

# The Effect of Family Cohesion on Romantic Relationships

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## Introduction

Cohesion, in a social sense, cohesion encompasses the strength of relationships and the sense of solidarity among members of a community (Kawachi, I., & Berkman, L., 2000). This also includes the attitudes and behaviors one has about being in a particular group, including their family of origin.

Satisfaction and success in family relationships reflect or are reflected by romantic relationships. Positively, this can be seen in the form of healthier emotional relationships, sexuality openness, and acceptance of one another at both the family or origin and romantic levels. Negatively, this can be seen in the form of poor problem-solving skills, which leads to lower confidence, commitment, and dedication in relationships (Anderson et al., 2014; de Graaf et al., 2011).

Conflict is a part of every relationship. It has been found that the lack of healthy conflict management behaviors will deteriorate the relationship, putting more stress on both sides of the conflict (Lu, W., & Wang, J., 2017). This, in turn, will cause more damage to the relationship, posing more issues than just the initial conflict. The way in which conflict is managed can alter the relationship outcome.

## References

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## Research Question

This study looked at how a relationship is conducted and managed when the partners in the relationship have very different experiences from their family of origins.

**RQ1:** *How do romantic couples on opposite sides of the cohesion vs. adaptability scale manage their relationships?*

## Methods

**Participants:**  
Two sets of two partners who had been in a romantic relationship at least six months prior to the study and were of adult age were analyzed in this study. Within each partnership, one partner had to be from a traditional family structure and the other had to be from a less traditional family structure.

**Procedure:**  
The researchers conducted two interviews with each of the participants. Semi-structured questions were asked about their family background and romantic relationship experiences in an ethnographic way. The participants shared narratives in order to help themselves answer the questions in the way they most desired. Transcripts were coded for categorical themes.

## Results

Categories	Participants			
	Couple 1		Couple 2	
	Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 1	Partner 2
Family life growing up	-divorced parents -very distant -didn't do things together -low levels of self-disclosure and connectedness -lots of hurt within family	-close -can discuss anything -seeks advice	-rely on family for everything -boundaries and structure but not suffocating -Christian values brought in -nightly family dinners	-not close -talk to friend or other authority figure -talk about simple things but not personal things -divorced parents
Family conflict	-reluctant to solve issues -avoid communicating about issues	-24 hours to address conflict	-comfortably work through it	-avoid acknowledging and addressing issues after parents divorced
Romantic conflict	-more comfortable to avoid than deal with conflict up front	-confront conflict	-sit down with no distractions and talk about it -bring in parents' style	-stop and talk through what happened -looks to partners parents for healthy example
Romantic relationship	-not used to being comfortable disclosing at beginning	-lots of time and effort to learn partner's background	-talk through differences	-cohesive -trying to make healthy now and healthy for the future

## Conclusions/Discussion

**Family Communication Patterns Theory:** The theory that examines how family experiences shape how individuals think, act, and communicate throughout their lives (Koerner, A., & Schrod, P., 2014).

- Partners coming from **highly cohesive** families referenced different aspects of **warm orientation** ideas that they brought from their family into their romantic relationship.
- Partners coming from **less cohesive** families tended to have more barriers in terms of trust, aligning with what a **cold conformity orientation** family would look like.
- Partners coming from **highly cohesive families** took **conflict management** behaviors that they used in their family, suggesting the behavior did not change from generation to generation, like schema says.

## Limitations

- Similar characteristics** were presented among couples in the case study, meaning the findings are **not generalizable** among large populations.

## For Further Research

- Consider using participants from **non-traditional romantic relationships**
- Consider utilizing a **different data collection procedure** to involve more participants