

Older Adults' Written Accounts of Recent Intergenerational Conflict: Initiating Factors and
Management Styles

By

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Abstract

From theoretical perspectives of conflict management and communication accommodation, this study used a content analytic approach to examine older adults' reports of intergenerational communication in a recent conflict with a grandchild or a nonfamily young adult. Voluntary participants included four hundred and twenty-seven older adults ($N = 427$, M age = 74.40, $SD = 6.18$, age range = 61-95) who were first asked to think about a family or nonfamily intergenerational relationship and then to provide a written account about a conflict they were experiencing or had experienced recently in that relationship. Only a portion of the older adults (i.e., 42.4%; $n = 181$; M age = 74.38, $SD = 6.92$, age range = 63-95) reported a recent intergenerational conflict in this sample. These written conflict scenarios (i.e., 96 scenarios with grandchildren and 85 scenarios with nonfamily young adults) were analyzed to uncover conflict initiating factors and conflict management styles. In general, chi-square analysis revealed the prevalence of conflict due to *old-to-young criticism* ($n = 57$).

Disagreement/generation gap ($n = 49$), *young-to-old rebuff* ($n = 32$), *cumulative annoyance* ($n = 26$), and *young-to-old criticism* ($n = 14$) were also identified. Specifically, results indicated that *disagreement/generation gap* was reported more frequently in conflicts with grandchildren and *old-to-young criticism* was reported more frequently in conflicts with nonfamily young adults.

In addition, chi-square analysis of the conflict management styles revealed that older adults used the *problem-solving* ($n = 73$) and *competing styles* ($n = 67$) most frequently and the young adults used the *competing style* ($n = 80$) most frequently. Furthermore, results demonstrated that young adults tended to use the *avoiding style* with grandparents and the *competing style* with nonfamily elders. On the other hand, older adults reported themselves as using the *problem-solving style* more with grandchildren and the *competing style* more with

nonfamily young adults. Additionally, the *obliging* and *third-party styles* were reported to be used by both young and older adults.

In terms of the associations between initiating factors and management styles, results indicated that young and older adults dealt with intergenerational conflict in different ways. In general, the *competing style* was mostly used when *old-to-young criticism* initiated the conflict. Further, *cumulative annoyance* was associated with young adults' use of the *avoiding style* and *disagreement/generation gap* was associated with the *problem-solving style* for both young and older adults. In terms of the associations between management styles, the use of the *competing* and *problem-solving styles* by young adults were significantly associated with the use of the same styles by older adults, indicating both positive and negative reciprocation in intergenerational conflict.

The participants who did not report a recent intergenerational conflict ($n = 246$; M age = 73.64, $SD = 5.88$, age range = 60-89) were asked to comment on and describe communication characteristics in the relationship by focusing on the reasons why they reported no recent conflict. Content analysis indicated that older adults reported several accommodative characteristics of their communication in both family and nonfamily intergenerational relationships. These accommodative characteristics included *respect* ($n = 57$; reported significantly more frequently in family relationships), *appropriate management of interpersonal boundaries* ($n = 46$; reported significantly more frequently in nonfamily relationships), *a general understanding for each other* ($n = 20$; reported significantly more frequently in nonfamily relationships), and *attentive communication and listening* and *discussing topics of interest* (no differences between family and nonfamily relationships).

Overall, the current study contributed to research literature in intergenerational conflict in several ways. First, it uncovered conflict initiating factors and conflict management styles in family and nonfamily intergenerational relationships, an area that has been under studied. Second, it provided a new perspective of intergenerational conflict from the older adults' point of view, which corroborated and contrasted prior intergenerational conflict research from the young adults' perspective. Third, analysis of the accommodative communication characteristics from those older participants who did not report a recent intergenerational conflict provided baseline data to enhance our understanding of the bright side of communication accommodation in intergenerational relationships. Overall, results suggested that older adults might experience or perceive intergenerational relationships in conflict situations more positively than young adults. Major findings are discussed considering intergenerational communication, interpersonal and intergroup conflict management, shared family identity, and communication accommodation theory.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Recent estimates in the United States situate the population of those 65 years old and older at nearly 45 million (showing an increase of about 25% since 2003). That number will continue to climb as projections estimate over 55 million older adults by 2020 and 82 million by 2040 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). These increases are in large part due to the demographic trends in birth rate (i.e., the cohort of the Baby Boomers who were born between the years of 1945 and 1965) and the longer life span of human beings in general (LaPierre & Hughes, 2009). Similar trends observed in other countries around the world have propelled research studying this age group (Gueyffier et al., 1999; Lloyd-Serlock, Beard, Minicuci, Ebrahim, & Chatterji, 2014; Rosemary & Ries, 2004).

Communication scholars, for example, have begun to address the growing population of older adults over the past several decades (Anderson, Harwood, Hummert, 2005; Fowler, Gasiorek, & Giles, 2015; Hummert, 1994; Hummert, Shaner, Garstka, & Henry, 1998; Nussbaum & Coupland, 1995; Williams & Giles, 1996; Williams & Nussbaum, 2013). One of the theoretical frameworks that provides grounds for the examination of communication with (toward and from) this age group is communication accommodation theory (CAT; Giles, 1980; Giles, 2016; Giles & Ogay, 2006). CAT is a communication theory that explains the processes by which individuals adjust their communication behaviors based on perceptions of communication competence, conversation needs, and/or role relations between conversational partners to manage their social, relational, and communicative distance and goals (Coupland, Coupland, Giles, & Henwood, 1988; Shepard et al., 2001). Essentially, CAT suggests that social identities and stereotypes influence the behaviors of participants in communicative interactions.

It is important to understand two significant strategies of CAT in light of the current study. The first strategy is accommodation—the perceived communicative adjustment in an interaction to enhance effective communication (Gasiorek, 2017). Accommodative behaviors (e.g., socioemotional support, mutuality, and positive emotional expression; Williams & Giles, 1996) bridge distance between and build solidarity with outgroup members (Giles, 2008). They can enhance interpersonal similarity or reinforce self-identity in order to reduce uncertainty and improve communication. One of the sub-strategies of accommodation is convergence. Convergence refers to how individuals adjust their speech to assimilate to their conversational partners' speech (Gasiorek & Giles, 2013).

The second major strategy of CAT is nonaccommodation, which contains the sub-strategies of overaccommodation, underaccommodation, and divergence. Nonaccommodation refers to how individuals adjust their “communication in ways that hinder effective communication and/or increase social distance” (Gasiorek, 2017, p. 2). Overaccommodation occurs when speakers adjust their communication more than listeners perceive is necessary, while underaccommodation occurs when speakers do not adjust their communication sufficiently for a listener's needs or desires (Gasiorek, 2017; Zhang & Giles, 2018). Further, divergence refers to speech adjustments that an individual makes to differentiate themselves from their conversational partner (Zhang & Giles, 2018). Research acknowledges that accommodation (Harwood, 1998; Harwood, McKee, & Lin, 2000; Williams & Giles, 1996) and nonaccommodation (Giles et al., 1994; Giles & Williams, 1994; Kemper, 1994; Hummert et al., 1998; Ryan et al., 1992; Ryan, Hummert, & Boich 1995; Williams & Giles, 1996; Wiebe & Zhang, 2017) are important strategies to consider when examining intergenerational communication.

CAT has the potential to explain both positive (i.e., accommodation) and negative (i.e., nonaccommodation) intergenerational communicative dynamics. However, the majority of intergenerational communication literature has examined two specific forms of nonaccommodation (i.e., over- and underaccommodative behaviors) and their negative outcomes (Coupland et al., 1988; Giles & Williams, 1994; Harwood et al., 2000; Hummert & Ryan, 2001; Ryan et al., 1995; Williams et al., 1997; Williams & Giles, 1996). These studies reveal that young and older adults' use of overaccommodative behaviors include overly personal or intimate questions, condescending comments, use of inappropriate or patronizing endearments, and giving unsolicited advice (Giles & Williams, 1994; Ryan et al., 1995; Williams & Giles, 1996). Further, young adults also overaccommodate older adults by using loud and slow speech with exaggerated intonation and pronunciation, repetitions, and exaggerated praise for minor accomplishments (Harwood et al., 2000; Hummert & Ryan, 2001; Williams & Giles, 1996). These studies also suggest that young and older adults both use underaccommodative behaviors (e.g., nonlistening, ignoring, disapproving or disrespectful comments, dismissive of the other's topics, and imperative orders; Giles & Williams, 1996; Harwood et al., 2000; Williams & Giles, 1996), which could be perceived as more dissatisfying than overaccommodative behaviors.

Much of this nonaccommodative communication in intergenerational interactions occurs as a result of negative age-based stereotypes (Hummert, 1994). Hence, the Communication Predicament of Aging (CPA) Model, and later the Age Stereotypes in Interactions (ASI) Model, were developed to outline roles of age stereotypes in communication and have provided theoretical frameworks for the bulk of intergenerational communication research (Bonnesen & Hummert, 2002; Harwood, 2000; Hummert, 1994; Ryan, Giles, Bartolucci, & Henwood, 1986).

These models focus on the negative feedback cycle of stereotype-based communication (Hummert, 1994; Ryan et al., 1986).

CAT provides a theoretical frame for the CPA model. Age cues (e.g., vocal cues, facial signs of age, and nonverbal behaviors) influence age categorization. These cues trigger age stereotypes that hinder intergenerational interactions and have negative consequences for the stereotyped individual. Specifically, negative age stereotypes can create a negative feedback cycle for older adults. For example, a young adult could misperceive an older adult based on a negative age-based stereotype. This could lead the young adult to have lower expectations for the older adult's competence in the conversation. In response, the young adult might use aforementioned over- or underaccommodative communication in the interaction. These adjustments reinforce the negative age stereotypes creating a negative feedback cycle for older adults that may lead to loss of self-esteem, constrained communication, emotional decline, and health problems (Hummert, 1994; Ryan et al., 1986).

The ASI model further illustrates that older adults do not have to be stereotyped negatively to be susceptible to this negative feedback cycle. Positive stereotypes (e.g., Golden Ager) can interact with personal (e.g., age) and contextual (e.g., hospital setting versus community setting) variables to hinder intergenerational communication and relationships (Anderson et al., 2005; Hummert, 1994; Hummert et al., 1998). The ASI model considers the self-system of the perceiver (e.g., age, quality of previous contact, and cognitive complexity), characteristics of the older adult (e.g., physical characteristics and communication behaviors), and the context (e.g., institutional setting). These three key factors lead to stereotype activation and guide communication behaviors throughout an interaction.

The bulk of intergenerational research testing these models has focused on intergenerational communication in stranger, acquaintance, or institutional relationships (cf. Anderson et al., 2005; Harwood et al., 2005; Soliz & Harwood, 2006). However, most intergenerational communication occurs between grandparents and grandchildren (Ng, Liu, Weatherall, & Loong, 1997; Williams & Giles, 1996). Scholars have argued the importance of the inclusion of intergenerational relationship as a key factor when studying these age groups (Anderson et al., 2005) and continue to acknowledge that the grandparent-grandchild (GP-GC) relationship has been relatively understudied (Anderson et al., 2005; Soliz & Harwood, 2006), specifically in terms of accommodative and nonaccommodative communication (Wiebe & Zhang, 2017; Zhang & Lin, 2009). Thus, the current study will examine both family and nonfamily intergenerational relationships from a communication accommodation perspective. CAT is heuristic in generating research in the domain of intergenerational communication. The majority of prior research using CAT in intergenerational communication examined perceptions, outcomes, and personal/intergroup motivations (Dragojevic, Gasiorek, & Giles, 2016). However, the current study examines intergenerational communication exchanges and dynamics between young and older adults in family and nonfamily relationships in conflict situations.

Overall, prior literature asserts that nonaccommodative communication between young and older adults can be problematic, even in family relationships (Zhang & Lin, 2009). Evidence suggests that older adults experience dissatisfying and demeaning communication with young adults in a variety of contexts (Hummert, 1994; Ryan et al., 1995), and simultaneously demonstrates that older adults mistreat, disrespect, or patronize young adults (Giles & Williams, 1994; Zhang & Hummert, 2001; Zhang & Lin, 2009). These nonaccommodative behaviors from

and towards both the young and older adults are potential factors that could lead to conflict in intergenerational relationships (Zhang & Lin, 2009).

As most of the foundational research on intergenerational conflict has been conducted from the young adults' perspective, scholars have emphasized the importance of conducting more research from the perspective of older adults (Blanchard-Fields, 2007; Blanchard-Fields et al., 2007; Fingerman & Charles, 2010; Wiebe & Zhang, 2017; Zhang & Lin, 2009). Previous literature on intergenerational conflict has indicated that the older adults' perspective is needed to disclose the full picture of conflict (Zhang & Lin, 2009). Other research has confirmed this idea noting that young adults' reports of conflict show severe positive bias towards themselves (Wiebe & Zhang, 2017). Altogether, these studies provide a solid basis for anticipating that older adults may report conflict initiation and management differently than young adults, making the current study on conflict scenarios a valuable addition to current literature.

This chapter has explored the nature of intergenerational communication from a communication accommodation perspective, concluded that family and nonfamily intergenerational relationships present opportunities for the exchange of problematic communication that has the potential to escalate into intergenerational conflict, and provided justification for intergenerational communication and conflict research from the perspective of older adults. With these main ideas in mind, the purpose of this study is to examine older adults' written reports of their communication in both family and nonfamily intergenerational conflict to uncover initiating factors and management styles used by both young and older adults. Further, accounts from older adults who are reluctant to report a recent conflict or lack recent conflict will be used to uncover accommodative communication that exist in intergenerational relationships.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Conflict and Intergenerational Communication

Conflict has been defined as “a dynamic process that occurs between interdependent parties as they experience negative emotional reactions to perceived disagreements and interference with attainment of their goals” (Barki & Hartwick, 2004, p. 234). Further, it is unavoidable in relationships (Roloff & Chiles, 2011) and may arise for a variety of reasons. Verbal or behavioral expressions of incompatible interests, however, must occur for the perceived differences to become an open conflict (Zhang, 2004). Once a conflict is initiated, it has the potential to be either functional or dysfunctional depending on how it is managed. When dysfunctional, it can invoke negative feelings and often leads to negative outcomes. To avoid dysfunctional conflict tendencies and enhance functional ones, scholars began to identify and teach effective interpersonal conflict management behaviors and techniques (Blake & Mouton, 1964; Kilmann & Thomas, 1977). However, before it is possible understand the full picture of conflict management, it is important to consider the ways that conflict is initiated (Witteman, 1992; Zhang, 2004; Zhang & Lin, 2009).

Conflict initiating factors. Conflict initiation has been defined as one party’s communicative moves that interfere “with the activity of another that escalates a situation into conflict” (Zhang & Lin, 2009, p. 345). Over the years, scholars have referred to the many ways conflict can be initiated as *conflict initiating factors*. Conflict initiating factors have been examined in marital conflict (Peterson, 1983), young adult peer to peer conflict (Witteman, 1992), and intergenerational conflict (Zhang, 2004; Zhang & Lin, 2009; Wiebe & Zhang, 2017). Peterson (1983) examined daily significant interactions between husbands and wives and found that most interactions involved conflict. Through an analysis of scenarios written by the

husbands and wives, four initiating factors were uncovered in marital conflict: criticism, illegitimate demand, rebuff, and cumulative annoyance.

As much of conflict initiation literature builds off this work, it is important to understand each initiating factor. When a conflict is initiated by criticism, an individual “finds fault with” the other individual’s “behavior, opinion, and/or attitude” (Zhang & Lin, 2009, p. 350). Frequently, criticism is endless or repeating (Wiebe & Zhang, 2017). An illegitimate demand takes place when an individual “places or imposes his or her wants, needs, desires, or demands” on the other individual regardless of the other individual’s wants, needs, or desires (Zhang & Lin, 2009, p. 350). When a conflict is initiated by rebuff, an individual “bluntly rejects” the other party’s “request for support, approval, help or need for more attention, affection, or understanding” (Zhang & Lin, 2009, p. 350). Finally, cumulative annoyance refers to an individual’s repetitive activity that is perceived as inappropriate by and surpasses a certain threshold of the other individual. The accumulation leads an individual to experience conflict with another individual (Witteman, 1992).

In a similar way to Peterson’s (1983) work on marital conflict initiation, Witteman (1992) examined written accounts of peer to peer conflict among college students. The study identified six types of conflict initiating factors that existed within the relationship: cumulative annoyance (33.5%), mutually cumulative annoyance (23.4%), rebuff (14.6%), illegitimate demand (11.7%), noncumulative annoyance (8.8%), and criticism (8.0%). This study identified two additional variations of cumulative annoyance—mutually cumulative annoyance, which recognized both individuals as being responsible for the buildup, and noncumulative annoyance, which was defined as a single irritation as opposed to an accumulation (Witteman, 1992). The initiating factors uncovered in this study were reported in romantic relationships, friendships, and

acquaintances and were generally negative and created unsteady environments. These two studies revealed that even in close relationships (i.e., marriage, romantic relationships, and friendship), problematic communication exists and can escalate a situation into conflict.

Conflict initiating factors have been further examined in both Chinese (Zhang, 2004) and American (Zhang & Lin, 2009) intergenerational relationships between young and older adults from the young adults' perspective. Zhang (2004) analyzed young adults' written accounts of intergenerational communication in the People's Republic of China. Results revealed five initiating factors that precipitated intergenerational conflict. The most common initiating factor was old-to-young criticism (50.9%). Illegitimate demand (18.0%), rebuff (13.6%), young-to-old criticism (8.8%), disagreement/generation gap (6.7%), and other (2.1%) were also identified. This study added disagreement/generation gap as a relevant initiating factor to intergenerational conflict. This initiating factor takes place when an individual perceives a difference or clash in attitude, values, life style, and/or opinions between themselves and the other individual (Zhang & Lin, 2009). This study also made an important distinction between family and nonfamily relationships. Rebuff was reported significantly more often in nonfamily relationships, while disagreement/generation gap was used significantly more often in family relationships. However, there were no differences between family and nonfamily conflict for criticism and illegitimate demand.

Zhang (2004) acknowledged the importance of cultural norms in intergenerational communication. In China, norms of hierarchy and filial piety give older adults power over young adults (Zhang, Harwood, & Hummert, 2005). Thus, it is no surprise that old-to-young criticism is the most reported initiating factor in both family and nonfamily contexts as older adults are

justified to be critical due to their higher status. This study provided rationale for studying intergenerational relationships in other cultures that do not have explicit cultural norms.

Zhang and Lin (2009) continued conflict initiation research by examining American young adults' written accounts of conflict. This study uncovered seven major initiating factors that led to conflict. Old-to-young criticism was the most common initiating factor (33.8%), followed by old-to-young rebuff (17.0%), disagreement/generation gap (16.4%) and illegitimate demand (13.5%). Young-to-old criticism (7.9%), young-to-old rebuff (5.6%), and older adults' inability (e.g., physical or cognitive incapacities) were also identified. Consistent with Zhang (2004), this study examined the difference between family and nonfamily relationships. Results revealed that disagreement/generation gap as well as young-to-old rebuff and old-to-young illegitimate demand occurred more often in families, while nonfamily elders criticized and rebuffed more than family elders. Despite the differences in cultural norms, the findings from research on American intergenerational relationships echoed those from research on Chinese intergenerational relationships.

As noted earlier, conflict initiating factors contain communicative moves (primarily nonaccommodative) that interfere with the activity of another and escalate a situation into conflict. Essentially, these conflict initiating factors reflect various forms of nonaccommodative communication that have been previously examined in intergenerational interactions (Giles et al., 1994; Giles & Williams, 1994; Williams & Giles, 1996). Although it is difficult to define each initiating factor as either under- or overaccommodative (as communication motives, intended or inferred, could be unknown), viewing these factors in terms of the nonaccommodative communication that exists within them helps connect these two areas of literature. For example, criticism has been shown to consist of disapproving and disrespectful comments

(underaccommodative), unsolicited advice and over parenting behaviors (overaccommodative), and overly personal and intimate questions (overaccommodative; Wiebe & Zhang, 2017; Zhang & Lin, 2009). Further, cumulative annoyance, by definition, could consist of any repeated nonaccommodative behavior that surpasses a certain threshold of an individual and once past this threshold, the interaction becomes an open conflict (Gasiorek & Dragojevic, 2017). Thus, cumulative annoyance could consist of either over- (e.g., unsolicited advice, over parenting, overly personal questions) or underaccommodation (e.g., nonlistening, ignoring, dismissive of other generated topics). Prior literature suggests that disagreement/generation gap consists of mostly underaccommodative behaviors (e.g., disapproving and disrespectful comments, interruptions, and nonlistening and ignoring; Wiebe & Zhang, 2017; Zhang & Lin, 2009). Finally, when comparing prior rebuff literature with prior nonaccommodation literature, it is clear that this initiating factor is mostly underaccommodative (i.e., dismissive of other-generated topics). From a communication accommodation perspective, the current study examines communicative moves between young and older adults in intergenerational conflict. Overall and consistent with prior literature (e.g., Ryan, Hummert, & Boich, 1995; Williams et al, 1997; Williams & Giles, 1996), intergenerational communication between young and older adults, especially in conflict situations (Zhang & Lin, 2009), contains various forms of nonaccommodative communication that can be harmful to an individual's well-being and even to the relationship in general.

It is important to note that all intergenerational conflict initiation research has been conducted from the young adults' perspective. Zhang (2004) revealed that young adults reported that 82.5% of conflict situations were initiated by the older adults, 8.8% by the young adults, and 6.7% were mutually initiated. Similarly, Zhang and Lin (2009) reported findings that 66.6% of

conflict situations were initiated by the older adults, 13.5% by the young adults, and 20% were mutually initiated. Although these findings are valuable, they suggest certain biases toward the young adult. The older adults' perspective would add an alternate and valuable lens to examine intergenerational conflict.

Overall, there are several reasons why conflict initiating factors are a focal point of this study. First, considering previous research on conflict initiation, intergenerational conflict creates an environment to examine nonaccommodation that has been shown to pose health and well-being concerns for those involved. Further, although conflict initiation is important in understanding the full picture of conflict, it is relatively understudied. Finally, existing literature primarily examines intergenerational conflict from young adults' perspective. To enhance research in this area, the current study examines older adults' written accounts of conflict to uncover the major conflict initiating factors in American intergenerational relationships between young and older adults (for similar procedures see Witteman, 1992; Zhang, 2004; Zhang & Lin, 2009). Thus, from the older adults' perspective, the following research question is posed:

RQ1: What are the most frequently reported conflict initiating factors in intergenerational relationships?

Conflict management styles. Scholars have explained that the simultaneous examination of conflict initiating factors and conflict management styles could lead to a fruitful and comprehensive understanding of conflict (Witteman, 1992; Wiebe & Zhang, 2017). Thus, in addition to conflict initiating factors, the current study will also focus on conflict management styles. Due to the extensive study of conflict management, scholars have noted the difficulty in synthesizing conflict literature (Roloff & Chiles, 2011). Nonetheless, Kilmann and Thomas' (1977) conflict management typology has provided a theoretical framework for much of the

interpersonal and organizational conflict literature to date. This section will provide a review of literature dealing with age differences in conflict management and the rationale for studying conflict management styles in intergenerational relationships.

Kilmann and Thomas' (1977) model is a widely accepted and well-acknowledged framework for conflict management styles. Their reinterpretation of Blake and Mouton's (1964) model has been cited extensively and has been used to examine interpersonal conflict management. Originally, Blake and Mouton's (1964) theory of conflict was created for an organizational context. Their ideas focused on the manager's interest in production versus the manager's interest in other people. These dimensions resulted in the possibility of withdrawing, smoothing, forcing, problem-solving, and compromising. Kilmann and Thomas (1977) adapted this model to introduce an interpersonal paradigm. Instead of focusing on the interest in production versus other people, the framework focused on the level of interest in the self versus the other. This typology included five main conflict management styles: competing, avoiding, compromising, collaborating, and obliging. Since then, four of those styles have been considered distinctive (Witteman, 1992) and have been adapted and validated by others in the study of intergenerational relationships (Zhang et al., 2005).

As much of conflict literature builds off this work, it is important to understand the definition of each style as well as how each style relates to CAT. From an accommodation perspective, two of these styles are accommodative and two are nonaccommodative. The competing style, the first nonaccommodative style, is characterized by high levels of self-interest and low levels of interest in the other. This style is "negative, confrontational, assertive, and uncooperative," and can include communication behaviors as "faulting and rejecting the other, hostile questioning, and denying responsibility" (Zhang et al., 2005, p. 73). The avoiding style,

the second nonaccommodative style, is characterized by low interest in the self and the other. This style is “non-confrontational, but under-responsive to the conflict,” and includes “minimizing explicit discussion of the conflict, trivializing and downplaying the disagreements, and shifting the topic to withdraw from the conflict” (Zhang et al., 2005, p. 73).

On the other hand, the obliging style and problem-solving style are accommodative in nature. The obliging style is characterized by a low interest in the self and high interest in the other. This style “emphasizes relational harmony,” and it includes such behaviors as “recognizing the others party’s needs, affirming the other’s position, taking full responsibility for the problem, apologizing, and being unassertive” (Zhang et al., 2005, p. 73). Finally, the problem-solving style is characterized by high interest in the self and the other. This style is assertive and cooperative. It includes showing “empathy and understanding for the position of the other person, while soliciting input from the other person and engaging that individual in finding a mutually acceptable solution” (Zhang et al., 2005, p. 73).

Convergence and divergence are also important strategies of CAT that will be beneficial to understand when examining conflict management styles. In conflict management literature, reciprocation takes place when one individual matches the conflict management style of another and is a form of convergence. The idea of reciprocation in conflict management styles traces back to foundational studies on cohort differences (Sillars & Zietlow, 1993) and, when optimally used (e.g., one individual uses an accommodative style such as problem-solving and the other individual converges by using the same accommodative style), has been shown to have potentially beneficial consequences in interpersonal relationships (Schwarz, 2010). However, when convergence is carried out in a nonoptimal or suboptimal way (e.g., one individual uses a

nonaccommodative style such as the competing style and the other individual converges by using the same nonaccommodative style), it could have harmful consequences (Kim et al., 2001).

Contrastingly, when an individual distances themselves from another individual by using a different conflict management style, it is referred to as divergence (Gasiorek and Giles, 2013). Like convergence, divergence has the potential to be both positive and negative depending on the context in which it is used. Overall, using CAT as a theoretical framework will illustrate both the bright and dark side of intergenerational conflict management interactions by explaining the styles in terms of accommodation and nonaccommodation as well as explaining individuals' use of the conflict styles as they relate to their communication partners' use of the conflict styles (i.e., convergence and divergence).

CAT provides a beneficial lens through which to view the conflict management styles from Kilmann and Thomas' (1977) original typology (Gasiorek & Giles, 2013). Over the years, scholars have used this typology either directly or indirectly to navigate their research. The earliest studies that focused on conflict throughout the lifespan compared marital communication at different life stages (Sillars & Wilmot, 1989; Sillars & Zietlow, 1993). Sillars and Wilmot (1989) reported that older couples were less expressive than young couples and were much less likely to disagree. Sillars and Zietlow (1993) produced two main findings concerning conflict management across the lifespan. First, both young and older couples reciprocated the other's conflict style. However, this reciprocation was stronger and more often found in older couples. Second, consistent with the previous study, young adults were more engaging and direct in their conflict styles and used confrontational, analytic, and irreverent remarks. These two studies provided the initial evidence that conflict management styles differ depending on life stages.

In response to these initial studies, scholars began to examine conflict preferences across the lifespan. Bergstrom and Nussbaum (1996) examined cohort differences in conflict styles between young and older adults in caretaking situations. This study indicated that young adults were more satisfied with controlling or competing conflict styles. However, when the conflict was not resolved immediately, they tended to prefer nonconfrontational, or avoidant, strategies. Older adults, however, were most satisfied with solution-oriented styles.

Although conflict literature results as a whole have been sporadic (Roloff & Chiles, 2011), age differences in conflict management has been one area that has produced generally consistent findings. For example, consistent with prior literature (Bergstrom & Nussbaum, 1996), Blanchard-Fields et al. (2007) examined differences in the endorsement of the problem-solving strategy endorsement and effectiveness between young and older adults. Results indicated that older adults were more solution focused than young adults. In the context of the workplace, Beitler, Machowski, and Zapf (2016) found that active constructive (problem-solving) conflict management strategies were used more often and more effectively by older adults. From its initial conception, Kilmann and Thomas' (1977) conflict typology has stressed that the problem-solving style is the most effective style for both individuals in the conflict. Research has since agreed that this conflict management style is the most appropriate and effective (Canary & Spitzberg, 1987; Sillars & Weisberg, 1987).

Considering these insights, this study will advance research in several ways. First, older adults' reports of recent conflict situations will be examined to uncover a valuable perspective of conflict management styles used by both young and older adults. These reports will also provide an opportunity to extend the utility of CAT into the realm of intergenerational conflict management. The majority of the prior research using CAT in intergenerational communication

has examined perceptions, outcomes, and personal/intergroup motivations. The current study focuses on the communicative dynamics embedded in the written accounts of intergenerational conflicts. Further, conflict initiating factors will be examined as they relate to conflict management styles. Finally, the current study will examine the associations between young and older adults' use of conflict management styles. Thus, from the older adults' perspective, the following research questions are posed:

RQ2: What are the most frequently used conflict management styles in intergenerational relationships?

RQ3: How are the intergenerational conflict initiating factors associated with the management styles?

RQ4: How are the management styles used by older adults associated with the management styles used by young adults?

An Intergroup Perspective on Intergenerational Communication

One of the theoretical foci that comes into play when dealing with intergenerational communication between young and older adults is the juxtaposition of age and family. An intergroup perspective highlights the notion that intergenerational relationships may be characterized by both an ingroup membership in shared family identity and an outgroup membership in age. Social identity theory (SIT) and the Common Ingroup Identity Model (CIIM) help describe these dynamics.

Social identity theory. SIT originated to explain how psychological and sociological processes interact to produce micro and macro intergroup dynamics (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). More scholars have since studied the intergroup perspective and applied it to communication. Intergroup communication occurs when either party in a social interaction

defines self or other in terms of group memberships (Harwood, Giles, & Palomares, 2005). SIT states that people can understand the self in terms of personal identity and social identity. Personal identity refers to the perception of self as a unique individual with particular traits and preferences, while social identity refers to the perception of self as a member of particular groups, along with the associations relevant to those groups (Harwood et al., 2005). To maintain a positive social identity, individuals must recognize distinctive differences between ingroups and outgroups that favor their own group memberships. Group memberships affect the way that people interact with each other. Further, not all individuals involved in an interaction have to be aware of the intergroup communication in order for it to occur (Harwood et al., 2005). They also argue that self- and other-categorizations are linked. For example, when a young person categorizes someone as an older person, they invoke an implicit self-categorization as not an older person. This categorization then becomes relevant to both parties in the situation. Hence, when intergroup communication occurs, self- and other-categorization are inherent. One important group membership that links the GP-GC dyad is shared family identity. However, the GP-GC dyad is unique because there is a difference in age-group membership. This makes the GP-GC dyad more complex than nonfamily encounters because there are multiple salient group memberships (Soliz & Harwood, 2006).

Common Ingroup Identity Model. If members of different age groups (i.e., grandchildren and grandparents) think of each other in terms of the ingroup membership they share (i.e., family), their communication could be more beneficial to the interaction and less likely to lead to the unsatisfactory behaviors that have been revealed in prior intergenerational literature. A useful theoretical framework for highlighting the complexity in family relationships is Gaertner and Dovidio's (2000) CIIM. This model stipulates that if members of different

groups can think of themselves within a single group rather than as separate groups, attitudes toward former outgroup members will become more positive through the cognitive and motivational processes involving pro-ingroup bias (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). If one could identify with an outgroup enough to acknowledge a broader categorization, then there could be more positive thoughts, feelings, and behaviors towards that individual.

Interactions in which the individuals involved do not have family as a common ingroup will provide a baseline for comparing the differences CIIM might have on intergenerational conflict situations. Further, the family provides a context where it is relatively easy to establish a common ingroup identity (Banker & Gaertner, 1998), and shared family identity has previously been used as a common ingroup (Zhang, 2004; Soliz & Harwood, 2006; Soliz, 2007; Song & Zhang, 2012). If grandparents can see the grandchild as a part of the same group (i.e., family), then this could influence the way that they initiate and manage conflict. In light of the first five research questions, SIT/CIIM, and prior literature, the following hypotheses are offered:

H1: The frequencies of conflict initiating factors reported by older adults will vary in family and nonfamily relationships. Specifically, older adults will report less instances of criticism and more instances of disagreement/generation gap in family intergenerational relationships as opposed to nonfamily intergenerational relationships.

H2: The frequencies of conflict management styles reported by older adults will vary in family and nonfamily relationships. Specifically, older adults will report less instances of the nonaccommodative conflict management styles (i.e., competing and avoiding) and more accommodative conflict styles (i.e., obliging and problem-solving) in family intergenerational relationships as opposed to nonfamily intergenerational relationships.

Forms of accommodation. In addition to forms of nonaccommodation in intergenerational conflict, the current study will also examine how accommodative communication can enhance intergenerational relationships. Satisfactory conversations between young and older adults have been analyzed to create a list of accommodative characteristics in intergenerational communication (Williams & Giles, 1996). These characteristics include socioemotional support from either the young or older adult, narratives told by the young and older adult, astereotyping, mutuality (i.e., shared respect, understanding, and conversational goals), positive emotional expression, and elder accommodation (i.e., treating the young adult as an equal). Research supports these findings (Harwood et al., 2000) and acknowledges that family relationships add alternative accommodative characteristics (e.g., interpersonal boundaries; Fowler, Fisher, & Pitts, 2013). Thus, the current study is interested in the communicative characteristics, specifically those that are accommodative, that exist in intergenerational relationships that lack conflict. From the older adults' perspective and in light of the participants who report no recent intergenerational conflict, the following research questions are proposed:

RQ5.1: What are the reported communicative characteristics in intergenerational relationships?

RQ5.2: Do the reported communicative characteristics in intergenerational relationships differ in family and nonfamily contexts?

Chapter Three: Method

This study employed a content analytic design to examine recent intergenerational conflict scenarios between young and older adults from a communication accommodation perspective. Older adults' written reports provided data to identify conflict initiating factors and conflict management styles used by both young and older adults.

Pilot Study

After IRB approval, a pilot study with a small sample was developed to assess clarity of the instructions, materials, and procedures and to detect any potential problems embedded in the design of the study. As this study aimed to examine older adults' written accounts about intergenerational conflict, the overarching goal of the pilot was to make sure the questionnaire designed based on prior studies studying young adults (i.e., Zhang & Lin, 2009; Wiebe & Zhang, 2017) could be used in the main study.

Participants

A total of 10 older adults participated in the pilot study. The participants were half male (M age = 73.25, SD = 10.23, age range = 64-82) and half female (M age = 74.40, SD = 9.95, age range = 67-79). These participants were primarily family members and acquaintances of the researcher.

Materials and Procedures

Each participant was given both the family and nonfamily survey (see Appendix A). They were informed that they should not put their name on the survey and their answers would be kept anonymous.

Half of the participants (i.e., 5) were first asked to think of a grandchild that they had and a conflict they were experiencing or had recently experienced within that relationship. They were

then asked to answer four major questions in writing related to the conflict. They described what the conflict was about, how they became aware of the conflict, how the conflict started, and when it happened. Participants were specifically asked to describe the conflict in detail including its initiating factors, its development, outcome, and their feelings and impressions towards the grandchild. Finally, in order to have sufficient data to code for the major variables in the current study, participants were instructed to write about what they and the grandchild said or did during the conflict.

After they wrote their responses to the aforementioned questions, the participants rated the typicality of their conflict using a three item (e.g., this conflict was typical of other conflicts I have with my grandchildren; this conflict was representative of other conflicts I have with my grandchildren; this conflict illustrated what conflict is usually like with my grandchildren) scale that was developed in response to prior literature ($\alpha = .944$; Wiebe & Zhang, 2017). These items were measured on a 7-point Likert Scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Further, Vangelisti and Caughlin's (1997; see also Imamura, Zhang, & Harwood, 2011) four-item measurement ($\alpha = .942$) was adapted to identify older adults' perceived closeness with the grandchild in the reported conflict scenarios (e.g., I am close to this grandchild; I like this grandchild; I enjoy spending time with grandchild). These items were measured on a 7-point Likert Scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). They then were asked to provide demographics and background information about the grandchild. Older adults reported the grandchild's age and race, their relationship type with the grandchild (i.e., paternal/maternal and full/step/adopted), length of relationship, when the conflict took place, typicality of the reported conflict scenario, total number of grandchildren, and their caretaking role with the grandchild.

Following similar procedures, the participants then answered the questions related to a conflict they were experiencing or had recently experienced with a nonfamily young adults. Similarly, older adults rated the typicality of their reported conflict (e.g., this conflict was typical of other conflicts I have with young adults; this conflict was representative of other conflicts I have with young adults; this conflict illustrated what conflict is usually like with young adults; 7-point Likert Scale; 1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree), their levels of closeness with the reported young adult (e.g., I am close to this young adult; I like this young adult; I enjoy spending time with this young adult; 7-point Likert Scale; 1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree), and then reported the young adult's age and race, their relationship type with the young adult (i.e., co-worker, acquaintance, neighbor, friends, strangers, etc.), length of relationship, when the conflict took place, and typicality of the reported conflict scenario.

At the end of the questionnaire, participants were asked to provide their basic demographic information (i.e., age, sex, racial/ethnic background, years of education, retirement status, and relationship status). To make sure there was no order effect, the other half of the participants (i.e., 5) were asked to answer questions related to a recent intergenerational conflict with a nonfamily young adult first, followed by a conflict with a grandchild.

Results

Out of the 10 participants, only four of them returned a completed questionnaire (i.e., they completed all questions related to an intergenerational conflict with a grandchild and a nonfamily young adult). These completed questionnaires provided responses that varied from several sentences to several paragraphs. Overall, the responses averaged about 150 words which is comparable to the typical length of a written intergenerational conflict scenario reported in prior literature (Wiebe & Zhang, 2017; Zhang & Lin, 2017). The participants who reported a

conflict scenario also complete the typicality and closeness measures. The other questionnaires were either returned with excessive missing data after the first part was completed or blank throughout (e.g., 4 questionnaires were almost blank). Most participants who did not complete the questionnaire returned with a note about the reason they did not finish the questionnaire, indicating a “lack of a recent conflict to report” or that they “did not have any recent conflict with grandchildren” or “nonfamily young adults.”

As the researcher either knew the participants well or had a relatively good relationship with these participants, follow-up informal conversations were conducted with them. The researcher discussed several issues about the nature of the current questionnaire with both those who completed and didn't complete the questionnaire. They were specifically asked to comment on the length of the questionnaire, the clarity of the questionnaire, and their recent contact and conflict with grandchildren and young adults. They were again assured that their answers would be kept anonymous. Those who completed the questionnaire or only the first section of the questionnaire commented that they were pretty tired thinking and writing about conflict after the first section. They (i.e., all participants) did, however, acknowledge that the questionnaire made sense and was easy to understand. Finally, those who did not complete the questionnaire again confirmed that they had contact with young adults and grandchildren but did not have a recent conflict with young adults or grandchildren.

Discussion

The goal of this pilot study was to assess the clarity of the instructions, materials, and procedures, to detect any potential problems embedded in the design of the study, and determine whether it was suitable for gathering data from older adults. Overall, it was clear that questions that were adapted from prior literature sufficiently prompted older adults to respond about their

conflict situations with young adults. In addition, the older adults' written scenarios provided in-depth data that described the communicative moves that took place within the conflict. Through the follow-up conversations, the instructions, materials, and procedures were all deemed clear. However, two problems arose: The questionnaire was long and not all older adults had recently experienced intergenerational conflict. Specifically, in response to these issues, the researcher made two changes after conversations with his academic advisor. First, the original questionnaire requested both family and nonfamily reports of conflict situations. In the revised version (see Appendix B), participants will be randomly assigned to report only one conflict scenario either with a grandchild or a nonfamily young adult. Second, if participants do not have a recent conflict to report, they will be asked to comment on the characteristics of their behavior and communication that they believe kept them from experiencing conflict.

Main Study

Participants and Procedures

The current study used two methods of data collection—recruitment through a local Osher Lifetime Learning Institute and grandparent referrals. An Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at a Midwestern university, which provides educational programs for older adults, agreed to send out an email to a group of their participants that made them aware of the study. Those who were interested in participating, although limited in number, emailed their contact information to the researcher. The other and more effective recruitment strategy asked students from a large Midwestern university and a small Midwestern private college to provide information about a grandparent who might be interested in participating in a study on intergenerational communication. This participant recruitment method was also used in previous

studies on intergenerational communication (Harwood & Lin, 2000). Students received class credit for their referral.

In each of these cases, the researcher gathered the older adults' contact information (i.e., phone numbers, postal address, and/or email addresses) and sent them an electronic survey. They were also informed that their name would not be associated in any way with the research findings and that no one other than the researchers would have access to their responses in this study. Further, no individual responses would be shared with anyone, including those who provided the referral. Participation was voluntary.

Participants were randomly assigned one of the two questionnaires (see Appendix B), asking them to think of an intergenerational relationship (approximately 18-25 years old) with a nonfamily young adult or a grandchild. Each questionnaire first asked participants to think of an intergenerational relationship (i.e., grandchild or nonfamily young adult) and a conflict that were experiencing or had recently experienced within that relationship. If participants were experiencing or had recently experienced conflict with a grandchild/young adult, they were asked to answer questions in four main areas dealing with the conflict scenario: First, they were asked describe what the conflict was about. Second, they were asked how they became aware of the conflict. Third, they were asked a series of questions dealing with the initiating factors of the conflict, when the conflict happened, the development of the conflict, the outcome of the conflict, and feelings and impressions experienced during the conflict. Lastly, participants were asked what they did or said during the conflict and what the grandchild/young adult did or said during the conflict. Directly following these questions, participants answered questions related to the reported conflict scenario (i.e., typicality of the conflict, when the conflict happened), the grandchild/young adult (i.e., relational closeness, relationship type, age, sex, and ethnicity), and

their basic demographic information (i.e., age, sex, ethnicity, education level, working status, and relationship status).

Those who reported no conflict with a grandchild or nonfamily young adult were asked to comment on or describe the communication characteristics in the relationship by focusing on reasons they had not experienced a recent conflict. Directly following these questions, this group of participants answered questions on the grandchild/nonfamily young adult (i.e., relationship type, age, sex, and ethnicity) and questions about their own demographic information (i.e., age, sex, ethnicity, education level, working status, and relationship status).

A total of 495 responses were received from older adults. However, 68 questionnaires were removed as they were either empty or full of extensive missing values. After this process, the sample totaled 427 participants (M age = 74.40, SD = 6.18, age range = 61-95). Thirty percent were male (n = 125) and seventy percent were female (n = 302). Ninety-two percent of participants were European-American/Caucasian/White (n = 392), three percent African-American/Black (n = 11), four percent Asian-American (n = 14), and two percent Native American (n = 5). On average, participants had 14.73 years (SD = 2.69) of education and were predominately married (n = 294; 69%). However, three percent were single (n = 13), six percent were divorced (n = 25), and twenty-two percent were widowed (n = 93).

Out of the total number of respondents, 181 reported a conflict with a young adult (M age = 74.38, SD = 6.92, age range = 63-95). A little over half of those participants reported a family conflict (n = 96, M age = 75.38, SD = 7.02, age range = 63-95), while the rest reported a nonfamily conflict (n = 85; M age = 73.35, SD = 6.72, age range = 63-95). A one-sample t-test indicated that the mean typicality score for the conflict scenarios (M = 2.93, SD = 1.85) was significantly different from the midpoint scale (i.e., 4), t (170) = -7.56, p < .05. Thus, the

reported conflict scenarios aren't typical of communication they had with family and nonfamily young adults. There was no difference in typicality between the reports of conflict with family ($M = 2.90$, $SD = 1.88$) and nonfamily ($M = 2.97$, $SD = 1.83$) relationships, $t(170) = .33$, $p > .05$. Further, an independent samples t-test revealed that intergenerational family relationships ($M = 6.28$, $SD = 1.19$) were significantly closer than nonfamily relationships ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 1.75$), $t(169) = 10.47$, $p < .001$.

The grandchildren reported in the conflict scenarios had an average age of about twenty-two years (M age = 21.84, $SD = 3.99$, age range = 17-35) and were fifty-five percent male ($n = 53$) and forty-five percent female ($n = 43$). They were primarily European-American/Caucasian/White ($n = 82$). There were also five African-American/Black grandchildren, four Asian-American grandchildren, and five grandchildren who were placed into the other category. The average time that had passed from the initial conflict scenario to the report was about nine and a half months ($M = 9.71$, $SD = 11.50$, age range = 0-39 months). Eighty-six percent ($n = 81$) of participants hadn't been the caretaker of the grandchild that they reported, while fourteen percent ($n = 13$) of participants had been. Forty-four percent of participants were related paternally ($n = 41$) to the grandchild they reported, while fifty-six percent ($n = 52$) were related maternally. Ninety-five percent ($n = 85$) of the grandchildren reported were full-grandchildren of the participants, while five percent ($n = 5$) were step or half grandchildren. The average participant had about seven grandchildren in total ($M = 6.61$, $SD = 3.84$, number of grandchildren range = 1-20).

The nonfamily young adults had an average age of about twenty-two years (M age = 21.84, $SD = 3.99$, age range = 17-35) and were fifty-eight percent female ($n = 49$) and forty-two percent female ($n = 36$). The young adults were primarily European-American/Caucasian/White

($n = 69$; 81.2%). Young adults were also African-American/Black ($n = 9$; 10.6%), Asian-American ($n = 1$; 1.2%), and other ($n = 6$; 7.0%). Overall, participants reported the young adults as co-workers ($n = 15$; 17.4%), neighbors ($n = 7$; 8.1%), acquaintances ($n = 12$; 13.9%), friends ($n = 12$; 13.9%), strangers ($n = 12$; 13.9%), and other ($n = 28$; 32.8%). The length of relationship ranged from zero years to thirty-two years ($M = 7.14$, $SD = 9.73$).

Finally, the remainder of the participants ($n = 246$) provided their reasons for lack of conflict with family ($n = 126$) or nonfamily ($n = 120$) young adults with whom they had the most contact. The grandchildren (M age = 20.39, $SD = 2.59$, age range = 18-31) reported in relationships that lacked conflict were forty-two percent female ($n = 53$) and sixty-eight percent male ($n = 73$). Most of the participants had never been the caretaker of the grandchild they reported ($n = 97$; 76.9%), but there were some who had been the grandchild's caretaker ($n = 29$; 23.1%). The participants were related to the grandchildren both paternally ($n = 45$; 35.7%) and maternally ($n = 80$; 64.3%). Ninety-seven percent of grandchildren were full-grandchildren ($n = 123$), while less than two percent were step-grandchildren ($n = 2$). Overall, the reported grandchildren were ninety percent European-American/Caucasian/White ($n = 114$), nearly two percent African-American/Black ($n = 2$), four percent Asian-American ($n = 5$), and four percent other ($n = 5$).

The nonfamily young adults (M age = 22.31, $SD = 3.87$, age range = 17-34) were fifty-one percent female ($n = 61$) and forty-nine percent male ($n = 59$). They were primarily European-American/Caucasian/White ($n = 88$; 82%). Young adults were also African-American/Black ($n = 6$; 6%), Asian-American ($n = 6$; 6%), Latino/Hispanic ($n = 1$; 1%) and other ($n = 5$; 5%). Overall, participants reported the young adults as co-workers ($n = 6$; 5.6%), neighbors ($n = 21$; 19.6%), acquaintances ($n = 19$; 17.8%), friends ($n = 31$; 29.0%), strangers (n

= 5; 4.7%), and other ($n = 25$; 23.3%). The length of relationship ranged from zero years to thirty years ($M = 8.09$, $SD = 7.97$).

Development of the Coding Scheme

In the initial coding stage, a coding scheme that was applicable to initiating factors in intergenerational conflict was developed. Previous studies of conflict initiating factors in conflicts with peers (Witteman, 1992) and with older adults (Wiebe & Zhang, 2017; Zhang, 2004; Zhang & Lin, 2009) were referenced in the development of the categories and their operational definitions. Conflict management styles in intergenerational dyads were referenced as well (Zhang et al., 2005). Coders were familiarized with these conflict management styles (i.e., competing, avoiding, obliging, and problem-solving) and conflict initiating factors (i.e., old-to-young criticism, young-to-old criticism, illegitimate demand, old-to-young rebuff, disagreement/generation gap, and young-to-old rebuff).

Before the coding began, coder training was conducted. Each coder was asked to spend time familiarizing themselves with the adapted lists conflict initiating factors (Table 1) and conflict management styles (Table 2). After they felt comfortable with the operational definitions, they began to code conflict scenarios to ensure that the lists were exhaustive. Each conflict scenario was considered as a unit of analysis. Coders were instructed to focus on the initial stage of each conflict scenario to identify the major initiating factor. As for the conflict management styles used by the older adult and the young adult, coders were asked to focus on the communicative exchanges and conflict development in each scenario.

Similarly, a coding scheme was developed to describe the reasons for lack of conflict in family and nonfamily intergenerational relationships. Although scholars have alluded to reasons for lack of problematic intergenerational communication (Fox & Giles, 1993; Harwood, 1998;

Williams & Giles, 1996) that have been shown to lead to conflict (Wiebe & Zhang, 2017; Zhang & Lin, 2009), a comprehensive list has not been created.

Coders were familiarized with prior literature on accommodative intergenerational communication as a reference point for potential categories for the characteristics of intergenerational relationships that lack conflict (Harwood, 1998; Harwood, McKee, & Lin, 2000; Williams & Giles, 1996; Williams et al., 1997). Older adults' reports with both grandchildren and young adults were analyzed. A characteristic that appeared across a number of scenarios was considered as a category.

In the coder training process, the coders coded family ($n = 30$) and nonfamily ($n = 30$) young adult conflict scenarios for management styles and initiating factors individually then compared their findings. In the same way, they coded the reasons for lack of conflict with grandchildren ($n = 40$) and nonfamily young adults ($n = 40$). If there were any disagreements, the coders discussed the scenario in more detail until an agreement was made. Throughout the coder training process, adjustments were made to the operational definitions of conflict initiating factors, conflict management styles, and reasons for lack of conflict for clarity. When the lists proved to be exhaustive for the initiating factors (Table 3), management styles (Table 4), and reasons for lack of conflict (Table 5), the scenarios were returned to the larger pool for later coding but were not included in the subsequent reliability check.

Coding and Reliability Check

After the training process, each of the two coders individually analyzed a total of 39 scenarios (21.55%) in different stages of the coding process for reliability checks. The conflict initiating factor and management styles used by young and older adults were identified in each scenario in separate passes. If a scenario had an initiating factor or management style that did not

fit into the list, it was coded into the “other” category. The overall intercoder reliability for initiating factors, young adults’ management styles, and older adults’ management styles was measured using both percent agreement (.92, .95, and .88 respectively) and Cohen’s Kappa (.85, .80, .83 respectively), which was satisfactory. The disagreements in this stage were discussed and resolved. The remaining 142 scenarios were split up and individually coded by each coder. Three initiating factors (i.e., 1.66%) were placed in the “other” category. These scenarios were initiated by an illegitimate demand by the older adult. Further, one conflict management style of older adults (i.e., 0.55%), and six conflict management styles of young adults (i.e., 3.87%) were placed in the “other” category. Each of the conflict management styles that were placed in the other category lacked sufficient information to determine the style. The other category for both conflict initiating factors and management styles was not included in later data analysis.

A similar process was followed to code the characteristics for intergenerational relationships that lack conflict. Each of the two coders individually analyzed 60 responses (24.39%). If a response had a characteristic that didn’t fall into the list, it was coded into the “other” category. The overall intercoder reliability for the characteristics was measured using both percent agreement (.98) and Cronbach’s alpha (.95), which was satisfactory. The remaining 186 responses were split up and individually coded by each coder. Six characteristics (i.e., 2.43%) were placed in the “other” category. Four of these characteristics involved a third-party, usually a parent of the young adult, who protected the relationship from potentially problematic issues that would lead to conflict. There were, however, two cases that simply didn’t provide sufficient information to code.

Interval Level of Measures

Relational closeness. Vangelisti and Caughlin's (1997; see also Imamura, Zhang, & Harwood, 2011) four-item measurement was adapted to measure older adults' perceived closeness in general with the grandchildren ($\alpha = .90$; $M = 6.28$, $SD = 1.35$) and nonfamily young adults ($\alpha = .92$; $M = 3.89$, $SD = 1.96$) in the reported conflict scenarios (e.g., I am close to this young adult/grandchild; I like this older young adult/grandchild; I enjoy spending time with this young adult/grandchild). These items were measured on a 7-point Likert Scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

Conflict scenario typicality. A three-item measure was created in line with prior literature (Wiebe & Zhang, 2017; Zhang & Lin, 2009) to measure participants' perceptions of how typical the reported conflict scenario was comparing with conflicts that they experience with grandchildren ($\alpha = .94$; $M = 2.89$, $SD = 1.99$) and nonfamily young adults in general ($\alpha = .95$; $M = 2.98$, $SD = 1.93$; e.g., this conflict was typical of conflicts I have experienced with grandchildren/young adults in general; this conflict was representative of conflicts I have experienced with grandchildren/young adults in general; this conflict illustrated what conflict is usually like with grandchildren/young adults).

Chapter Four: Results

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 examined the types of conflict initiating factors in intergenerational relationships as reported by American older adults. A total of five initiating factors (i.e., old-to-young criticism, disagreement/generation gap, young-to-old rebuff, young adults' cumulative annoyance, and young-to-old criticism) were identified through the content analysis. Table 6 presents the frequencies of the initiating factors in the intergenerational conflict scenarios reported by older adults (see Table 3 for examples). A one sample chi-square test was conducted to examine whether the frequencies of the initiating factors were evenly distributed in the scenarios. Results indicated a significant difference of the frequencies across the initiating factors in the scenarios, overall $\chi^2(4, n = 178) = 39.18, p < .05$. Follow-up pairwise comparisons were conducted to evaluate the differences among these proportions (see Table 6). Type 1 error was kept at .05 across all the comparisons (Green & Salkind, 2011). Old-to-young criticism ($n = 57$; 31.49%), disagreement/generation gap ($n = 49$; 27.07%), and young-to-old rebuff ($n = 32$; 17.68%) were the most frequently reported initiating factors (no difference). Young adults' cumulative annoyance ($n = 26$; 14.36%) and young-to-old criticism ($n = 14$; 9.40%) were less frequently reported.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 examined the reported conflict management styles in intergenerational relationships as reported by American older adults. For both young and older adults, the four traditional styles emerged from the data (i.e., competing, avoiding, problem-solving, and obliging) as well as an additional style, third-party (Khakimova, Zhang, & Hall, 2012; Song & Zhang, 2012; see Table 4 for examples). Table 7 presents the frequencies of the

five management styles older adults reported themselves using in intergenerational conflict scenarios. A one sample chi-square test was conducted to examine whether the frequencies of the management styles were evenly distributed. Results indicated that the frequencies were significantly different across older adults' management styles in the scenarios, overall $\chi^2(4) = 109.33, p < .01$. Follow-up pairwise comparisons were conducted to evaluate the differences among these proportions (see Table 7). Type 1 error was kept at .05 across all the comparisons (Green & Salkind, 2011). Older adults used the competing style ($n = 67; 37.02\%$) and problem-solving style ($n = 73; 40.33\%$) most frequently (no difference between them). The avoiding style ($n = 15; 8.29\%$), the obliging style ($n = 7; 3.87\%$), and the third-party style ($n = 18; 9.94\%$) were all reported as the least used styles (no difference among them).

Table 8 presents the frequencies of the five management styles older adults reported to be used by young adults in intergenerational conflict scenarios. A second one sample chi-square test was conducted to examine whether the frequencies of young adults management styles were evenly distributed. Results indicated that the frequencies were significantly different across young adults' management styles, overall $\chi^2(4) = 84.57, p < .01$. Follow-up pairwise comparisons were conducted to evaluate the differences among these proportions (see Table 8). Type 1 error was kept at .05 across all the comparisons (Green & Salkind, 2011). Young adults used the competing style ($n = 80; 44.20\%$) most frequently. The problem-solving ($n = 26; 14.36\%$), avoiding ($n = 38; 20.99\%$), and obliging ($n = 22; 12.15\%$) styles were used the next most frequently and not significantly different from each other. Further, the third-party ($n = 9; 4.97\%$), problem solving, and obliging styles were not significantly different from each other either.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 examined the associations between the initiating factors and the management styles reported in intergenerational relationships. A two-way contingency table analysis was conducted¹ to evaluate these associations. Results indicated a borderline significance, Pearson $\chi^2(16, n = 177) = 23.83, p = .09$, Cramér's $V = .37$. Follow-up analyses were conducted to determine if young and older adults' management styles differed across each initiating factor. Type 1 error was controlled for using the Holm's sequential Bonferroni method (Green & Salkind, 2011). Table 9 presents the frequencies of both young and older adults' conflict management styles across initiating factors. Specifically, cross-tabulation results indicated that old-to-young criticism was most associated with the competing style. On the other hand, disagreement/generation gap was most associated with the problem-solving style. Finally, young-to-old rebuff was most associated with the competing and the problem-solving styles.

A two-way contingency table analysis also examined the associations between the reported initiating factors and reported management styles used by young adults. Initiating factors and management styles were found to be significantly related, Pearson $\chi^2(16, n = 172) = 44.84, p < .001$, Cramér's $V = .26$. Follow-up analyses were conducted to determine if young adults' management styles differed across each initiating factor. Old-to-young criticism, young-to-old criticism, and young-to-old rebuff were most associated with the competing style. On the other hand, disagreement/generation gap was most associated with the competing and problem-solving styles.

¹ Research Question 3 produced frequency tables with expected values of less than 5 which might pose a potential problem with the accuracy of the chi-square analyses. This issue is addressed in more depth in the Discussion Section.

Research Question 4

Research Question 4 examined the association between young and older adults' management styles in intergenerational conflict. A two-way contingency table analysis was conducted² to evaluate the association. Results indicated that young adults' management styles and older adults' management styles were significantly related, Pearson $\chi^2(16, n = 174) = 135.94, p < .001$, Cramér's $V = .44$. Table 10 presents the frequencies of young adults' management styles across older adults' management style. Specifically, cross-tabulation results indicate that the reported use of the competing style by young adults was associated with older adults' use of the same style over half of the time. The young adults' use of the problem-solving style was associated with the older adults' use of the same style as well. The same pattern was true of the third-party style.

Hypotheses 1 and 2

Finally, H1 and H2 theorized that both conflict initiating factors and management styles would vary based on family and nonfamily relationships. A two-way contingency table analysis was conducted to evaluate whether there was a significant difference between family and nonfamily relationships across the conflict initiating factors. Type of relationship and initiating factors were found to be significantly related, Pearson $\chi^2(4, n = 178) = 19.51, p = .001$, Cramér's $V = .33$. First, old-to-young criticism was reported more in nonfamily intergenerational relationships (adjusted residual = 3.9, $p < .001$). Second, disagreement/generation gap was reported more in family relationships (adjusted residual = 2.7, $p < .01$). No other differences

² Research Question 4 produced frequency tables with expected values of less than 5 which might pose a potential problem with the accuracy of the chi-square analyses. This issue is addressed in more depth in the Discussion Section.

existed between family and nonfamily relationships and the reported initiating factor (see Table 6).

A second and third two-way contingency table analysis was conducted to evaluate whether there was a significant difference between family and nonfamily relationships across the management styles (i.e., for both young and older adults). Type of relationship and older adults' management style were found to be significantly related, Pearson $\chi^2(4, n = 180) = 10.12, p < .05$, Cramér's $V = .24$. Similarly, type of relationship and young adults' management styles were found to be significantly related as well, Pearson $\chi^2(4, n = 175) = 9.68, p < .05$, Cramér's $V = .24$. Specifically, for older adults, the competing style was used more in nonfamily scenarios (adjusted residual = 2.6, $p < .01$) and the problem-solving style was used more in family scenarios (adjusted residual = 2.2, $p < .05$). No other significant differences existed between older adults' use of management styles in family and nonfamily relationships (see Table 7). On the other hand, young adults used the competing style more in nonfamily scenarios (adjusted residual = 2.2, $p < .05$), while they used the avoiding style more in family scenarios (adjusted residual = 2.5, $p < .05$). No other significant differences existed between young adults' use of management styles in family and nonfamily relationships (see Table 8).

Research Question 5

Research Question 5.1 examined the communication characteristics in intergenerational relationships reported by American older adults who did not experience a recent conflict. Seven communication characteristics were identified through content analysis (i.e., respect, relational closeness, understanding, lack of interaction, attentive communication and listening, interpersonal boundaries, and topics of interest; see Table 5 for examples). Table 11 presents the frequencies of the seven characteristics identified by older adults in intergenerational

relationships that lack conflict. A one-way chi-square test was conducted to examine whether the frequencies of the initiating factors were evenly distributed. Results indicated a significant difference in the frequencies across the communication characteristics, overall $\chi^2(6) = 77.80, p < .001$. Follow-up pairwise comparisons were conducted to evaluate the differences among these proportions (see Table 11). Type 1 error was kept at .05 across all the comparisons (Green & Salkind, 2011). Lack of interaction ($n = 65; 26.42\%$), respect ($n = 57; 23.17\%$), and interpersonal boundaries ($n = 46; 18.70\%$) were the most frequently reported characteristics. Both respect and interpersonal boundaries were deemed accommodative based on prior literature. Relational closeness ($n = 16; 6.50\%$), understanding of the other's perspective ($n = 20; 8.13\%$), attentive communication and listening ($n = 17; 6.91\%$), and topics of interests ($n = 19; 7.72\%$) were also reported. Attentive communication and topics of interests were deemed accommodative as well.

Research Question 5.2 examined how accommodative characteristics vary based on family and nonfamily relationships. A two-way contingency table analysis was conducted to evaluate whether there was a significant difference between family and nonfamily relationships. Type of relationship and the communicative characteristics were found to be significantly related, Pearson $\chi^2(6, n = 240) = 54.31, p < .001$, Cramér's $V = .47$. First, respect (adjusted residual = 5.1, $p < .001$) and relational closeness (adjusted residual = 3.5, $p < .001$) were reported more in family intergenerational relationships. Second, understanding (adjusted residual = 2.4, $p < .05$), lack of interaction (adjusted residual = 3.3, $p < .01$), and interpersonal boundaries (adjusted residual = 3.1, $p < .01$) were all reported as characteristics more frequently in nonfamily relationships (see Table 11).

Chapter Five: Discussion

Overview

The current study uses a content analytic approach to examine intergenerational relationships in which older adults report a conflict with scenario with a young adult to uncover conflict initiating factors and conflict management styles. In a similar way, it also examines intergenerational relationships in which older adults report no recent conflict to uncover the reasons for the lack of conflict. After examining the results, several major themes have emerged and will be discussed in depth throughout this chapter. The results reveal both a dark and bright side of intergenerational communication that provide an additional perspective to communication accommodation literature. In light of CAT and CIIM, this study also contributes new perspectives to both communication accommodation and family and nonfamily intergenerational conflict that enhance prior literature in several meaningful ways. Finally, the accommodative characteristics that emerged from the reports of no recent intergenerational conflict not only expand prior communication accommodation literature, but also provide fruitful ground for future research.

The Dark Side of Intergenerational Communication

Prior literature suggests that old-to-young criticism is the most common conflict initiating factor in intergenerational relationships between young and older adults (Wiebe & Zhang, 2017; Zhang & Lin, 2009). Further, scholars claim that criticism by the older adult is the “driving force behind the initiating of intergenerational conflict” (Wiebe & Zhang, 2017, p. 374). However, the young adults’ perspective dominates literature in this area as research continues to ignore the older adults’ side of the story. Although useful in its own right, the singular perspective of young adults limits their reports of a two-way interaction—individuals tend to hold others more

responsible than themselves, especially in situations with negative results or outcomes (Ross, 1977).

The current study expands the literature on initiating factors by revealing that older adults also report old-to-young criticism as the most frequent initiating factor in intergenerational conflict scenarios. It is, however, statistically no different from disagreement/generation gap and young-to-old rebuff. Old-to-young criticism contains behaviors that are more problematic than the behaviors that exist within the other initiating factors. Older adults often use communication that reflects their negative stereotypes of young adults leading to communication dissatisfaction, conflict escalation, and negative affective and behavioral responses from one or both parties (Zhang & Lin, 2009). The replication of this finding from the older adults' perspective, which has significant implications, confirms that criticism exists within and drives, at least to a certain extent, intergenerational conflict between young and older adults.

As noted in the introduction, the CPA model (Ryan et al., 1986) guides much of the research on intergenerational communication and describes how dissatisfying and nonaccommodative communication can be problematic in intergenerational interactions. Young respondents often describe criticism as carried out in an inappropriate and patronizing manner (Giles & Williams, 1994; Williams & Giles, 1996; Zhang & Lin, 2009). Scholars note that when old-to-young criticism initiates conflict, older adults tend to be critically restrictive, interfering, and meddlesome (Zhang & Lin, 2009). Considering the CPA model, older adults' critical behaviors could be due to their age-based stereotypes of young adults (e.g., party animals, disrespectful, and irresponsible; Matheson, Collins, & Kuehne, 2000). The current study suggests that the problematic communication that young adults report and that the CPA model describes,

does indeed exist in intergenerational relationships and could have consequences for the individuals involved.

In addition to criticism being one of the main initiating factors, the reports show that older adults use the competing conflict management style frequently and young adults use the competing conflict management style more than any other style. These reports from the older adults' perspective verify young adults' reports—intergenerational conflict is dominated by the competing conflict management style. High levels of self-interest and low levels of interest in the other characterize this style. It is “negative, confrontational, assertive, and uncooperative,” and can include communication behaviors such as “faulting and rejecting the other, hostile questioning, and denying responsibility” (Zhang et al., 2005, p. 73).

When examining the associations between conflict initiating factors and conflict management styles, a troublesome theme emerges. Both young (54.7%) and older adults (42.9%) use the competing style most frequently in response to old-to-young criticism (see Table 9). This substantial association asserts that the problematic communicative acts that take place when old-to-young criticism is used to initiate conflict continue to intensify the conflict through the management style. Essentially, the nonaccommodative communication described by intergenerational literature does not cease after initiation.

Further, prior literature on interpersonal conflict adds that negative reciprocation within the competing style could be damaging to relationships (Afifi, McManus, Steuber, & Coho, 2009; Song & Zhang, 2012). In older adults' reports of conflict scenarios, young adults used the competing style 72.3% of the time when the style was used by older adults (see Table 10). This negative reciprocation adds to the problematic communication that exists in this relationship and deserves heightened attention in the future.

The Bright Side of Intergenerational Communication

The aforementioned discussion creates a dark picture of intergenerational communication. There are, however, several other findings to consider when examining the results. It is important to recognize that older adults note that the conflict scenarios they reported were atypical interactions. In other words, although the scenarios include nonaccommodative communication and negative reciprocation, they are not representative of the respondents' normal interactions with young adults. Thus, the scenarios represent what the older adult might have felt most uncomfortable with or what was most salient and significant at the time of the report, but they are not necessarily reflective of typical communication (Wiebe & Zhang, 2017). This does not take away from the negative aspects discussed above as the conflict scenarios might represent the most negative and memorable, and thus influential communicative events for older adults in communicating toward and from young adults. From the perspective of intergroup contact, prior research has demonstrated that a single negative contact experience is found to have impact on attitudes formation (Tropp, 2003). Therefore, it is worthwhile to explore these conflict scenarios in intergenerational relationships. On the bright side, although these negative conflict situations do exist, they may not be as widespread as prior literature describes.

Additionally, there is an interesting distinction to be made between the older adults' and young adults' reports of conflict. In the older adults' reports, some of the cases that use old-to-young criticism also voice certain levels of care for the young adult and a desire for their well-being (see examples 2-3 in Table 3). When older adults criticize or find fault with the young adults' behaviors, they do not completely disregard the young adults' thoughts, desires, or feelings. In contrast to young adults' reports from prior literature, some of the older adults' reports of criticism seem more hopeful, at the very least. This is important when discussing the

overall implications of this finding because it differs from the majority of prior literature on criticism. The incorporation of conflict management styles into this study helps further explain this phenomenon.

Although young and older adults frequently use the competing style, both age-groups also utilize the problem-solving style. According to the reports, older adults use the problem-solving style just as much as the competing style, while young adults use the problem-solving style second most, statistically speaking, to the competing style. The findings of young and older adults' use of the problem-solving style are contrary to prior literature from the young adults' perspective, which claims individuals rarely utilize the problem-solving style when in intergenerational conflict (Wiebe & Zhang, 2017).

The current study shows that there is a tendency for reciprocation within the problem-solving style as well. When young adults use the problem-solving style, it is in association with older adults' use of the problem-solving style 32.5% of the time (see Table 9). This type of positive reciprocity, which is referred to in accommodation literature as optimal convergence (Zhang & Pitts, in press), can be beneficial to the relationship (Schwarz, 2010). Optimal convergence is a useful concept to consider when examining how individuals adjust their communication in conflict situations (Gasiorek & Giles, 2013). In this case, when one individual uses the problem-solving style and the other individual optimally converges (i.e., uses the same positive style), it is considered an accommodative move. Beyond the positive aspects of communication that exists within intergenerational conflict as well as the accommodative communication that has been described, other aspects of the results are valuable in understanding the full picture of the scenarios.

In breaking down the data further, it is important to note that out of the total number of participants ($n = 427$), conflict is experienced in less than 43% ($n = 181$) of the relationships (see Table 1). With this in mind, this study shows that the problematic communication that older adults report in conflict scenarios is not only atypical and more hopeful than prior literature suggests, but it is also limited in its frequency. The participants who did not report a conflict scenario provide a fruitful view into intergenerational communication. Older adults report several characteristics of intergenerational relationships that contribute to a lack of conflict. Most frequently, individuals show respect for one another, show respect for interpersonal boundaries, or lack interaction to experience conflict. Older adults also report relational closeness, an understanding of the others' perspective, attentive communication and listening, and talking about topics of interest as characteristics of intergenerational relationships that lack conflict.

Five of these characteristics (i.e., respect, attentive communication and listening, interpersonal boundaries, understanding, and topics of interest) reflect prior literature on intergenerational accommodation that suggests accommodative communication leads to more satisfactory interactions (Harwood, 1998; Harwood, McKee, & Lin, 2000; Williams & Giles, 1996). The current study advances those claims by presenting that the same accommodative communication has the potential to prevent, or at the least provide a buffer for, intergenerational conflict.

Theoretical Contributions

Thus far, this chapter has discussed two primary findings from the written reports. First, a portion of the results indicate a dark side of intergenerational communication. Specifically, the predominant use of nonaccommodative communication that initiates conflict and nonaccommodative conflict management styles that intensify it. Second, when observed

holistically, the majority of the results reveal a more positive perspective than prior literature describes. Beyond these two paradigms, the current study provides several valuable additions to literature and theoretical contributions.

Additions to prior literature. Similar to young adults' reports of intergenerational conflict scenarios (Wiebe & Zhang, 2017; Zhang & Lin, 2009), older adults report that disagreement/generation gap, young-to-old rebuff, and young-to-old criticism all exist within intergenerational conflict. In addition, young adults' cumulative annoyance accounts for a significant portion of conflict initiation. Prior literature on conflict initiation in marriage (Peterson, 1983) and peer relationships (Witteman, 1992) distinguishes cumulative annoyance as a conflict initiating factor. In the current study's scenarios, the young adults' repetitive activity surpasses a certain threshold from the perspective of the older adult. When this happens, the accumulation leads the older adult to experience conflict with the young adult. This initiating factor primarily faults the young adults' behavior for conflict, which could explain why it failed to show up in the young adults' reports. Regardless, this addition to intergenerational literature helps better illuminate conflict from the older adults' perspective. There are, however, certain initiating factors that young adults reported that older adults do not. These factors include old-to-young illegitimate demand and old-to-young rebuff. Both of these styles suggest that the older adults initiate the conflict. Again, each perspective (i.e., the young adults' and the older adults') most likely produces reports containing some bias that could explain the minor differences.

Similarly, the current study reveals that the older adults' reports of conflict management reflect certain aspects of the young adults' reports. The prevalence of the competing style from the older adults' perspective echoes prior literature, but the prevalence of the problem-solving style provides a new and interesting account. Further, the current study uncovers a fifth

management style in intergenerational conflict—the third-party style. The third-party style has been referenced before in conflict management research (Khakimova, Zhang, & Hall, 2012; Song & Zhang, 2012). However, the current study is the first to uncover its role in intergenerational conflict between young and older adults. Individuals use this style by inviting an outsider to mediate the conflict. Almost always, one or both parties communicate to the other through a parent of the young adult. The addition of this style exposes the unique complexity of intergenerational conflict management and deems additional research necessary to understand it in its entirety.

Contributions to CAT. CAT is a theory that accounts for intergroup nonaccommodation and also provides knowledge for the promotion of accommodative communication. These behaviors bridge the psychological distance between group members and provide an environment for satisfying communication. Although most prior intergenerational research on CAT focuses on nonaccommodative communication, literature focusing on accommodative communication exists (Harwood, 1998; Harwood, McKee, & Lin, 2000; Williams & Giles, 1996). The current study adds data to this body of research by showing that accommodative communication not only takes place in satisfying intergenerational interactions (e.g., Williams & Giles, 1996), but also helps buffer conflict.

Older adults report respect, interpersonal boundaries, and a lack of interaction as the most common characteristics of intergenerational relationships that lack conflict. The two most reported characteristics (i.e., respect and interpersonal boundaries) add to prior literature on accommodative communication in intergenerational relationships. Young and older adults believe that respect is accommodative (Harwood et al., 2000) and young adults specifically report that respect from the older adults leads to satisfactory interactions (Williams & Giles,

1996). Further, respecting the autonomy of young adults is classified as accommodative intergenerational communication (Fowler, Fisher, & Pitts, 2013). The current study refers to this as interpersonal boundaries. Moreover adults' attribute their low-levels of contact and communication with young adults as the reason that they had not experienced any recent conflict (i.e. lack of interaction). This study adds to literature by highlighting the two accommodative characteristics that exist in intergenerational relationships that lack conflict: a general respect for one another and interpersonal boundaries.

The current study also demonstrates that understanding, attentive communication and listening, and topics of interest (Williams & Giles, 1996) exist in intergenerational relationships that lack conflict. Although not as common as the first two characteristics, this study suggests that these accommodative characteristics also diminish conflict. As a whole, these findings provide fruitful ground for future research as well as practical takeaways for intergenerational relationships.

In addition to the aforementioned reasons for no conflict, forms of accommodation can be noticed in the conflict management styles. Specifically, scholars note that the reciprocation of conflict management styles is an example of convergence (Gasiorek & Giles, 2013). Optimal convergence (Zhang & Pitts, in press) takes place when the reciprocation is positive (i.e., problem-solving reciprocated by problem-solving). The current study highlights the young adults' use of the problem-solving style was associated with the older adults use of the same style ($n = 25$; 36.3%). Adding to the discussion of the bright side of communication, CAT helps explain how communication can be accommodative even in context of conflict. From this perspective, future research should examine how accommodative communication, like optimal convergence, can help resolve intergenerational conflict.

Further, it is important to acknowledge that conflict style reciprocation can also be nonoptimal. Although to a lesser degree than optimal reciprocation, nonoptimal reciprocation exists in the current study. The use of the competing style by young adults was associated with older adults' use of the same style over half of the time ($n = 47$; 72.3%). This type of nonoptimal reciprocation has the potential to harm the intergenerational relationship in certain situations (Afifi, McManus, Steuber, & Coho, 2009; Song & Zhang, 2012) and, like optimal convergence, should be examined in future research in terms of its influence on intensifying or prolonging a conflict situation.

Lastly, the conflict initiating factors that older adults report also adhere to prior literature on CAT. As discussed in the literature review, each initiating factor typically contains nonaccommodative communication (Zhang & Lin, 2009; Wiebe & Zhang, 2017). In combination, the reasons older adults reported no intergenerational conflict, the conflict initiating factors, and convergence in conflict management styles provide an interesting picture of the way accommodative and nonaccommodative communication can either initiate or diminish conflict. In addition to CAT, CIIM contributes a powerful perspective to the findings in this study.

Family and nonfamily differences. CIIM provides a theoretical lens through which to view the conflict reports from the older adults. Shared family identity is relatively easy to establish (Banker & Gaertner, 1998) and can lead to more positive interactions (Gaertner et al., 2000). Additionally, family elders have been shown to be more supportive of young people than nonfamily elders (Giles et al., 2002; Ng et al., 1997). Therefore, family membership could enhance, or at least influence, communication in conflict situations.

In light of CIIM and previous supporting research on the influence of relationship type on intergenerational communication, the current study confirms that intergenerational

communication in conflict situations differs in family and nonfamily relationships. Older adults report themselves as initiating conflict through criticism more towards nonfamily young adults than towards grandchildren. This finding indicates and validates that older adults are more nonaccommodative (i.e. critical and less supportive) towards nonrelated young adults than family elders are towards their grandchildren (Giles et al., 2002; Ng et al., 1997). Alternatively, the reports indicate that older adults initiate conflict through disagreement/generation gap with grandchildren significantly more than with nonfamily young adults. Literature suggests that older adults feel more obligations towards grandchildren and as a result tend to impose their own opinions and desires on them (Zhang & Lin, 2009). This could help explain the large amounts of conflict due to disagreement/generation gap within the family relationships. Because older adults tend to be familiar with and close to their grandchildren, they may be less likely to mask their true feelings and more likely to raise the expectations they have for their descendants. Due to the nature of this in-group relationship, characterized by a heightened level of care and a sense of responsibility, grandparents may feel fewer obligations to “mind their own business” and more freedom to voice their personal opinions, feelings, and ideas with their grandchildren. According to CIIM, relationships can be enhanced through a common ingroup but hindered by non-normative behaviors. Prior research on CIIM shows that ingroup members who are not seen as normative, may be evaluated more negatively (Haslam, Oakes, McGarty, Turner, & Onorato, 1995). Non-normative behaviors often include violating group norms or not supporting the ingroup. If either of the individuals participated in one of these non-prototypical behaviors, then it could have contributed to the initiation of conflict.

This study also identifies two main relational differences in the use of conflict management styles. First, older adults use the competing style significantly more with nonfamily

members than with family members. Second, older adults use the problem-solving style significantly more with family members than with nonfamily young adults. To summarize, older adults use the nonaccommodative and negative conflict management style most frequently with nonfamily young adults, while they use the accommodative and positive conflict management style most frequently with family young adults. These findings further the discussion of the influence of CIIM on intergenerational communication—family conflict seems to be initiated and handled more positively than nonfamily conflict.

Similarly, older adults' reports show that young adults use the competing style more with nonfamily older adults than they did with their grandparents. However, the only other significant difference was found in the avoiding style. Young adults use the avoiding style more with grandparents than with nonfamily older adults. Initially, this finding might seem contrary to the positive distinction that the family ingroup typically makes. However, the term *respectfully avoidant communication* indicates that avoidance can show respect in certain situations (Giles et al, 2002). In an attempt to elude differences so that a conflict won't escalate, grandchildren may have a tendency of removing themselves from certain situations or conversations. Thus, even though the avoiding style is typically negative, it actually could be a tool to respectfully avoid the escalation of the conflict.

The final difference between family and nonfamily communication that deserves attention is the older adults' reports of intergenerational relationships that lack conflict. Intergenerational family relationships elude conflict due to respect and relational closeness more often than nonfamily relationships. In family relationships characterized by respect, the older adult attributes the lack of conflict to the young adult's respect for him or her. Respondents often believe this is the result of the young adult's upbringing, which is most likely fostered by the

grandparents' sense of pride in their own children's parenting capabilities. On the other hand, in these relationships characterized by relational closeness, the older adult attributes the lack of conflict to the level of relational closeness with the young adult. These relationships seem pleasing for both parties and reflect an ideal GP-GC relationship.

Further, nonfamily intergenerational relationships avoid conflict due to understanding, lack of interaction, and interpersonal boundaries more than those in families. Understanding refers to the lack of conflict to a general understanding of the young adult or a mutual understanding of each other. A lack of interaction refers to the low levels of involvement, communication or contact with the young adult, contributing to a lack of conflict. Finally, interpersonal boundaries denotes a lack of conflict through respect for boundaries and autonomy of the other individual. Some of the boundaries lead older adults to practice conflict avoidant and non-confrontational tendencies.

It is interesting to note that interpersonal boundaries are more likely to be acknowledged by nonfamily older adults as characteristics of relationships that lack conflict. As discussed above, family elders may feel a heightened sense of obligation to their grandchildren and therefore may impose their own opinions and desires on young adult relatives (Zhang & Lin, 2009). Further, it seems that grandparents are less likely to recognize the interpersonal boundaries of their grandchildren. The failure to do so has the potential to lead to conflict. The current study provides evidence that older adults believe interjecting opinions on difficult matters with a nonfamily young adult would be inappropriate, based on their role. However, the shared ingroup of family seems to justify the grandparents' right to interfere.

Overall implications. Problematic and nonaccommodative communication exists within intergenerational relationships and can lead to conflict. Further, intergenerational conflict can be

intensified by the continued use of problematic and nonaccommodative communication. This type of communication can be harmful to the individuals involved. However, a brighter side exists—many intergenerational relationships do not experience conflict because they contain accommodative characteristics that helps buffer problematic communication. Even in relationships that do experience conflict, accommodative communication can reduce the severity of the conflict and lead to conflict resolution. These findings contribute to prior research by acknowledging that intergenerational communication might not be as dark as prior literature (i.e., the young adults' perspective) suggests. Biases that exist among individuals from different age groups could have influenced these findings. Alternatively, the positivity effect could have influenced the older adults' reports as well. The positivity effect has been well-documented and refers to the fact that older adults are more motivated to derive emotional meaning from life and to maintain positive feelings (Isaacowitz & Blanchard-Fields, 2012; Scheibe & Carstensen, 2010). Intergenerational relationships that lack conflict reflect this effect. Nearly 60% of the reports suggest that intergenerational communication is functioning in ways that evade conflict. Further, the scenarios where conflict exists do not resemble typical interactions that older adults have with young adults. In combination, these findings create an alternate perspective that enhances prior research in this area.

The current study adds to literature in the area of intergenerational communication in several ways. Most importantly, older adults' reports of conflict initiating factors and management styles enhance literature on intergenerational conflict by explaining aspects of both the bright and dark side of intergenerational communication. Second, the current study provides concrete data to help explain and contribute to several theoretical frameworks in

intergenerational communication. Finally, the addition of the characteristics of relationships that lack conflict contributes new and fruitful data for future research.

Limitations and Future Research

This study analyzed intergenerational communication based on older adults' accounts of conflict that were retrospectively written. This method provided valuable insights into intergenerational conflict from a communication accommodation perspective. More specifically, the written responses provided a rich data set to analyze communicative acts and moves from both the young and older adult throughout the conflict situation. After analyzing the results, it is clear that this study has meaningfully advanced literature and theory. However, it is important to acknowledge the extent to which these results should be taken.

The older adult participants were asked to think a current or recent conflict scenario within a relationship with a young adult. When considering their responses, it is important to note that the conflict situations were recalled and documented from their memory. Further, the scenarios may not be representative of typical conflict situations experienced by older adults. Instead, the reports reflect that which might have been most salient in their minds for a multitude of reasons. The scope of this study does not provide an answer for why each participant reported the conflict the way that they did. However, future research should use different methodologies to continue to examine intergenerational conflict.

In terms of data analysis, there was one potential limitation as well. The Tables 9 and 10 yielded certain cells with expected frequencies of less than 5 which can be problematic (Green & Salkind, 2011). In order to be consistent with the terminology, categorizations, and typologies of prior literature in this area, no major changes were made to address this problem in the current study. However, the limitation should be addressed in the future. One way to address this

problem is to collapse the six conflict management styles coded in the current study to fewer categories. Putnam and Wilson (1982) provide a three category conflict styles typology that offers a potential solution. They categorize conflict as nonconfrontation, solution-oriented, and control. The nonconfrontation style is characterized by “avoidance and smoothing as indirect strategies for dealing with conflict” while the solution oriented style is characterized by “direct confrontation, open discussion of alternatives, and acceptances of compromises” (Putnam & Wilson, 1982, p. 638). Finally, the control style is categorized as “direct confrontation that leads to persistent argument and nonverbal forcing” (Putnam & Wilson, 1982, p. 638). Re-coding the current data set into this three-style typology should help increase the expected values in the contingency tables without sacrificing its interpretability.

After analyzing the results of the current study, there are several additional questions to consider. First, beyond the conflict situations that were reported, the current study provided a view into intergenerational relationships that were free from recent conflict (according to the older adult participants). The accommodative characteristics not only add to CAT, but also provide fruitful grounds for future research that could give individuals practical instruction on how to evade conflict in intergenerational relationships. It is, however, important to discuss other possible reasons why older adults’ did not report conflict. There are a few theoretical frameworks that could help understand these ideas. In one line of thinking, social desirability bias (Edwards, 1957) or politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987) explains how participants might have the tendency to answer questions in a way that would be viewed more favorably by others. Thus, older participants might not report conflict because they view it as negative and destructive unlike young adults. This view of conflict might lead them to feel as if others might look down on them or think less of them if conflict existed within their relationships with young

adults. On the other hand, older adults have been shown to report low conflict frequency in their relationships with young adults because of their social maturity and emotional control (Sillars & Zietlow, 1993; Suito & Pillemer, 1988). This line of thinking matches the aforementioned positivity effect that has been well-documented throughout intergenerational research (Isaacowitz & Blanchard-Fields, 2012; Scheibe & Carstensen, 2010). Scholars should examine these ideas more closely in the future.

Second, this study acknowledges that gender and relationship might play an important role in intergenerational conflict. Future research should examine gender and relationship dyads. For example, a conflict between a grandfather and granddaughter might be different than a conflict with a grandmother and grandson. Further, conflict between female nonfamily older adults and male young adults might be different than conflict between male nonfamily older adults and female young adults and so on. The numerous potential relationship and gender dyads deserve more attention in future research.

Third, the current study claims that conflict is not always present in intergenerational relationships. Most scholars state that conflict is unavoidable in any relationship—therefore, this phenomena may deserve more attention. Finally, scholars should examine communicative moves throughout the conflict situations. Specifically, sequential communicative moves should be analyzed in more detail to understand how conflict moves from initiation, through the management process, and ultimately to conflict resolution. Overall, intergenerational communication deserves the attention of communication scholars and should receive continued devotion in the near future and beyond.

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Appendix A: Pilot Study Questionnaire

Pilot Study Questionnaire

Part 1

Conflict Scenario with Grandchild

Please think of an intergenerational relationship with a **grandchild** (approximately 18-25 years old) and a conflict that you are experiencing or have experienced **recently** in that relationship. Try your best to recollect your feelings and your grandchild's feelings at that time, the initiating factors of the conflict, the development, and the outcome as well.

1. What was the conflict about?
2. How did you become aware of the conflict with this grandchild?
3. What were the initiating factors of the conflict? In other words, how did the conflict start? Please describe the conflict in detail including its initiating factors, its development, outcome, your feelings, and impressions toward the grandchild.
4. What did you say or do during the conflict? What did the grandchild do or say during the conflict? Please provide details.

Instructions: Please consider the same conflict you have reported and indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement by circling a corresponding number (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = neutral, 5 = somewhat agree, 6 = agree, and 7 = strongly agree). **Higher numbers represent more agreement.**

| | Strongly Disagree | | | | Strongly Agree | | |
|--|-------------------|---|---|---|----------------|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 5. This conflict was typical of other conflicts I have with my grandchildren. | | | | | | | |
| 6. This conflict was representative of other conflicts I have with my grandchildren. | | | | | | | |
| 7. This conflict illustrated what conflict is usually like with my grandchildren. | | | | | | | |

8. How many months and/or days ago did this conflict happen?

Months _____ Days _____

9. Are you/have you ever been this grandchild's caretaker? Yes / No (circle one) If yes, when did you take care of this grandchild and for how long? _____ years

10. How are you related to this grandchild? Paternally _____ Maternally _____

11. Circle the following that best describes your relationship with your grandchild? Full grandchild /Step grandchild

12. How old is this grandchild (can be approximate)? _____

13. What is the grandchild's sex: Female/Male (circle one)

14. How many total grandchildren do you have? _____

15. What is your grandchild's ethnicity?

- European American/Caucasian/White
- African American/Black
- Latino American/Hispanic
- Asian American
- Native American
- Other: Please specify _____

16. How long have you known this grandchild?

- a. Their whole life
- b. Other: _____ years

Part 2

Instructions: Please consider the same grandchild in the conflict you have reported and indicate to what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements? Please circle one number/response for each statement.

| | Strongly Disagree | | | | | Strongly Agree | |
|---|------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---------------------------|---|
| 1. I feel as if this grandchild and I are family. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 2. I have a close relationship with this grandchild. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 3. I like my grandchild. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 4. My relationship with my grandchild is important to me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 5. I enjoy spending time with my grandchild. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Part 3

Instructions: This section asks you to provide some basic background information. Please answer the following questions by choosing a corresponding number or filling in blanks.

1. What is your age?

_____ years old

2. What is your sex?

- a. Male
- b. Female

3. What is your racial/ethnic background?

- g. European American/Caucasian/White
- h. African American/Black
- i. Latino American/Hispanic
- j. Asian American
- k. Other: Please specify _____

4. How many years of education do you have? (12 = high school degree, 16 = four years as undergraduate, 17+ = advanced/graduate degree)

_____ years

5. Are you retired? Yes/No

6. Which of the following best represents your relationship status?

- a. Single
- b. Married
- c. Divorced
- d. Widowed

Questionnaire 2

Part 1. Conflict Scenario with Young Adult (nonfamily).

Please think of an intergenerational relationship with **nonfamily** young adult (approximately 18-25 years old) and a conflict that you are experiencing or have experienced **recently** in that relationship. Try your best to recollect your feelings and the young adult's feelings at that time, the initiating factors of the conflict, the development, and the outcome as well.

1. What was the conflict about?
2. How did you become aware of the conflict with this young adult?
3. What were the initiating factors of the conflict? In other words, how did the conflict start? Please describe the conflict in detail including its initiating factors, its development, outcome, your feelings, and impressions toward the young adult.
4. What did you say or do during the conflict? What did the young adult do or say during the conflict? Please provide details.

Instructions: Please consider the same conflict you have reported above with the nonfamily young adult and indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement by circling a corresponding number (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = neutral, 5 = somewhat agree, 6 = agree, and 7 = strongly agree). **Higher numbers represent more agreement.**

| | Strongly Disagree | | | | | | Strongly Agree |
|---|------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---------------------------|
| 5. This conflict was typical of other conflicts I have with young adults. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 6. This conflict was representative of other conflicts I have with young adults. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 7. This conflict illustrated what conflict is usually like between young adults and me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

8. How many days or months ago did this conflict happen?

Months _____ Days _____

9. How long have you known this person? _____ Year(s)

_____ Month(s)

Note: If you have known this older person for less than one month, indicate how many days you have known him or her in the following space.

_____ day(s).

10. What is your relationship with this person?

- a. Co-worker
- b. Neighbor
- c. Acquaintance
- d. Friend
- e. Stranger
- f. Other: _____ (please specify)

11. How old is this person (can be approximate)? _____

12. The young adults' sex: Male / Female

13. What is the young adult's racial/ethnic background?

- a. European American/Caucasian/White
- b. African American/Black
- c. Latino American/Hispanic
- d. Asian American
- e. Native American
- f. Other: Please specify _____

Part 2

Instructions: Please consider the same young adult in the conflict you have reported and indicate to what extent you agree/disagree with the following statements **in general**. Please circle one number/response for each statement.

| | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I have a close relationship with this young adult. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 2. I like this young adult. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 3. My relationship with this young adult is important to me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 4. I enjoy spending time with this young adult. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Part 3

Instructions: This section asks you to provide some basic background information. Please answer the following questions by choosing a corresponding number or filling in blanks.

7. What is your age?

_____ years old

8. What is your sex?

- c. Male
- d. Female

9. What is your racial/ethnic background?

- l. European American/Caucasian/White
- m. African American/Black
- n. Latino American/Hispanic
- o. Asian American
- p. Other: Please specify _____

10. How many years of education do you have? (12 = high school degree, 16 = four years as undergraduate, 17+ = advanced/graduate degree)

_____ years

11. Are you retired? Yes/No

12. Which of the following best represents your relationship status?

- a. Single
- b. Married
- c. Divorced
- d. Widowed

Appendix B: Main Study Questionnaires

Questionnaire 1

Part 1

Conflict Scenario with Grandchild

Please think of an intergenerational relationship with a **grandchild** (approximately 18-25 years old) and a conflict that you are experiencing or have experienced **recently** in that relationship. Try your best to recollect your feelings and your grandchild's feelings at that time, the initiating factors of the conflict, the development, and the outcome as well.

(Note: If you are experiencing or have experienced a conflict recently with a grandchild over the age of 18, please proceed to question 1. If not, please comment on or describe the communication characteristics in the relationship by focusing on reasons you haven't experienced a recent conflict. Please provide details of the communication characteristics of this relationship that lacks conflict).

1. What was the conflict about?
2. How did you become aware of the conflict with this grandchild?
3. What were the initiating factors of the conflict? In other words, how did the conflict start? Please describe the conflict in detail including its initiating factors, its development, outcome, your feelings, and impressions toward the grandchild.
4. What did you say or do during the conflict? What did the grandchild do or say during the conflict? Please provide details.

Instructions: Please consider the same conflict you have reported and indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement by circling a corresponding number (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = neutral, 5 = somewhat agree, 6 = agree, and 7 = strongly agree). **Higher numbers represent more agreement.**

| | Strongly Disagree | | | | Strongly Agree | | |
|--|-------------------|---|---|---|----------------|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 5. This conflict was typical of other conflicts I have with my grandchildren. | | | | | | | |
| 6. This conflict was representative of other conflicts I have with my grandchildren. | | | | | | | |
| 7. This conflict illustrated what conflict is usually like with my grandchildren. | | | | | | | |

8. How many months and/or days ago did this conflict happen?

Months _____ Days _____

9. Are you/have you ever been this grandchild's caretaker? Yes / No (circle one) If yes, when did you take care of this grandchild and for how long? _____ years

10. How are you related to this grandchild? Paternally _____ Maternally _____

11. Circle the following that best describes your relationship with your grandchild? Full grandchild /Step grandchild

12. How old is this grandchild (can be approximate)? _____

13. What is the grandchild's sex: Female/Male (circle one)

14. How many total grandchildren do you have? _____

15. What is your grandchild's ethnicity?

- European American/Caucasian/White
- African American/Black
- Latino American/Hispanic
- Asian American
- Native American
- Other: Please specify _____

16. How long have you known this grandchild?

- a. Their whole life
- b. Other: _____ years

Part 2

Instructions: Please consider the same grandchild in the conflict you have reported and indicate to what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements? Please circle one number/response for each statement.

| | Strongly Disagree | | | | | Strongly Agree | |
|---|--------------------------|---|---|---|---|-----------------------|---|
| 1. I have a close relationship with this grandchild. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 2. I like my grandchild. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 3. My relationship with my grandchild is important to me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 4. I enjoy spending time with my grandchild. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Part 3

Instructions: This section asks you to provide some basic background information. Please answer the following questions by choosing a corresponding number or filling in blanks.

13. What is your age?

_____ years old

14. What is your sex?

- e. Male
- f. Female

15. What is your racial/ethnic background?

- g. European American/Caucasian/White
- h. African American/Black
- i. Latino American/Hispanic
- j. Asian American
- k. Other: Please specify _____

16. How many years of education do you have? (12 = high school degree, 16 = four years as undergraduate, 17+ = advanced/graduate degree)

_____ years

17. Are you retired? Yes/No

18. Which of the following best represents your relationship status?

- a. Single
- b. Married
- c. Divorced
- d. Widowed

Questionnaire 2

Part 1. Conflict Scenario with Young Adult (nonfamily).

Please think of an intergenerational relationship with **nonfamily** young adult (approximately 18-25 years old) and a conflict that you are experiencing or have experienced **recently** in that relationship. Try your best to recollect your feelings and the young adult's feelings at that time, the initiating factors of the conflict, the development, and the outcome as well.

(Note: If you are experiencing or have experienced a conflict recently with a young adult over the age of 18, please proceed to question 1. If not, please comment on or describe the communication characteristics in the relationship by focusing on reasons you haven't experienced a recent conflict. Please provide details of the communication characteristics of this relationship that lacks conflict).

1. What was the conflict about?
2. How did you become aware of the conflict with this young adult?
3. What were the initiating factors of the conflict? In other words, how did the conflict start? Please describe the conflict in detail including its initiating factors, its development, outcome, your feelings, and impressions toward the young adult.
4. What did you say or do during the conflict? What did the young adult do or say during the conflict? Please provide details.

Instructions: Please consider the same conflict you have reported above with the nonfamily young adult and indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement by circling a corresponding number (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = neutral, 5 = somewhat agree, 6 = agree, and 7 = strongly agree). **Higher numbers represent more agreement.**

| | Strongly Disagree | | | | | | Strongly Agree |
|---|------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---------------------------|
| 5. This conflict was typical of other conflicts I have with young adults. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 6. This conflict was representative of other conflicts I have with young adults. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 7. This conflict illustrated what conflict is usually like between young adults and me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

8. How many days or months ago did this conflict happen?

Months _____ Days _____

9. How long have you known this person? _____ Year(s)

_____ Month(s)

Note: If you have known this older person for less than one month, indicate how many days you have known him or her in the following space.

_____ day(s).

10. What is your relationship with this person?

- a. Co-worker
- b. Neighbor
- c. Acquaintance
- d. Friend
- e. Stranger
- f. Other: _____ (please specify)

11. How old is this person (can be approximate)? _____

12. The young adults' sex: Male / Female

13. What is the young adult's racial/ethnic background?

- a. European American/Caucasian/White
- b. African American/Black
- c. Latino American/Hispanic
- d. Asian American
- e. Native American
- f. Other: Please specify _____

Part 2

Instructions: Please consider the same young adult in the conflict you have reported and indicate to what extent you agree/disagree with the following statements **in general**. Please circle one number/response for each statement.

| | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5. I have a close relationship with this young adult. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 6. I like this young adult. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 7. My relationship with this young adult is important to me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8. I enjoy spending time with this young adult. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Part 3

Instructions: This section asks you to provide some basic background information. Please answer the following questions by choosing a corresponding number or filling in blanks.

19. What is your age?

_____ years old

20. What is your sex?

- g. Male
- h. Female

21. What is your racial/ethnic background?

- l. European American/Caucasian/White
- m. African American/Black
- n. Latino American/Hispanic
- o. Asian American
- p. Other: Please specify _____

22. How many years of education do you have? (12 = high school degree, 16 = four years as undergraduate, 17+ = advanced/graduate degree)

_____ years

23. Are you retired? Yes/No

24. Which of the following best represents your relationship status?

- a. Single
- b. Married
- c. Divorced
- d. Widowed

Appendix C: Tables

Table 1

Definitions Of The Identified Initiating Factors In Intergenerational Conflict (Adapted From Zhang [2004]) Used For Coder Training.

Old-to-young criticism: The elderly person criticizes or finds fault with the young respondent's behavior, opinion, and/or attitude.

Young-to-old criticism: The young respondent criticizes or finds fault with the elderly person's behavior, opinion, and/or attitude.

Old-to-young Illegitimate demand: The elderly person places or imposes his or her wants, needs, desires, or demands on the young respondent regardless of the young person's wants, needs, or desires based on the belief that the older person has the right or status to do so. No explicit criticism was indicated as the initiating factor of the reported conflict.

Old-to-young Rebuff: The older person bluntly rejects the young respondent's request for support, approval, help or need for more attention, affection, or understanding. In other words, the young person does not get the desired reaction or response from the older person. No explicit criticism or demand is indicated.

Young-to-old Rebuff: The young person bluntly rejects the older respondent's request for support, approval, help or need for more attention, affection, or understanding. In other words, the older respondent does not get the desired reaction or response from the young person. No explicit criticism or demand is indicated.

Disagreement/generation gap: The older respondent not only perceives a difference or clash in attitude, values, life style, and/or opinions between him or her and the young person, but also argues with the young person. Age difference is considered as the cause of this type of conflict. No explicit criticism or demand is indicated.

Table 2

Definitions Of The Identified Conflict Management Styles In Intergenerational Conflict (Adapted From Zhang Et Al. [2005]) Used For Coder Training.

Competing: This style is characterized as negative, confrontational, assertive, and uncooperative.

It includes such communication behaviors as faulting and rejecting the other, hostile questioning, and denying responsibility. The person who uses this style defends his or her positions furiously or firmly and does not concern much about the other side's interests, needs, and desires.

Avoiding: This style is non-confrontational, but under-responsive to the conflict. It includes acts minimizing explicit discussion of the conflict, trivializing and downplaying the disagreements, and shifting the topic as a way to withdraw from the conflict. This style is very passive and sometimes the person retreats from the social scene by excusing him or herself from the situation.

Obliging: This style emphasizes relational harmony. It includes such behaviors as recognizing the others party's needs, affirming the other's position, taking full responsibility for the problem, apologizing, and being unassertive. This style is also characterized by its lack of collaborative problem solving orientation. The biggest concern of the person in conflict is to please, satisfy, or sooth the other side.

Problem Solving: This style is assertive and cooperative in initiating mutually satisfying and acceptable solution. Like the obliging style, it includes showing empathy and understanding for the position of the other person, but unlike the obliging style, it involves soliciting input from the other person and engaging that individual in finding a mutually acceptable solution. Overall, this is a communication style that focuses on satisfying others sides' needs in positive and cooperative ways.

Table 3

Definitions Of The Identified Initiating Factors In Intergenerational Conflict (Adapted From Zhang [2004] Unless Otherwise Noted) Used To Code The Current Study

Old-to-young criticism: The older respondent criticizes or finds fault with the young adult's behavior, opinion, and/or attitude.

Example 1: "The conflict was initiated by a young lady using her cell phone during church, while sitting next to me. I get upset inside when younger kids don't show respect for others. Most often I keep these feelings to myself. I became irritated with the lady sitting next to me in church because she was looking on Facebook during the church service. When the observation was made, I asked the young lady why she bothers coming to church if she wanted to be on Facebook. I said it is rude and disrespectful to do this. Also, it distracts others." (Scenario 54: Nonfamily young adult)

Example 2: "I was not thrilled with the length, low cut of her outfits. When I asked her if she was going to change, she laughed and other adults in the room said it was none of my business...I told her the outfit was too revealing and not appropriate in mixed company. I just wanted the best for her." (Scenario 294: Grandchild)

Example 3: "The conflict was about appropriate dress for a work function. She told me what she planned to wear to an executive dinner; it was not appropriate business attire. She showed me a picture of the dress—low cut top with a slit up the too short skirt. I thought it was a poor choice. I advised her that a simple black cocktail dress that was less revealing was appropriate for this business dinner with top executives from our firm and our client's firms. I told her the dress was pretty and perhaps appropriate for a New Year's Eve party with friends but that it would not help her make a good professional impression on her work peers and superiors." (Scenario 195: Nonfamily young adult)

Example 4: “My grandson didn’t take off his shoes when he came into my house. I felt very frustrated and he felt nagged on.” (Scenario 187: Grandchild)

Young-to-old criticism: The young adult criticizes or finds fault with the older respondent’s behavior, opinion, and/or attitude.

Example 1: “The conflict was about HOA expenditures. We discussed what improvements took priority and how to fund them. This person was new to our HOA and immediately began criticizing me and wanted things done that would benefit only her. When she was told no, she went ahead and did whatever she wanted and billed the HOA for it.” (Scenario 85: Nonfamily young adult)

Example 2: “My grandson brought up cultural appropriation at a family dinner once. He became agitated and accused me of being overly privileged. He got up and left the table. After being accused of being privileged, I informed him of my modest past and how poor I was growing up. This wasn’t what he wanted to hear, so in response he said something about me watching Fox News before walking away.” (Scenario 313: Grandchild)

Young-to-old Rebuff: The young adult bluntly rejects the older respondent’s request for support, approval, help or need for more attention, affection, or understanding. In other words, the older respondent does not get the desired reaction or response from the young adult. Minimal criticism or demand is indicated.

Example 1: “This person refused to keep in touch with me. Tried several times over the course of three years on and off to contact them and they would not respond.” (Scenario 172: Grandchild)

Example 2: “When I ask him for a commitment he will set up a day and time, tell me he’ll be here, and then doesn’t show up. Often he doesn’t inform me until hours later if at all.” (Scenario 194: Nonfamily young adult)

Example 3: Older customer and young clerk at a hardware store: “The clerk was checking me out and reacted very unconcerned about my concerns, not answering my questions. When checking out she did not care to answer my question about the product or find out the answer from the manager. Just wasn’t interested in helping me solve the problem.” (Scenario 281: Nonfamily young adult)

Example 4: “I gave him a job to do and he didn’t do it. I asked him for his help if he wanted to stay at my house and he didn’t comply.” (Scenario 264: Grandchild)

Disagreement/generation gap: The older adult perceives a difference or clash in attitude, values, life style, and/or opinions between him/her and the young adult. Age difference tends to be considered as the cause of this type of conflict. Minimal criticism or demand is indicated.

Example 1: “We were in disagreement regarding her desire to get a body tattoo. She was sharing her interest in wanting to get a tattoo that would be visual on her forearm. I didn’t necessarily disagree with her desire to get a tattoo, but felt it could be less visual if placed elsewhere in a less visible location on her body. The conversation was initiated by my granddaughter who wanted to discuss her need to get a tattoo. The dialogue between us remained civil and I provided my insights to the long term consequences of having a visual design on her forearm. She stayed firm in her position that she wanted a tattoo and it needed to be on her forearm. We agreed to disagree, and did it in a way that both were respectful of the other person’s views. I told her that while I disagreed with her decision that I would accept and respect it.” (Scenario 149: Grandchild)

Example 2: “My granddaughter visiting from Colorado insisted on smoking marijuana. She said she could not go to sleep unless she smoked. We spent a good amount of time defending our sides on this issue. She told me that it was fine. I disagreed. In the end, she smoked outside.” (Scenario 158: Grandchild)

Example 3: “The conflict was about abortion. I believe in choice as he is pro-life. This was not knock-down-drag-out—he has his beliefs and I have mine. After our discussion, it was clear that we were both convinced of our beliefs.” (Scenario 160: Nonfamily young adult)

Example 4: “My grandson has been seeing his girlfriend for 3 years. When I was visiting my daughter, I disagreed with the fact that they shared his room. I thought it was disrespectful and wrong. They are too young. I try to understand the open nature of sex and relationships of kids now but I still think it’s just wrong. I didn’t vocalize my concern but he knew that I didn’t approve.” (Scenario 290: Grandchild)

Young adults’ Cumulative Annoyance (Peterson, 1983; Witteman, 1992): The young adult’s repetitive activity is perceived as inappropriate, and surpasses a certain threshold. The accumulation escalates the situation to a conflict. The emphasis here is that certain behaviors have happened many times.

Example 1: “The conflict was about language being used at a sporting event. At a Royals game there was gross language being used last week. It continued on and on throughout the game and my anger continued to increase. I turned around to tell the group of young men that they had become a terrible distraction and that their language should be kept to themselves. I was mad and disappointed that they had the money to come to the game but no sense of how to conduct themselves.” (Scenario 146: Nonfamily young adult)

Example 2: “He was hitting golf balls repeatedly into my wife and me as we played golf. A golf ball almost hit my wife. I thought he may not have seen us and went back to tell him we were there. On the next hole he hit into us again. I felt I had to protect my wife so I went back and told him not to do that again. It happened again. I became angry and told him that they needed to slow down.” (Scenario 217: Nonfamily young adult)

Table 4

Definitions Of The Identified Conflict Management Styles In Intergenerational Conflict (Adapted From Zhang Et Al. [2005] Unless Otherwise Noted) Used To Code The Current Study

Competing: This style is characterized by high levels of self-interest and low levels of interest for the other individual. It is also confrontational, assertive, and uncooperative. It includes communication behaviors such as faulting, rejecting, and questioning the other individual and denying responsibility. The person who demonstrates this style defends his or her position furiously or firmly and disagrees with the other's interests, needs, and desires.

Example 1: "I am 82 years old. I am too old to keep my opinion to myself. I told him how I thought it was wrong." (Scenario 182: Grandchild; also Old-to-young criticism)

Example 2: "He was rude and arrogant—didn't seem to care that I was considerably older than he was. I was firm and authoritative as to the direction I wanted the website to go. That it needed to reflect the business and the house inside that was the B&B. He would not grasp any of the design." (Scenario 124: Nonfamily young adult)

Example 3: The conflict has been initiated and then this communication takes place: "...I asked him to sit down and get quiet. He refused..." (Scenario 91: Grandchild)

Avoiding: This style involves low levels of interest for both oneself and the other individual. It is non-confrontational, yet under-responsive to the conflict. It minimizes explicit discussion of the conflict, trivializes and downplays the disagreement, and shifts conversation as a way to withdraw from the situation. This style is passive and often results in the individual's retreat from the social scene.

Example 1: "...she changes the subject and sometimes she just calls her friend and leaves..." (Scenario 199: Grandchild)

Example 2: “I told him to take responsibility for his life...the grandchild said he would get to it later just so that I would leave him alone. He didn’t address the issue.” (Scenario 154: grandchild)

Obliging: This style demonstrates low levels of self-interest and high levels of interest for the other individual. It emphasizes relational harmony as the individual recognizes the other party’s needs, affirms the other’s position, concedes, takes full responsibility for the problem, and apologizes. Finally, it is unassertive and lacks collaborative problem solving—the biggest concern of the person in conflict is to please or satisfy the other side.

Example 1: “I told him that I thought he was irresponsible and that he needed to be more respectful towards his grandfather. He apologized and said he understood. I think he most likely apologized to appease me.” (Scenario 242: Grandchild)

Example 2: “We explained to the young man that our situation wasn’t right. We were waiting in line, people passed us in line, and the young man and his workers didn’t do anything about it. The young man understood and did everything he could to make the wrong right!” (Scenario 277: Nonfamily young adult)

Problem Solving: This style is characterized by high levels of interest for both oneself and the other individual. This style is assertive and cooperative in initiating a mutually satisfying and acceptable solution. Like the obliging style, it includes empathy and understanding for the position of the other person. Unlike the obliging style, however, it involves soliciting input from the other person and collaborating to find the best solution. Overall, this is a communication style that focuses on cooperation and satisfaction for both parties.

Example 1: "...She said she was very tired and over reacted. I told her that I understood and that I would change too. It takes a lot of understanding on both sides. We both gave each other big hugs and got back on track..." (Scenario 205: Grandchild)

Example 2: I told her next time to let me know if I seem too hard on her and I would try to do better and gave her a hug. She said she would and she actually thanked me for being there to help. (Scenario 223: Nonfamily young adult)

Example 3: "...I said, 'please tell me what I can do different in the future.' It was apparent by his silence that he was stunned by my response. I believe my response diffused his anger. From that time on our relationship improved to the point of each one of us learning to respect each other..." (Scenario 194: Grandchild)

Example 4: "...There was never any hostility in our feelings or words. We each expressed our feelings to each other concerning the matter, and accepted each other's ideas and feeling..." (Scenario 210: Nonfamily young adult)

Third Party (Khakimova, Zhang, & Hall, 2012; Song & Zhang, 2012): This style is utilized when the individuals involved in the conflict invite an outsider to mediate. It can include any combination of interest for oneself and the other. Often times, one or both parties communicates to the other through the parent of a young adult.

Example 1: "...It was about how they drove their car. I contacted his parent to point out to the young person of the safety factors not heeded by him..." (Scenario 222: Nonfamily young adult)

Table 5

Reasons for reporting no recent intergenerational conflict

Respect*: The older adult attributes the lack of conflict to the young adult's respect for him or her. Respondents often believe this is the result of how the young adult was raised. This respect can be mutual.

Example 1: "We do our best to respect each other." (Scenario 291: Grandchild)

Example 2: "Mutual respect." (Scenario 137: Nonfamily young adult)

Example 3: "We have wonderful grandchildren and believe they were raised to respect us" (Scenario 267: Grandchild)

Example 4: "We have a relationship that respects one another's opinions." (Scenario 76: Grandchild)

Example 5: "She is extremely polite and respectful and I can't imagine us having a conflict." (Scenario 290: Grandchild)

Example 6: "They love and respect me." (Scenario 236: Grandchild)

Example 7: "They have been taught and understand love and respect." (Scenario 195: Grandchild)

Example 8: "Parents raised the grandchildren to be polite and mine their manners." (Scenario 277: Grandchild)

Example 9: "My grandchildren were taught to respect their elders." (Scenario 165: Grandchild)

Relational Closeness: The older adult attributes the lack of conflict to the high level of relational closeness with the young adult. These relationship seems enjoyable for both parties.

Example 1: "I feel a closeness with young adults and enjoy talking to them." (Scenario 245: Nonfamily young adults)

Example 2: “We’ve always been close and had a good relationship since he was a young child.” (Scenario 107: Nonfamily young adult)

Example 3: “My grandchildren and I have had an integral, loving, reciprocal relationship throughout their lives.” (Scenario 70: Grandchild)

Example 4: “My grandchildren and I are very close.” (Scenario 232: Grandchild)

Example 5: “I think I have a very good relationship with my grandchildren.” (Scenario 286: Grandchild)

Understanding*: The older adult attributes the lack of conflict to a general understanding of the young adult or mutual understanding of each other. This typically includes generational understanding.

Example 1: “If I do run into a situation with a young non-family youth, I try to understand what they are looking for before I react.” (Scenario 308: nonfamily young adult)

Example 2: “I try to relate to young people, we were all young once. Human nature hasn’t changed much.” (Scenario 280: Nonfamily young adult)

Lack of Interaction: The older adult attributes the lack of conflict to low levels of involvement, communication, or contact with the young adult.

Example 1: “Not around them very much.” (Scenario 313: Grandchild)

Example 2: “My exposure to this age group is minimal.” (Scenario 95: Nonfamily young adult)

Example 3: “I am not around other young people that are not my family often enough to encounter a conflict.” (Scenario 121: Nonfamily young adult)

Example 4: “Don’t know them well enough to get into that situation.” (Scenario 107: Nonfamily young adult)

Attentive communication and listening*: The older adult attributes lack of conflict to active listening and awareness while communicating with the young adult. This often included careful, strategic, and/or open communication between the parties.

Example 1: “Good listening goes a long way toward a solution.” (Scenario 225: Grandchild)

Example 2: “I listen. Give no advice.” (Scenario 92: Nonfamily young adult)

Example 3: “I listen well and don’t give unsolicited advice.” (Scenario 93: Nonfamily young adult)

Example 4: “I try to listen first and respond sensitively.” (Scenario 63: Nonfamily young adult)

Example 5: “We talk things through.” (Scenario 135: Grandchild)

Example 6: “We have a very good line of communication with our grandchildren. We don’t always agree, but we listen to each other.” (Scenario 289: Grandchild)

Interpersonal Boundaries*: The older adult attributes the lack of conflict to his or her attention to interpersonal boundaries and autonomy of the other individual. Some of the boundaries lead older adults to practice conflict avoidant and non-confrontational tendencies. Further, they believe interjecting opinions on difficult matters with the young adult would be inappropriate based on the older adult’s role in some cases.

Example 1: “I don’t feel it is my place to interject myself into these situations.” (Scenario 249: Nonfamily young adult)

Example 2: “It is not my business to express my opinions that might disagree with other young adults.” (Scenario 220: Nonfamily young adult)

Example 3: “I don’t always agree with the actions of the young adults of today, but I have never been in a position where it was my place to become involved with them.” (Scenario 209: Nonfamily young adult)

Example 4: “Because if they are not my family I feel as though I should not butt in.” (Scenario 116: Nonfamily young adult)

Example 5: “I see my role as one of support and encouragement rather than criticism and control.” (Scenario 217: Grandchild)

Topics of Interest*: The older adult attributes the lack of conflict to pursuing commonalities with the young adult. The individuals usually focus on behaviors, opinions, and attitudes that are similar.

Example 1: “These topics are ones that are not brought up with this young adult.” (Scenario 314: Nonfamily young adult)

Example 2: “We avoid subjects of any depth and focus on just light talk and visits.” (Scenario 144: Grandchild)

*Characteristics that are accommodative in nature based on a prior list of accommodative communication by Hummert (in press; Harwood, 1998; Harwood, McKee, & Lin, 2000; Williams & Giles, 1996; Williams, Ota, Giles, Pierson, Gallois, Ng, et al., 1997)

Table 6

Frequencies Of The Identified Conflict Initiating Factors In Family And Nonfamily Intergenerational Relationships as Reported by Older Adults

| Factors | Frequency | Intergenerational Relationship Type | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| | | Family (%) | Nonfamily (%) | Adjusted Residual |
| Old-to-young criticism | 57 ^a | 18 (18.8%) | 39 (45.9%) | 3.9*** |
| Disagreement/generation gap | 49 ^{ab} | 34 (35.4%) | 15 (17.6%) | 2.7** |
| Young-to-old rebuff | 32 ^{abc} | 19 (19.8%) | 13 (15.3%) | 0.8 |
| Cumulative Annoyance | 26 ^{bc} | 17 (17.7%) | 9 (10.6%) | 1.4 |
| Young-to-old criticism | 14 ^c | 5 (5.2%) | 9 (10.6%) | 1.4 |
| Other | 3 | 3 (3.1%) | 0 (0.0%) | - |
| Total Count | 181 | 96 | 85 | - |
| Percentages | 100 | 100 | 100 | - |

Note. Different superscripts in frequency column indicate significant differences according to Chi-square analyses. Overall $\chi^2(4) = 39.18, p < .01$.

* $p < .05$ if adjusted residual > 1.96 ; ** $p < .01$ if adjusted residual > 2.58 ; *** $p < .001$ if adjusted residual > 3.20 .

Table 7

Frequencies Of The Identified Conflict Management Styles Used By Older Adults In Family And Nonfamily Intergenerational Relationships as Reported by Older Adults

| Styles | Frequency | Intergenerational Relationship Type | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| | | Family (%) | Nonfamily (%) | Adjusted Residual |
| Problem-solving | 73 ^a | 46 (47.9%) | 27 (31.8%) | 2.2* |
| Competing | 67 ^a | 27 (28.1%) | 40 (47.1%) | 2.6** |
| Avoiding | 15 ^b | 11 (11.5%) | 4 (4.7%) | 1.3 |
| Third-party | 18 ^b | 9 (9.4%) | 9 (9.9%) | 1.4 |
| Obliging | 7 ^b | 3 (3.1%) | 4 (4.7%) | 0.6 |
| Other | 1 | 0 (0.0%) | 1 (1.2%) | - |
| Total Count | 181 | 96 | 85 | - |
| Percentages | 100 | 100 | 100 | - |

Note. Different superscripts in frequency column indicate significant differences according to Chi-square analyses. Overall $\chi^2(4) = 109.33, p < .01$.

* $p < .05$ if the adjusted residual is > 1.96 ; ** $p < .01$ if the adjusted residual is > 2.58 .

Table 8

Frequencies Of The Identified Conflict Management Styles Used By Young Adults In Family And Nonfamily Intergenerational Relationships as Reported by Older Adults

| Styles | Frequency | Intergenerational Relationship Type | | |
|-----------------|------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| | | Family (%) | Nonfamily (%) | Adjusted Residual |
| Competing | 80 ^a | 35 (36.5 %) | 45 (52.9%) | 2.2* |
| Avoiding | 38 ^b | 27 (28.1%) | 11 (12.9%) | 2.5* |
| Problem-solving | 26 ^{bc} | 15 (15.6%) | 11 (12.9%) | 0.5 |
| Obliging | 22 ^{bc} | 13 (13.5%) | 9 (10.6%) | 0.6 |
| Third-party | 9 ^c | 3 (3.1%) | 6 (7.1%) | 1.2 |
| Other | 6 | 3 (3.1%) | 3 (3.3%) | - |
| Total Count | 181 | 96 | 85 | - |
| Percentages | 100 | 100 | 100 | - |

Note. Different superscripts in frequency column indicate significant differences according to Chi-square analyses. Overall $\chi^2(4) = 84.57, p < .01$.

* $p < .05$ if adjusted residual > 1.96 .

Table 9

Associations Between Conflict Initiating Factors And Management Styles Of Young Adults In Family And Nonfamily Intergenerational Relationships as Reported by Older Adults

| | | Competing | | Avoiding | | Obliging | | Problem-Solving | | Third-Party | | χ^2 (df = 4*) | Total | |
|---|------------------------------|-----------|------|----------|------|----------|------|-----------------|------|-------------|------|-----------------------|-------|-----|
| | | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | | n | % |
| Older Adults' Styles by Factor | Old-to-young criticism | 24 | 42.9 | 6 | 10.7 | 0 | 0.0 | 19 | 33.9 | 7 | 12.5 | 14.0** | 56 | 100 |
| | Young-to-old criticism | 4 | 30.8 | 0 | 0.0 | 3 | 23.0 | 5 | 38.5 | 1 | 7.7 | 2.7 | 13 | 100 |
| | Cumulative Annoyance | 12 | 48.0 | 1 | 4.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 8 | 32.0 | 4 | 16.0 | 11.0 | 25 | 100 |
| | Young-to-old rebuff | 13 | 20.3 | 2 | 14.3 | 1 | 14.3 | 14 | 20.6 | 2 | 11.1 | 26.4** | 32 | 100 |
| | Disagreement/ Generation gap | 13 | 26.5 | 5 | 10.2 | 3 | 6.1 | 24 | 49.0 | 4 | 8.2 | 32.1** | 49 | 100 |
| Young Adults' Styles by Factor | Old-to-young criticism | 29 | 54.7 | 7 | 13.2 | 11 | 20.8 | 2 | 3.8 | 4 | 7.5 | 45.9** | 53 | 100 |
| | Young-to-old criticism | 10 | 77.0 | 2 | 15.4 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 7.6 | 0 | 0.0 | 11.2** | 13 | 100 |
| | Cumulative Annoyance | 8 | 32.0 | 12 | 48.0 | 4 | 16.0 | 1 | 4.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 11.0 | 25 | 100 |
| | Young-to-old rebuff | 14 | 43.7 | 7 | 21.9 | 4 | 12.5 | 5 | 15.6 | 2 | 6.3 | 13.3** | 32 | 100 |
| | Disagreement/ Generation gap | 16 | 32.7 | 10 | 20.4 | 3 | 6.1 | 17 | 34.7 | 3 | 6.1 | 18.7** | 49 | 100 |

Note. χ^2 values indicate differences in the frequencies of each initiating factor across management styles. Older adults overall Pearson $\chi^2(16, n = 177) = 23.80, p = .09$. Young adults overall Pearson $\chi^2(16, n = 172) = 44.84, p < .05$.

*degrees of freedom may vary due to a column with a count of zero

** $p < .05$.

Table 10

Associations Between Older Adult Conflict Management Style And Young Adult Conflict Management Style In Intergenerational Relationships as Reported by Older Adults

| | YA's Style | Competing | | Avoiding | | Obliging | | Problem-solving | | Third-party | | χ^2 ^a (df = 3*) | Total | |
|---------------|-----------------|-----------|------|----------|------|----------|------|-----------------|------|-------------|------|------------------------------------|-------|-----|
| | | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | | n | % |
| OA's Style | Competing | 47 | 72.3 | 6 | 9.2 | 11 | 16.9 | 1 | 1.6 | 0 | 0.0 | 109.9** | 65 | 100 |
| | Avoiding | 7 | 46.7 | 8 | 53.3 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0.1 | 15 | 100 |
| | Obliging | 5 | 71.4 | 2 | 28.6 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0.3 | 7 | 100 |
| | Problem-solving | 18 | 26.1 | 14 | 20.3 | 11 | 15.9 | 25 | 36.3 | 1 | 1.4 | 32.5** | 69 | 100 |
| | Third-party | 3 | 16.7 | 7 | 38.9 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 8 | 44.4 | 2.3 | 18 | 100 |

Note. χ^2 values indicate differences in the frequencies of each initiating factor across management styles. Overall $\chi^2(4, n = 16) = 144.76, p < .01$.

*degrees of freedom may vary due to a column with a count of zero

** $p < .05$.

Table 11

Characteristics Of Intergenerational Relationships That Lacked Conflict In Family And Nonfamily Intergenerational Relationships as Reported by Older Adults

| Factors | Frequency | Intergenerational Relationship Type | | Adjusted Residual |
|---|-----------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| | | Family (%) | Nonfamily (%) | |
| Respect † | 57 ^a | 46 (36.5%) | 11 (9.2%) | 5.1*** |
| Relational Closeness | 16 ^b | 15 (11.9%) | 1 (0.8%) | 3.5** |
| Understanding † | 20 ^b | 5 (4.0%) | 15 (12.5%) | 2.4* |
| Lack of Interaction | 65 ^a | 22 (17.5%) | 43 (35.8%) | 3.3*** |
| Attentive Communication and Listening † | 17 ^b | 11 (8.7%) | 6 (5.0%) | 1.2 |
| Interpersonal Boundaries † | 46 ^a | 14 (11.1%) | 32 (26.7%) | 3.1** |
| Topics of Interest † | 19 ^b | 11 (8.7%) | 8 (6.7%) | 0.6 |
| Other | 6 | 2 (1.6%) | 4 (3.3%) | - |
| Total Count | 246 | 126 | 120 | - |
| Percentages | 100 | 100 | 100 | - |

Note. Different superscripts in frequency column indicate significant differences according to Chi-square analyses. Overall $\chi^2(7) = 55.07, p < .01$.

* $p < .05$ if adjusted residual > 1.96 ; ** $p < .01$ if adjusted residual > 2.58 ; *** $p < .001$ if adjusted residual > 3.20 .

† Characteristics that are accommodative in nature based on prior literature