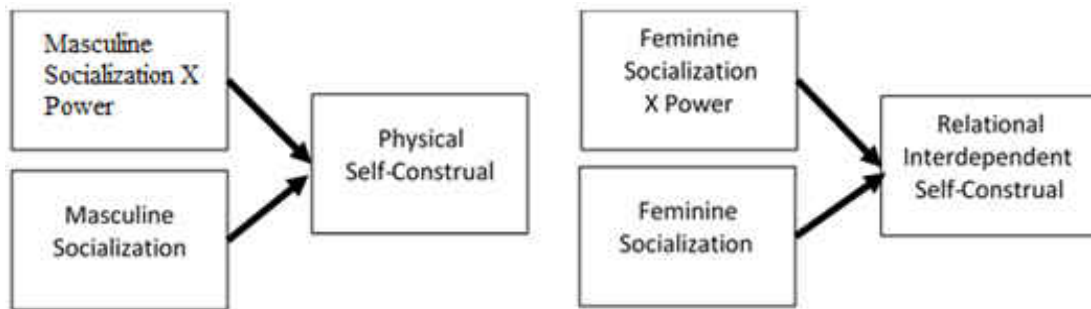


Figure 2: Gender Socialization and Power on Self-Construal

Self-Construal and Romantic Relationship Goals

As shown in *figure 3*, this study hypothesizes that individuals holding a strong PSC versus individuals holding a strong RISC will place higher importance on romantic relationship goals pointed towards mating over parenting goals. Evidence for this hypothesis is formalized with

the premise that individuals in romantic relationships within independent self-construal cultures possess poorer understandings of their romantic partner’s goals and have shallower relationships than

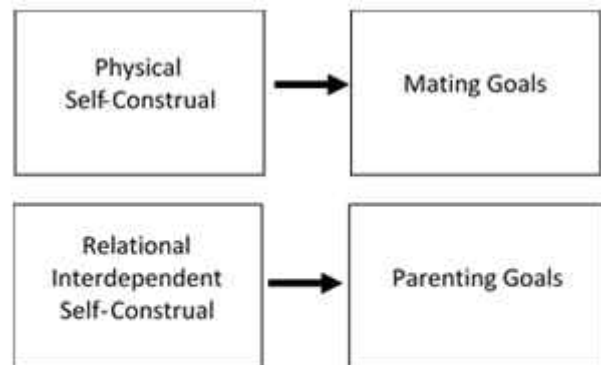


Figure 3: Self-Construal on Romantic Relationship Goals.

romantic individuals within collectivistic cultures (Kapoor, Hughes, Baldwin, & Blue, 2003; Yum, 2004). Less awareness of one’s romantic partner’s goals and feelings may be the result of a weaker self-expansion happening within individualistic cultures. This is compounded by the idea that people who hold strong individualistic

self-construal more often possess individualistic goals, including values of autonomy and self-fulfillment (Wendi et. al., 1999).

Conflict Communication Strategy through Self-Construal and Romantic Goals

Figure 4 shows the hypothesized relationship that masculine socialized individuals who possess strong PSC are expected to employ direct conflict communication strategies (coercion, rational reasoning, or autocracy) to achieve their mating goals. Also shown is the hypothesized relationship that feminine socialized individuals who predominantly employ RISC are expected to more often use indirect strategies (manipulation, supplication, or soft positives) rather than direct conflict communication to achieve their parenting goals. LCC cultures grant more affordance and power to the most masculine individuals, meaning their physical self-construals operate under a condition of greater leniency for both approaching mating goals and using negative direct conflict communication strategies without risk for punishment. Lindgren, Schacht, Pantalone, Blayney, & George (2009) present evidence for this suggesting that when engaging in heterosexual sexual communication, men more commonly employ direct strategies while women employ indirect strategies.

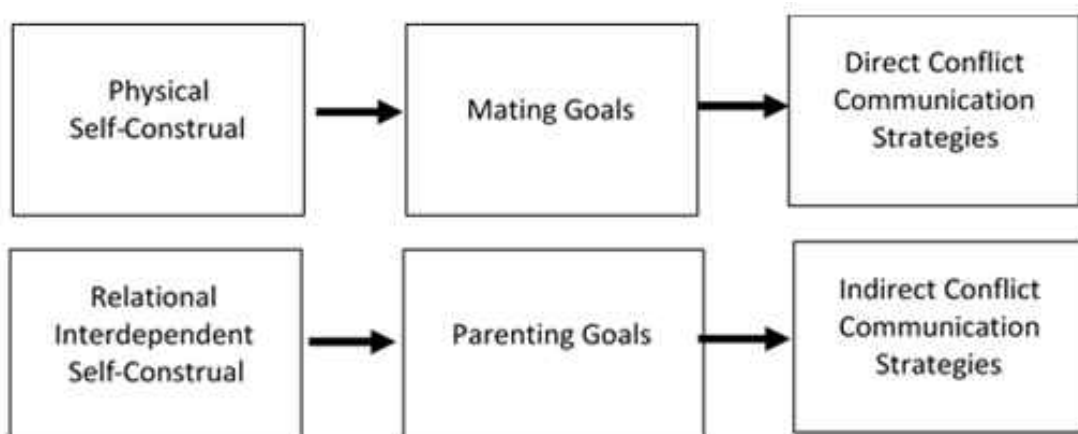


Figure 4: Self-Construal on Romantic Goals and Communication Strategies. Expected structure equation model predicting type of self-construal to predict the relationship between romantic goal type on conflict communication strategies.

Furthermore, heterosexual women more often than men choose to express discomfort or disengagement from sexual communications by indirect communicative strategies (Lindgren, Schacht, Pantalone, Blayney, & George, 2009). Cultures that promote a self-construal entangled with close relationships are associated with greater amounts of HCC (Kapoor, Hughes, Baldwin, & Blue, 2003). RISC has been shown in previous research to be associated with femininity (Gore et al., 2019). In the current study, RISC is hypothesized to be associated with parenting goals. Possessing a lesser amount of romantic power, experiencing stronger feminine socialization, and framing the self through close relationships all combined strongly encourage the use of indirect conflict communication strategies when pursuing parenting goals.

Fully Hypothesized Model

The full hypothesized model, shown in *figure 5*, presents the comprehensive model which is the hypothesis of this proposed work. It is hypothesized that gender socialization and power within a romantic relationship are direct influences on the type of self-construal which an individual most strongly holds. The proposed research

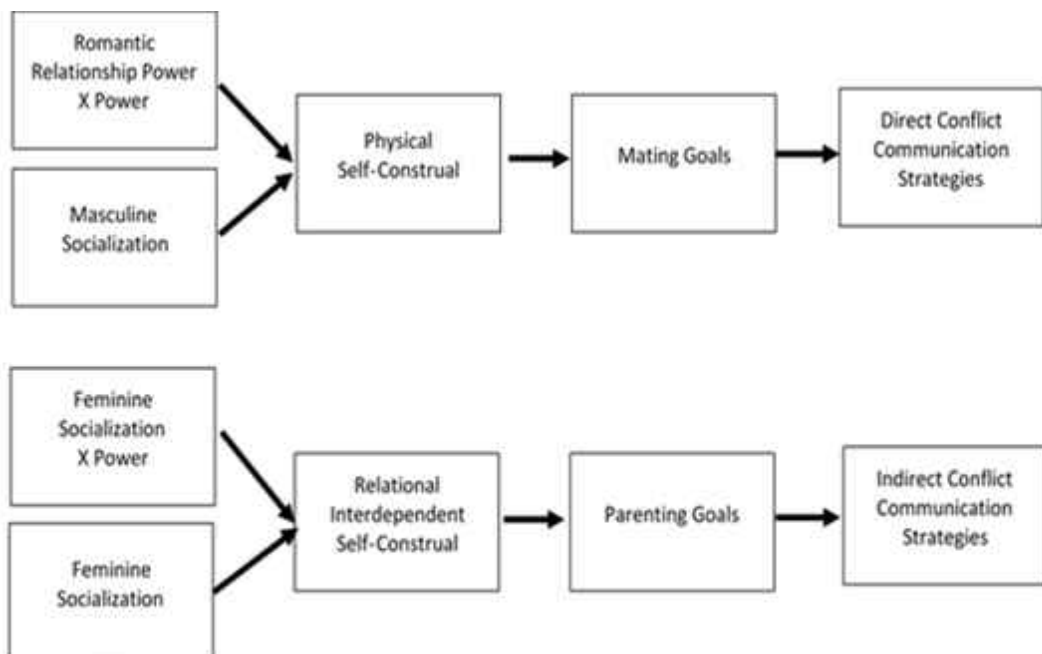


Figure 5: Hypothesized Structure Equation Model

also expects self-construal to directly predict the type of romantic goals that an individual finds more attractive to approach. Furthermore, the proposed research hypothesizes conflict communication strategies to be directly predicted by mating goals, and an indirect consequence of self-construal.

The strength at which an individual exhibits gender socialized characteristics (masculine or feminine) and an interaction between the power that a romantic partner holds with strength gender socialization is hypothesized to promote the self-construal which best optimizes success to influence a romantic partner who is impeding romantic goals. Masculinity and high romantic power are predicted to directly increase the strength of PSC, in turn promoting mating goals and direct conflict communication strategies over parenting goals and indirect conflict communication strategies.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Participants

This study gathered 300 participants using Amazon's subject pool, Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Research by Buhrmester et al. (2011) have shown the MTurk participant population to score very well on test-retest measurements and to also be older and more racially diverse than an average undergraduate participant pool population.

Participants for this study were expected to meet the following criterion to participate: they speak English as their native language; are of at least 18 years of age, permanently reside within the United States of America, at the moment of beginning of the study they are in a romantic relationship, and they must have a completion rate of at least 90% across all attempted MTurk tasks.

Materials

Romantic Relationship Power. The 20-item Relationship Power Inventory (RPI) (Farrell, Simpson, & Rothman, 2015) is a self-report measure of romantic relationship power held by an individual within their romantic relationship. This measure provides information regarding how well individuals are able to resist influence attempts by their romantic partners by assessing an individual's process power ("I tend to take the lead in discussions" or "I am the one to bring up issues") and an individual's outcome power ("I get the final say when making decisions"). Participants answer the items on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree). Example items include "I have more say than my partner does when we make decisions in our relationship" and "I have more control over decision making than my partner does in our relationship."

Gender Socialization. The 55-item Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ) (Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1975) taps the masculinity and femininity of individuals. The original 55-item PAQ attempts to assess stereotypes of how valued attributes are for a person to possess in consideration of their gender. This questionnaire provides a self-perceived possession of traits that are believed to be stereotypical for a singular gender, and traits that are not considered more desirable for one gender over another. The 55-item PAQ possesses three subscales of male valued, female valued, and sex-specific. The sex-specific subscale of items are ones that are rated as only beneficial for one sex to possess. The 55-item PAQ has been found to hold a strong internal consistency, with α s of the subscales ranging from 0.65 to 0.91. (Robinson, Shaver, & Wrightsman, 1991).

We have modified the scale to measure the same traits as the PAQ with a focus on how much the participant's social environment emphasized it for them. The basic premises of the subscales and their items have not been changed. We have modified the wording of the items to better ask how encouraged individuals were in the past to conform to the ascribed gender norm. The original 55-item PAQ asked respondents to rate the strength of agreement that they believed attributes were valuable in males and females (Robinson, Shaver, & Wrightsman, 1991). We have changed these items to instead ask how encouraged the respondent was in the past to display said attributes.

Relational Interdependent Self-Construal. The 11-item Relational-Interdependent Self-Construal Scale (RISC; Cross, Bacon, & Morris, 2000) was used to measure an individual's relational self-construal. In a series of studies, the scale has shown good reliability (Cross et al., 2000; Gore & Cross, 2006; Gore et. al, 2009). Cross et al. (2000) reported acceptable test-retest reliability of the RISC ($r_s = .70$ over

1 month; $r_s = .60$ over 2 months) and discriminant validity with other relevant measures such as the Communal Orientation Scale (Clark, Ouellette, Powell, & Millberg, 1987), Interdependent Self-Construal Scale (Singelis, 1994) and Empathic Concern Scale (Davis, 1983). An example item is “My close relationships are an important reflection of who I am.” The scale requires participants to respond to a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *never or almost never true*, 5 = *always or almost always true*).

Physical Self-Construal. The Physical Self-Construal scale (Gore, Dean, & Ryan, 2019) was used to measure how a person’s body and physical abilities are incorporated into how they define themselves. Respondents choose how well items describe them on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *never or almost never true*, 5 = *always or almost always true*).

Mating Goals. The importance of the sexual aspirations an individual desire to achieve was assessed by using the 10-item short-term mating orientation (STMO). The STMO is a modified subscale originating from the Sociosexual Orientation Inventory by Simpson and Gangstead in 1992 (Jackson & Kirkpatrick, 2007). Jackson and Kirkpatrick (2007) report their STMO to be a measure of the extent to which individuals’ mate acquisition motivation system is habitually activated (Beall & Schaller, 2019). A correlational analysis of the STMO with the original Sociosexual Orientation Inventory against reports of an individual’s previous sexual behavior found the STMO to strongly correlated with a history of sexual behavior (Jackson & Kirkpatrick, 2007). Scoring high on the STMO is indicative of stronger sexually promiscuous attitudes, suggesting that the individual more frequently is approaching mating goals (Beall & Schaller, 2019). An example item is “I could enjoy sex with someone I find highly desirable even if that person does not have long-term potential.” The STMO measures an individual’s current strength of desire to pursue

mating goals. Recently, Beall and Schaller (2019) employed the STMO with success ($\alpha = 0.95$) to predict how frequently participants were pursuing mating goals.

Parenting Goals. The long-term mating orientation scale (LTMO) is a 9-item measurement which is also a modified subscale of the Sociosexual Orientation Inventory, developed simultaneously by Jackson & Kirkpatrick (2007). LTMO was found to have high internal reliability ($\alpha = 0.89$). The LTMO was found to correlate with male preference for parenting qualities ($r = 0.33$). Furthermore, the LTMO negatively correlated ($r = -0.24$) with male preferences for attractiveness/social visibility (Jackson & Kirkpatrick, 2007). The LTMO measures an individual's current strength of desire to pursue parenting goals. Scoring high on the LTMO suggests that for individuals entering a romantic relationship, more value is placed upon a romantic partner possessing personal or parenting qualities (Jackson & Kirkpatrick, 2007). Example items include "I would like to have a romantic relationship that lasts forever" and "I am interested in maintaining a long-term romantic relationship".

Conflict Communication Strategies. The communication strategies used to navigate conflict which the present study explores were chosen based upon the findings of Overall, Fletcher, Simpson, and Sibley (2009). To classify communication strategies, the authors put forward a two-dimensional scale classifying valence, the degree to which a communication strategy is considered positive to negative, and directedness; the degree to which one says exactly what they mean. These two-dimensional factors of communication are presented by Overall et al. (2009) to be strong orthogonal descriptors of communication strategies in describing both the immediate and long-term impacts of conflict communication behaviors. Each strategy type (coercion, autocracy, manipulation, supplication, reasoning, and soft positives) was noted by Overall et al. (2009) to be consistently employed in heterosexual

romantic relationships because they have the greatest perceived odds of success at inducing a change in behavior or attitude and cause a change in the targeted features over time. For both men and women, Overall et al. (2009) found that the morality of the described strategies to be unchanging across samples, such as the strategy of manipulation always being considered negative-indirect.

This study presents a measure employing the same communication strategies described by Overall et al. (2009). Participants are asked how commonly they have enacted the strategies when resolving conflict with their current romantic partner (1 = *Almost Never*, 5 = *Almost Always*). Example items are “If your romantic partner’s behaviors are making you unhappy, will you commonly say you understand their actions, but it makes you feel discomfort?” and “Do you often attempt to “cash-in” on old favors to influence your romantic partner’s behavior?”

Procedure

To begin the study, participants selected this study from the MTurk job board. If a person wished to participate in the study, they were given a small screening survey, checking that the person fits all the study’s criteria. If the participant did not fit within the criterion, they were informed that they did not meet the required qualification to participate in the study. Participants that did qualify were taken to surveymonkey.com, where the study was hosted. Participants then completed all of the measures in a randomized order to control for any unseen confounding variables. Upon completion of the study, participants were brought back to the MTurk homepage where they received a \$0.75 payment if at least 80% of the attention checks were successfully completed.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this research was to determine if distinguishable relationships exist between gender socialization, self-construal, relationship goals, and conflict communication strategies. This study hypothesized a recursive two-tracked model, separated by gender socialization and power within a romantic relationship. The first relationship the present study was designed to determine is if an individual's predominant type of self-construal is predicted by gender socialization and romantic power. The next section of the hypothesized track suggests self-construal to directly predict the type of romantic goals for which an individual holds stronger desires. Lastly, this research hypothesized conflict communication strategies to be predicted directly by romantic relationship goals, and an indirect consequence of self-construal. To test the hypotheses, structure equation modeling was conducted using LISREL 10.

Model 1

For the first hypothesis, masculine socialization strongly predicted PSC and feminine socialization was a strong predictor of RISC. These two findings provide evidence for the hypothesis that being reared to possess highly masculine or feminine beliefs impacts the predominate type of self-construal a person holds. No association was found between the interaction of gender socialization and power on either PSC or RISC. Both PSC and RISC were respectively found to be positively related mating and parenting goals. Therefore, the results support the second hypothesis of the study.

The third hypothesis of the study was mating goals would predict direct conflict communication strategies and parenting goals would predict indirect conflict communication strategies. Of the direct communication strategies, only coercion was significantly predicted by mating goals. Of the indirect communication strategies,

only manipulation and supplication were significantly predicted by parenting goals. Given that only half of the hypothesized paths were significant, this study concludes there is not enough evidence to support the third hypothesis.

The hypothesized model did not possess any significant cross-over pathways between the identified self-construals and identified romantic goals. RISC possessed an insignificant association with mating goals, and PSC possessed an insignificant association with parenting goals. The model's standardized beta coefficients are shown in Figure 6.

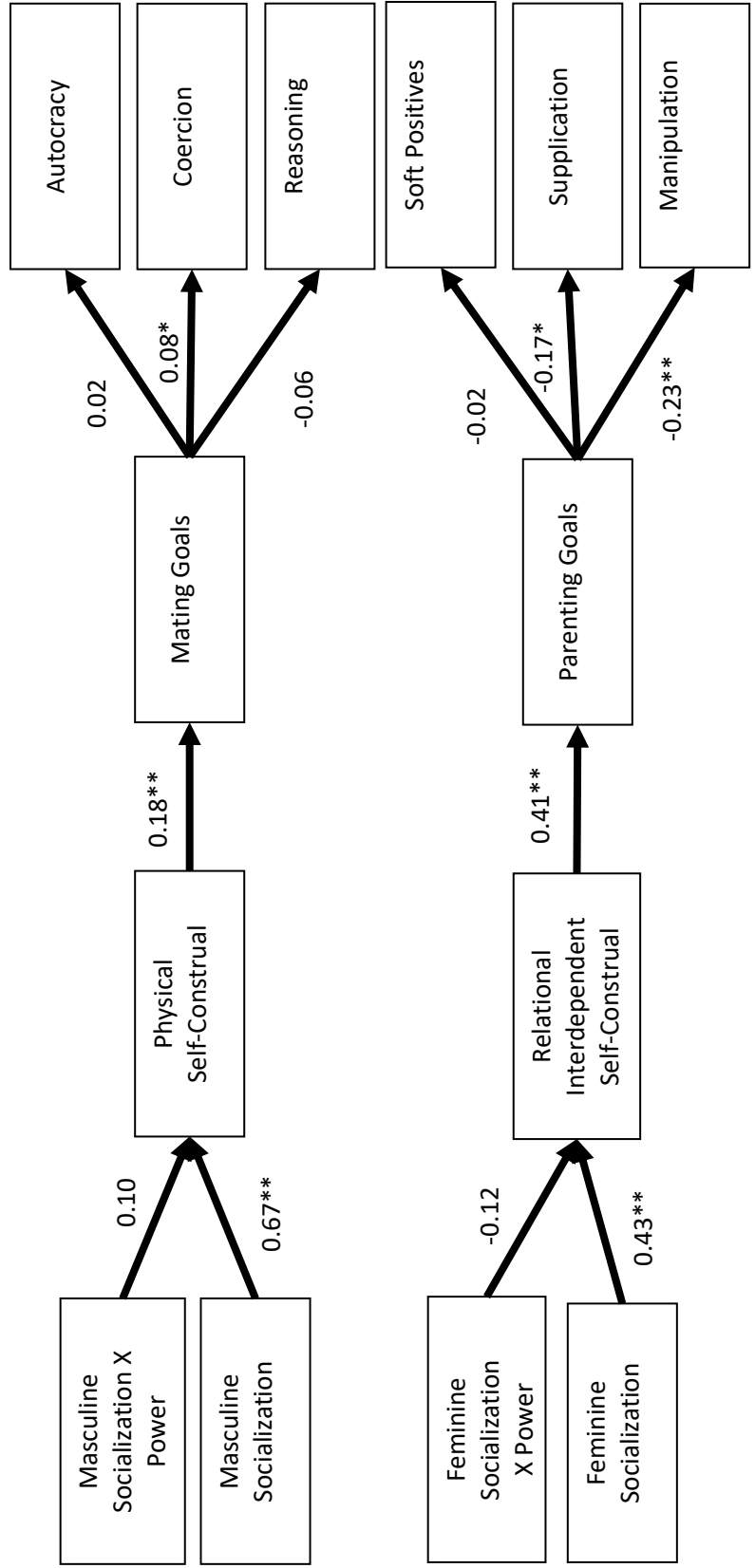


Figure 6: Results for Hypothesized Structure Equation Model. The hypothesized structure equation model ($N = 241$) with direct conflict communication strategies (autocracy, coercion, and reasoning) and indirect conflict communication strategies (soft positives, supplication, and manipulation). Standardized beta coefficients are included in the model.

Note: $\chi^2(56) = 453.46, p < .001$; $CFI = 0.90$; $GFI = 0.81$; $RMSEA = 0.31$

* $p < .05$. ** $p < 0.01$

The hypothesized model did not fit the data well, $\chi^2 (56) = 453.46, p < .001$, Goodness of Fit Index (*GFI*) = 0.81, Comparative Fit Index (*CFI*) = 0.90, and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (*RMSEA*) = 0.16 (McDonald & Ho, 2002). A large discrepancy exists between *CFI* and *RMSEA* in terms of if the study's hypothesized model fits the data. The *CFI* suggests the hypothesized model meets the minimum requirement of good model fit $CFI \geq 0.90$, however the *RMSEA* suggests the hypothesized model has a poor fit where good fitting models have a minimum requirement of $RMSEA < 0.08$. The answer to this discrepancy could be due to the *CFI* being more suited for exploratory models while *RMSEA* is argued to be better suited for confirmatory models (Rigdon, 1996).

Model 2

In order to increase the model fit, the researchers decided to conduct a post-hoc analysis where both parenting and mating predicted all six of the conflict communication strategies. Model 2, the post-hoc model, is shown in Figure 7. Mating goals was a significant predictor of all six conflict communication strategies. Parenting goals was a significant predictor for all but soft positives. Within model 2, a notable distinction exists between associations that mating and parenting goals have with conflict communication strategies. Mating goals had positive associations with all six strategies. Parenting goals had negative associations with autocracy, supplication, coercion, and manipulation. Similar to the previous model, Model 2 did not possess significant associations that would directly connect the two tracks. Neither type of self-construal was significantly associated with the opposing's track romantic goal. Model 2 also had a better fit than the hypothesized model with a $\chi^2 (50) = 277.21, p < .001$; *CFI* = 0.94; *GFI* = 0.88; *RMSEA* = 0.12 (McDonald & Ho, 2002). Model 2 fits the data better than Model 1 ($\Delta\chi^2(6) = 176.24, p < 0.001$).

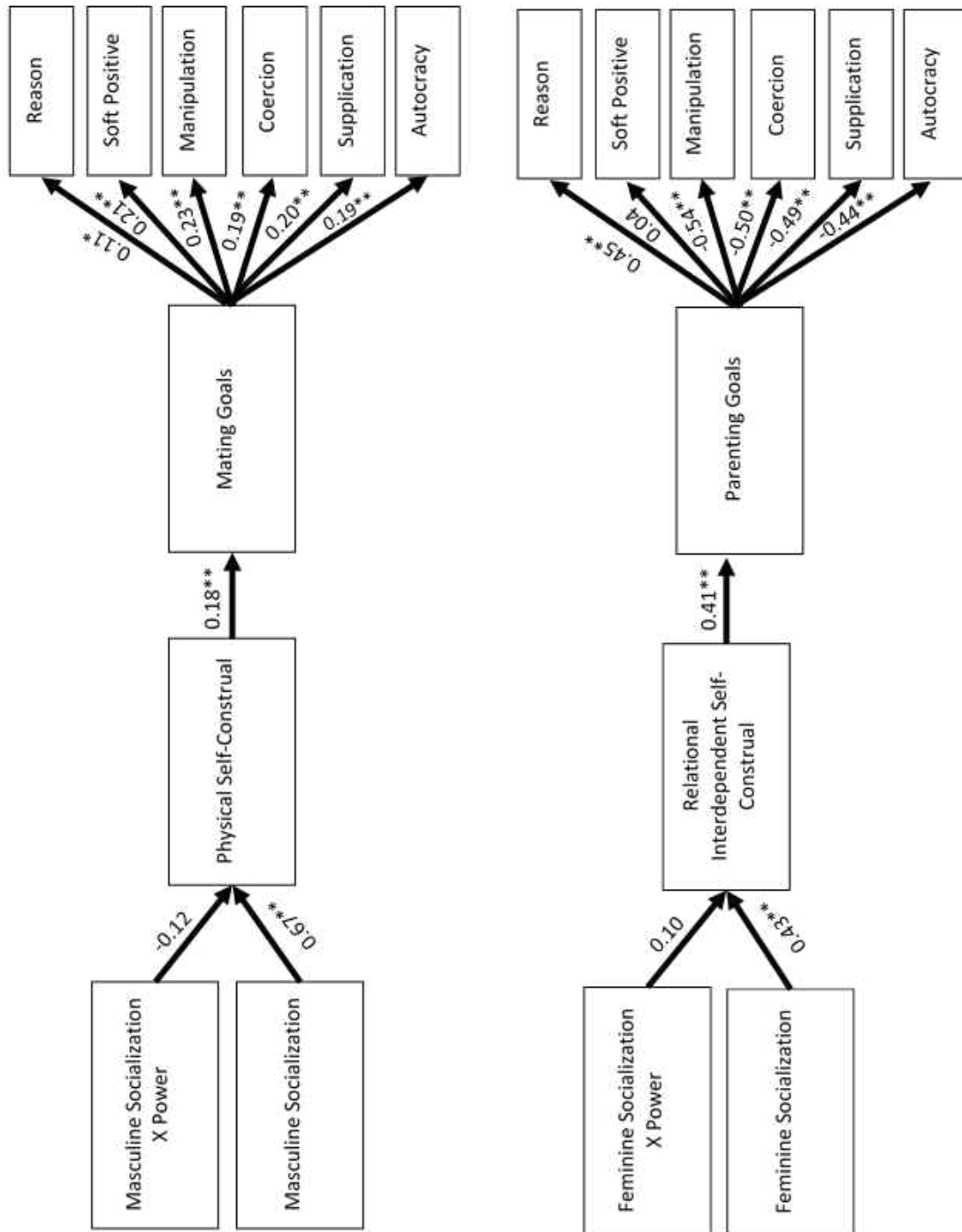


Figure 7: Results for Post-Hoc Structure Equation Model. The post-hoc structure equation model ($N = 241$) with modified paths from romantic goals to all the measured conflict communication strategies with standardized beta coefficients.

Note: $\chi^2(50) = 277.21, p < .001; CFI = 0.94; GFI = 0.88; RMSEA = 0.12$

* $p < .05$. ** $p < 0.01$

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was to determine if distinguishable relations exist across of gender socialization, self-construal, relationship goals, and conflict communication strategies. The first hypothesis was partially supported by the data. Both feminine and masculine socialization were positive predictors of the corresponding self-construal. However, both interaction terms of socialization and power were unrelated to self-construal. The second hypothesis was fully supported; RISC and PSC were positively associated with parenting and mating goals respectively. The last hypothesis of romantic relationship goals predicting conflict communication strategies was not supported. Only three of the six paths from romantic relationship goals to conflict communication strategies (coercion, supplication, and manipulation) were significant, and they were not in the predicted directions.

The hypothesized model also did not fit psychological model standards. The researchers remedied the poor model fit in the post-hoc model, titled Figure 7. The only modification made in the post-hoc model was for the influence of romantic goals on conflict communication strategies. Restrictions placed upon conflict communication strategies by the two-tracks were removed. From the post-hoc model, a noticeable difference between the outcomes of conflict communication strategies appeared. Mating goals were positively associated with all six conflict communication strategies. Parenting goals had strong negative associations with four of the conflict communication strategies (autocracy, supplication, coercion, and manipulation), they were not associated with soft-positives, and they had a strong positive association with reasoning. This stark difference in the direction of the associations between

parenting and mating goals suggests individuals pursuing parenting goals were less likely to use negative and indirect strategies. Individuals who pursue mating goals may, therefore, be more aggressive in their attempts to achieve their relationship goals.

Implications

This study partially supports previous research that suggested the gender of an individual is related to the type of self-construal a person most strongly holds (Gabriel & Gardner, 1999; Gardner, Gabriel, & Hochschild, 2002). The results of this study and previous literature together provide strong evidence suggesting that more frequent exposure to culturally normative gender roles influences many psychological aspects held as an adult (Lawson, Crouter, & McHale, 2015). Our result provides a more nuanced hypothesis than previous literature has in the past. Gender socialization serves as a conduit to promote the appropriate self-construal dependent upon the cultural expectations for social interactions (Canary, 2003; Cross & Morris, 2003; Gardner, Gabriel, & Hochschild, 2002; Gore et al., 2019).

Romantic goals and self-construal were consistent with sex roles. The study found that participants with a robust RISC placed greater value on both general romantic relationship maintenance behaviors and sacrificial parenting behaviors. This is concordant with Eastwick et al. (2018), who have shown that long-term romantic relationships are more successful when partners are putting greater investments into their relationship. The results suggest that highly relational people are framing themselves in a way that fits within a feminine cultural norm, including desires to begin a family and self-sacrifice. These same individuals with salient parenting goals should be less likely to cheat or participate in behaviors that may jeopardize the romantic relationship. Similar, but more generalized, patterns have been found in

numerous studies, where RISC has been linked to femininity and being more aware of close others' feelings (Cross, Bacon, & Morris, 2000; Yum, 2004).

A simple understanding of the results suggests that individuals possessing strong PSC prefer to pursue mating goals over parenting goals. This impression supports previous literature finding that masculinity promotes greater sexually permissiveness (Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Treger & Schmitt, 2019; Trivers, 1972). Masculine individuals are socialized to understand masculinity as the ability to have many romantic partners. Here, the culture itself promotes masculinity through defining oneself in physical terms, which is strongly associated with a desire to pursue mating goals.

Individuals with strong PSC prefer to express themselves through their physical bodies (Gore et al., 2019). The results of this study suggest a similar argument, with PSC being strongly associated with a stronger desire for mating goals. When considering independently construed individuals have less intimate knowledge about their romantic partners when compared against their RISC peers, holding long-term romantic relationships could be more difficult (Cross, Bacon, & Morris, 2000). Eastwick et. al. (2018) argued in their ReCast model that within long-term romantic relationships, partners typically shift away from mating goals, transitioning towards parenting goals. Their research ultimately concludes that successful long-term romantic relationships are predictable by the possession of parenting goals instead of mating goals. The results of the study reconfirm that hypothesis. Within the current study's participants, ($n_{Standardized\ Parenting\ Goal > 0} = 113$, $n_{Standardized\ Mating\ Goal > 0} = 101$) have been within their current romantic relationship longer ($M_{Romantic\ Relationship\ Length | Standardized\ Parenting\ Goal > 0} = 10.93$ years, $M_{Standardized\ Mating\ Goal > 0} = 7.62$ years) ; $t(182) = 2.51, p = 0.013$.

Considering that this study found PSC and RISC to predict mating and parenting goals, future studies should reinvestigate the Eastwick et. al. (2018) ReCast model with self-construal included as additional measures to improve the ReCast model's fit.

This is the first study to establish a distinct model where pathways exist between PSC on mating goals and RISC on parenting goals. A stronger desire for parenting goals was not associated with having a strong PSC. A stronger desire for mating goals was not associated with having a strong RISC. The participants held less value in exploring romantic goals that did not fit within the norms incorporated into their self-construal. The non-existence of associations across the groups may be due to how the obligatory behaviors to achieve desired parenting and mating goals are perceived. Within heterosexual romantic relationships, males and females are expected to have different experiences while experiencing the same circumstances. During sexual intercourse, males are expected to emphasize the pleasure derived from the physical act itself. Alternatively, women are expected to understand sexual intercourse as signaling of love or related positive affects (Bimbaum & Laser-Brandt, 2002). Aligned very well with the results by Bimbaum and Laser-Brandt (2002) is that having a powerful PSC is argued to focus the definition of the self towards the abilities of the body, while RISC is argued to focus the definition of the self towards the close intimate relationships a person has (Cross & Morris, 2003; Gore et al., 2019). The results of this research showed that PSC and RISC could possibly connect this literature, with gender socialization associating with self-construal; self-construal associates with different romantic goals, possibly even during shared romantic experiences.

The results of the study present a possibility for agreement with preceding literature on conflict communication strategies between romantic partners. Clark,

Shaver, and Abrahams (1999), Frieze and McHugh (1992), and Canary (2003) all collectively argued that heterosexual men are both expected to and more often employ direct strategies when expressing their sexual interest towards a female. This association may be better explained through socialization and self-construal. For people pursuing mating goals, all six conflict communication strategies were employed, although the link to reasoning was the weakest. There was no discernible difference between the high and low contextual conflict communication strategies when pursuing mating goals.

Gender socialization is an integral variable within the proposed models. However, the authors of the study advise caution when defining behaviors as masculine or feminine. This study should be considered as have taking on a traditional approach towards how people experience gender socialization. Western culture has over time been becoming more progressive. A result of this progressive movement has been a degradation in many existing distinctions between normative gendered behaviors considered to be masculine and feminine. This has slowly been creating a need for the psychological community to reflect on we understand masculinity and femininity. Recent research on gender socialization is beginning to show this idea. The future of gender socialization within the psychological literature will hopefully adopt a new multi-dimensional approach where masculinity and femininity are considered to possess multiple facets (Kachel, Steffens & Niedlich, 2016; Levant, 2011; Maccoby, 1988; Menon, 2017).

The results provide a plausible explanation for why research on gender socialization and communication strategies has long been problematic for researchers (Morita, 2003). Previous research has relied on differences in power between romantic partners to explain communication strategies (Dunbar & Burgoon, 2005;

Frieze & McHugh, 1992). This current study suggests that gender socialization and communication strategies are connected, but indirectly.

In previous literature, gender socialization has failed to be reliable predictor of conflict communication strategies. When examining heterosexual participants in romantic relationships, power is often granted to whoever is the more masculine partner. This conclusion has produced semi-reliable research suggesting gender socialization and indirectly romantic power predicts conflict communication strategies because each gender has distinct culturally acceptable styles to communicate with a romantic partner. In the past, this hypothesis has worked well; especially well during the early 1990s when the theory was introduced (Frieze & McHugh, 1992). The theory still holds true. Gender socialization plays a role in the kinds of conflict communication strategies an individual can employ to solve a conflict with their romantic partner (Canary, 2003; Dunbar & Burgoon, 2005). Previous literature came to the consensus that gender socialization informs the relationship between romantic power on conflict communication strategies. However, the results of the current study suggest that gender socialization may only serve as a distal predictor of more proximal ones, such as self-construal and romantic goals, to directly associate with conflict communication strategies. This study offers the alternative that gender socialization provides a framework from which a self-construal is constructed; self-construal operates the romantic goals perceived to be appropriate for the individual; romantic goals are then perceived to be more successful when romantic partners are swayed using the corresponding conflict communication strategies.

Both the hypothesized and post-hoc models did not possess any cross-over pathways between self-construal and romantic relationship goals. RISC possessed a nonsignificant relationship with mating goals. PSC possessed a nonsignificant

relationship with mating goals. To the researchers' knowledge, this finding has not been documented in previous literature. A possible argument for this finding is simply a difference in the types of goals the identified populations prefer to pursue. Individuals that are predominately engaging in PSC may have less intrinsic motivation to pursue parenting goals. Individuals predominately engaging in RISC possibly have less intrinsic motivation to pursue mating goals. Previous literature has suggested that within long-lasting romantic relationships, romantic partners normatively transition from mating goals and into parenting goals (Eastwick, 2018).

Limitations and Future Direction

The present study created the conflict communication strategies material based upon a coding sheet to be used while examining recorded videos of romantic couples interacting. There was no evidence that any of the conflict communication strategies suffered from poor reliability. Future testing of this survey is required before it should be considered a valid psychological tool. An inability to bring romantic couples into a laboratory setting was another limitation that this research faced. This meant that the study was entirely reliant upon self-report measures and was vulnerable to social desirability bias. The present study indirectly asked participants about how commonly they employ behaviors which could be considered as physical or verbal abuse. The researchers erroneously excluded a critical survey question that asked what the participant's sex is. Since this study explored previously untested models, the effect of this limitation is not known.

Future studies should consider using a more advanced methodology to examine the tested relationships in the study. Researchers should consider introducing a lab visit for romantic couples where a method comparable to Overall et al. (2009) can be employed. Employing lab visits also allows researchers to gather dyadic

romantic partner data. With dyadic romantic partner data, future research can provide a better investigation into the role romantic power has on this research's presented two-track model. Young adults and seniors do not possess the same attitudes toward romantic relationships. These two populations also did not experience the same gender socialization experiences. Therefore, it is suggested that future researchers consider narrowing the age range of participants to examine a more specified population. Future studies should assess and account for sex and gender. By accounting for these variables, a stronger definitive argument could be produced regarding how gender associations create two dominant tracks towards self-construal and other following constructs. This addition could establish differences in communication strategies through socialization, self-definition, and relationship goals above and beyond gender.

While this study identifies research suggesting gender socialization experienced as a child significantly impacts adulthood outcomes, a wider range of socialization experiences should be considered by future research (Lawson, Crouter, and McHale (2015). Gender socialization does not end in childhood. Values of masculinity and femininity are consistently and constantly reevaluated to properly fit within in-groups. This study approached gender socialization by asking participants about the socialization experienced they had experienced in the past. A potential problem with this methodology is that at any time throughout life, an individual might experience significant changes in how they identify with traits often considered to be masculine or feminine. An individual that is raised to be hyper-masculine could in adulthood identify with more typical feminine traits. This presents a problem for researchers, where hypotheses are increasing the potentiality for type II error within studies. It is important that future research on new or the identified model employs

socialization measurements which are capturing more both childhood and later-on gender socialization experiences.

Conclusion

This study has identified two distinct pathways from gender socialization to conflict communication strategies with the feminine pathway producing more positive long-term strategies. Masculine socialization encourages individuals to have a self-construal that is focused on their physical ability. Placing self-definition within the body's physical accomplishments blends into the types of goals held for a romantic relationship, meaning PSC corresponds with mating goals. This masculine pathway ultimately predicts indirect and negative conflict communication strategies in romantic relationships. Alternatively, feminine socialization encourages a self-construal that is focused on important close relationships. Through framing of the self by close others, these individuals had romantic goals associated with self-sacrificial behaviors. The feminine pathway was characterized by conflict communication strategies that avoid negative and indirect strategies and adopt positive and direct strategies. The identified model allows researchers to understand how gender socialization can impact conflict communication strategies through other variables, such as self-construal. By understanding these relationships, researchers can create more attuned hypotheses and improve future romantic relationship research. It is important that researchers continue exploring the masculine and feminine pathways to better understand patterns in communication between romantic partners. By utilizing the two-track model, we can begin to understand questions about why romantic couples do not always get along and how conflict communication strategies are selected to persuade their romantic partner.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:

Power Scale

Appendix A:

Power Scale

For each statement, rate how true it is of you and your partner **generally in your relationship**.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not		Sometimes				Always
At all						

1. I have more say than my partner does when we make decisions in our relationship
2. I have more control over decision making than my partner does in our relationship.
3. When we make decisions in our relationship, I get the final say.
4. I have more influence than my partner does on decisions in our relationship.
5. I have more power than my partner when deciding about issues in our relationship.
6. I am more likely than my partner to get my way when we disagree about issues in our relationship.
7. My partner has more say than I do when we make decisions in our relationship.*
8. My partner has more control over decision making than I do in our relationship.*
9. When we make decisions in our relationship, my partner gets the final say.*
10. My partner has more influence than I do on decisions in our relationship.*
11. My partner has more power than me when deciding about issues in our relationship.*
12. My partner is more likely to get his/her way than me when we disagree about issues in our relationship.*
13. I am more likely than my partner to start discussions about issues in our relationship.
14. When my partner and I make decisions in our relationship, I tend to structure and lead the discussion.
15. I lay out the options more than my partner does when we discuss decisions in our relationship.
16. I tend to bring up issues in our relationship more often than my partner does.
17. My partner is more likely than me to start discussions about issues in our relationship.*
18. When my partner and I make decisions in our relationship, my partner tends to structure and lead the discussion.*
19. My partner lays out the options more than I do when we discuss decisions in our relationship.*
20. My partner tends to bring up issues in our relationship more often than I do.*

*Reverse scored item

APPENDIX B:
Gender Socialization Scale

Appendix B:
Gender Socialization Scale

Please use the scale below to rate the following statements:

1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree Somewhat; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree Somewhat; 5 = Strongly Agree

1. I was encouraged to be independent
2. I was encouraged to not be easily influenced by others
3. I was encouraged to play sports
4. I was encouraged to temper my emotions
5. I was encouraged to be active
6. I was encouraged to be competitive
7. I was encouraged to be interested in sex
8. I was encouraged to voice my opinion
9. I was encouraged to seek adventure
10. I was encouraged to be outgoing
11. I was encouraged to always be a leader
12. I was encouraged to be intellectual
13. I was encouraged to never give up easily
14. I was encouraged to have confidence in myself
15. I was encouraged to speak up for what is right
16. I was encouraged to be ambitious
17. I was encouraged to be timid
18. I was encouraged to feel superior over my peers
19. I was encouraged to not be indecisive
20. I was encouraged to know the ways of the world
21. I was encouraged to be aggressive

22. I was encouraged to be dominate
23. I was encouraged to like math and science
24. I was encouraged to be skilled with my hands
25. I was encouraged to be loud
26. I was encouraged to be in control of the situation
27. I was encouraged to embrace my emotions
28. I was encouraged to be considerate
29. I was encouraged to be grateful
30. I was encouraged to devote myself to others
31. I was encouraged to be gentle
32. I was encouraged to be helpful
33. I was encouraged to be kind
34. I was encouraged to solve problems with words
35. I was encouraged to have a strong conscience
36. I was encouraged to be aware of others feelings
37. I was encouraged to be clean and neat
38. I was encouraged to be creative
39. I was encouraged to be understanding
40. I was encouraged to be warm
41. I was encouraged to like children
42. I was encouraged to enjoy art and music
43. I was encouraged to share my inner feelings
44. I was encouraged to get approval
45. I was encouraged to cry
46. I was encouraged to express if my feelings are hurt

47. I was encouraged to be religious

48. I was encouraged to be a home-builder

49. I was encouraged to be easily excitable

APPENDIX C:
Physical Self-Construal Scale

Appendix C:
Physical Self-Construal Scale

Please use the scale below to rate the following statements:

1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree Somewhat; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree Somewhat; 5 = Strongly Agree

1. My physical body is an important part of who I am.
2. What I can accomplish with my hands is the way of showing what I can do.
3. My happiness depends on what I have accomplished with my physical body.
4. I value what my physical body is capable of achieving.
5. I see physical tasks as something to do, but I feel little pride when I accomplish them.
6. I respect people who are concerned about how well they can use their body to complete a task.
7. Being able to get the job done with my own hands is important to me.
8. My sense of pride comes from knowing what I can do with my body.
9. Some people think of their body when they think of themselves, but I am not one of those people.
10. When I think of myself, I often think of my physical body.
11. If I can't use a part of my physical body, I feel worthless.
12. Even when my body can't give any more, I still keep pushing.
13. Physical labor is what I was made to do.
14. I try to take into consideration what my body is capable of doing when trying to complete a task.
15. My hands are the tools to most of my work.
16. In general, what I've created with my hands is an extension of who I am.

17. I trust myself to take on any level of physical labor.
18. If a person can't complete a physical task on their own, I feel like it is my responsibility to help.
19. Having to do a job that involves physical labor is important to me.
20. I will sacrifice my leisure time for the sake of getting physical tasks done.

APPENDIX D:
Relational Interdependent Self-Construal Scale

Appendix D:

Relational Interdependent Self-Construal Scale

Please use the scale below to rate the following statements:

1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree Somewhat; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree Somewhat; 5 = Strongly Agree

1. My close relationships are an important reflection of who I am.
2. When I feel very close to someone, it often feels to me like that person is an important part of who I am.
3. I usually feel a strong sense of pride when someone close to me has an important accomplishment.
4. I think one of the most important parts of who I am can be captured by looking at my close friends and understanding who they are.
5. When I think of myself, I often think of my close friends or family also.
6. If a person hurts someone close to me, I feel personally hurt as well.
7. In general, my close relationships are an important part of my self-image.
8. Overall, my close relationships have very little to do with how I feel about myself.
9. My close relationships are unimportant to my sense of what kind of person I am.
10. My sense of pride comes from knowing who I have as close friends.
11. When I establish a close friendship with someone, I usually develop a strong sense of identification with that person.

APPENDIX E:
Mating Goals Scales

Appendix E:
Mating Goals Scales

Please use the scale below to rate the following statements:

1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree Somewhat; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree Somewhat; 5 = Strongly Agree

1. I can easily imagine myself being comfortable and enjoying "casual" sex with different partners.
2. I can imagine myself enjoying a brief sexual encounter with someone I find very attractive
3. I could easily imagine myself enjoying one night of sex with someone I would never see again
4. Sex without love is OK
5. I could enjoy sex with someone I find highly desirable even if that person does not have long-term potential
6. I would never consider having a brief sexual relationship with someone
7. Sometimes I would rather have sex with someone I did not care about
8. I would consider having sex with a stranger if I could be assured that it was safe, and he/she was attractive to me
9. I believe in taking sexual opportunities when I find them
10. I would have to be closely attached to someone (both emotionally and psychologically) before I could feel comfortable and fully enjoy having sex with him/her.

APPENDIX F:
Parenting Goals Scale

Appendix F:
Parenting Goals Scale

Please use the scale below to rate the following statements:

1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree Somewhat; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree Somewhat; 5 = Strongly Agree

1. I am interested in maintaining a long-term romantic relationship with someone special
2. I hope to have a romantic relationship that lasts the rest of my life
3. I would like to have a romantic relationship that lasts forever
4. Long-term romantic relationships are not for me
5. Finding a long-term romantic partner is not important to me
6. I can easily see myself engaging in a long-term romantic relationship with someone special
7. I cannot imagine spending the rest of my life with one sex partner
8. If I never settled down with one romantic partner, that would be OK
9. I can see myself settling down romantically with one special person
10. I would like to have at least one long-term committed relationship during my lifetime

APPENDIX G:
Conflict Communication Strategies Scales

Appendix G:
Conflict Communication Strategies Scales

Please use the scale below to rate the following statements:

5 = Almost Always; 4 = Commonly; 3 = Sometimes; 2 = Uncommonly; 1 = Almost Never

Coercion

1. How often is making threats the only way to fix a romantic partner's behavior?
2. How commonly is criticizing your romantic partner the way to change your romantic partner's behaviors?
3. How often do you have to yell at your romantic partner to make them listen?
4. How frequently do you need to insult your romantic partner for them realize their behaviors are wrong?
5. How often do you need to use physical force for your romantic partner to correct their behavior?
6. How commonly do you curse at your romantic partner to make your romantic partner understand?
7. How commonly do you have to express anger towards your romantic partner to correct their behavior?
8. How frequently do you express irritation towards your romantic partner?
9. How often do you express blame to your romantic partner when they cause a negative event in your life?
10. How commonly do you have to ridicule your romantic partner until they realize they are wrong?
11. How frequently must you put down your romantic partner for them to back off or change their behavior?
12. How commonly do have to threaten withholding something your romantic partner desires if they keeping acting up?

Autocracy

13. How commonly must you insist your romantic partner change their behaviors?
14. How often is demanding change the only way to reach your romantic partner?

15. How frequently do you find that asserting authority over your romantic is best?
16. When your romantic partner is talking, how frequently do you interrupt them to make them stop?
17. How often do you have to make your romantic partner feel inferior to bring them back down to reality?
18. How commonly do you use sarcasm when your romantic partner is trying to influence you?
19. How often do you act condescending towards your romantic partner, so they will understand they need to correct their behavior?
20. How frequently do you need to remind your romantic partner that their point of view is not valid?
21. When discussing a disagreement you and your romantic are having, how often do you control the discussion?
22. How commonly do you find value in consider your romantic partner's feelings when having an argument? (R)
23. How frequently does your romantic partner change your beliefs after a disagreement? (R)
24. When your romantic partner is trying to convince you about something, how frequently do you simply ignore what they are saying?
25. When your romantic partner is attempting to discuss with you something that doesn't concern them, how often do you refuse to talk about the subject?
26. How frequently does your romantic partner need to be explicitly told that a behavior of theirs is not acceptable?

Reasoning

27. How often do you attempt to present facts when resolving conflict with your romantic partner?
28. How often when resolving conflict with your romantic partner do you to present a through and laid-out argument?
29. When your romantic partner tries to influence, how commonly do you ask questions to better understand their point of view?
30. When trying to convince your romantic partner to change their behavior, how often do you point out positive consequence for their behavior?

31. When in a disagreement with your romantic partner, how commonly do you look for alternatives to problem?
32. How often do you attempt to reason with your romantic partner to solve a conflict?
33. How frequently do you incorporate facts into your arguments when trying to persuade your romantic partner?
34. How frequently do you and your romantic partner weigh pros and cons when trying to solve a conflict?
35. How commonly do you attempt to outline different outcomes when attempting to influence your romantic partner?
36. How commonly do you attempt to explain your point of view when trying to convince your romantic partner?
37. How often do you attempt to calmly rationalize origins of a conflict with your romantic partner?

Manipulation

38. Do you often attempt to “cash-in” on old favors to influence your romantic partner’s behavior?
39. How commonly do you remind your partner of their previous transgressions in an attempt to keep them from repeating those same mistakes?
40. How frequently do you influence your romantic partner by evoking them to feel concern for you?
41. When trying to convince your romantic partner to complete a desired behavior, how commonly do you say lines such as “If you love me then you will”?
42. How commonly do you need to remind your romantic partner of an insecurity they hold?
43. How commonly do you attempt to make your romantic partner understand your position by guiltning them?
44. How commonly do you manipulate your romantic partner?
45. If your romantic partner is hesitant to follow through with your desires, how commonly do will you verbally question their loyalty or love for you?

Supplication

46. When you need to influence your romantic partner’s behavior, how commonly is crying a used tactic?

47. Pretending to be ill a useful way I can make my romantic partner complete the actions I desire from them.
48. Often, I can act helpless to try to convince my romantic partner to perform a desired behavior.
49. When trying to solve a conflict, how frequently do you whine to influence the outcome?
50. When attempting to fix your romantic partner's behavior, how commonly do you emphasize the negative effects they are having on you?
51. How commonly do you fake being in a specific mood to cause desired actions from your romantic partner?
52. How often does your romantic partner cause you to be in a poor mood due to their negative behavior?

Soft Positives

53. When your romantic partner causes you to feel discomfort, how often do you pretend their behavior was not a big deal or serious problem?
54. If your romantic partner's behaviors are making you unhappy, will you commonly say you understand their actions, but it makes you feel discomfort?
55. How commonly do you suppress some disagreement you have with your romantic partner in an effort to avoid a conflict?
56. When in a disagreement with your romantic partner, how often do you give them compliments to light the mood of the situation?
57. If your romantic partner is in a disagreement with you, do you usually attempt to understand their point of view?
58. When in a conflict with your romantic partner, do you often try to make your partner laugh to lighten the mood?
59. When conflicting with your romantic partner, do you usually have to ask them to stop and consider your own point of view on the troublesome topic?
60. If your romantic partner is mad at you, do you usually try to charm or flirt with them

APPENDIX H:
Consent Statement

Appendix H:

Consent Statement

We are asking you to take part in a research study being led by Farshad Sadr at Eastern Kentucky University.

Participating in this study is voluntary. If you do not feel comfortable answering any of the questions, you may skip the item and move on. You are also allowed to quit at anytime if you desire to. If at any point you feel distress or discomfort while completing the study, immediately quit and seek help if needed.

The information collected in this study is strictly for research purposes only. No identifying information will be obtained by the researchers. Any information provided will only be accessible by the research team. All collected information will be assigned a randomized numeral string as an identification code and stored in a secure computer that is password protected.

This study asks participants to provide an honest and effortful when answering questions about yourself and your romantic relationship. Participants will be asked about subjects including how you communicate with your romantic partner, how you define yourself, the dynamics of your romantic relationship, and future goals you hope to achieve with your romantic partner.

Only individuals who are at the current moment in any form of romantic relationship with another person qualify for completing the study. This study may possibly take up to 60 minutes to complete. Participants will be rewarded \$0.75 upon the conditions that the participant has not incorrectly answered 3 or more items serving as attention checks and the participant fully completes the study without exiting early.

Please direct questions to Farshad Sadr at farshad.sadr@eku.edu. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, contact the Eastern Kentucky University Institutional Review Board at (859) 622-3636.

APPENDIX I:
Debriefing Form

Appendix I:
Debriefing Form

Thank you for completing the study.

This study is attempting to understand how the ways people define themselves impact the goals and communication strategies between romantic partners. Specifically, this study examined two main questions.

First, we investigated if the various ways in which one defines themselves may impact how they behave in their romantic relationships. The researchers expect individuals that define themselves in terms of their body's functions and abilities will be more likely to influence with their romantic partner in more direct ways than a person who defines themselves in terms of the persons that are very close towards. Oppositely, we expect people who define defines themselves in terms of the persons that are very close towards to influence their romantic partner using indirect communication strategies.

Second, we investigated if the individuals that in a strong degree define themselves in terms of their body's functions and abilities find more value in shorter romantic relationships, having sexual flings, or not feeling they are tied down over a desire to be romantically engaged with the same person forever, or having children, or being in a committed romantic relationship. We also expect males than females fit within the physically defined category.

Please feel free to send us any questions, comments, or inquires to learn more to Farshad Sadr at farshad_sadr@mymail.eku.edu.

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