Family Feud: Guarding Your Self-Esteem in Conflict

Rationale
What better way to talk about “Communication in Action” than to show the interaction among families, including how conflict styles and self-esteem affect what we say and do. Families can be considered a basic social unit that is vital to the development of communication skills, whether superb or deficient. The information presented will be appropriate for a poster session.

Abstract
This analysis shows the correlations among Self-Esteem, Conflict Style, and Family Connectedness. Effective conflict management is crucial for maintaining personal integrity while working with the inevitable clashes that occur in families. The focus of this presentation will be to show how self-esteem and conflict style affect family connectedness.

Implications
While the matter of Self-Esteem did not have any significant correlations, Family Cohesion, Family Adaptability, and Conflict Styles did produce some interesting results. Religious affiliation played a large role in showing differences in conflict style and family togetherness. Non-Religious individuals appear to avoid conflict situations less often and use an accommodation tactic less often when they do engage in conflict. The results seem to imply that individuals associated with Protestant and Non-Denominational groupings do not like conflict. Subjects who associated themselves with the Protestant groups had higher scores on both real and ideal family cohesion than those in the Non-Religious and Non-Denominational groups. While the scores indicate that those in the Protestant group perceived their families as being closer than 2 of the other religious groups, Protestants also desired more family closeness. Family flexibility with regard to conflict management styles was also a significant area of research. The research shows that as an individual becomes more competitive in his/her conflict management style, s/he desires more flexibility in the family. If that individual perceives that his/her family flexibility is going down, s/he is likely to switch to a more compromising style of conflict management to presumably salvage relationships. When and if the individual begins to avoid conflict, s/he will have less desire for family flexibility. The above includes the most significant results of our research.

Further Research
Further study should be directed at the family involvement and measures of self-worth as it evolves though interaction on a long-term basis.

Sources of Error
While the internal reliability of the Self-Esteem scale and the FACES III instrument were very high, the complexity of the conflict assessment scale made it unfeasible to assess, leading to possible inaccuracy. Researcher error could have played a part in the results as well as social desirability on the part of the participants.

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