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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EARLY ATTACHMENT AND MARITAL SATISFACTION IN EARLY ADULTHOOD

Seyed Hadi Hosseini Yassin
hosseins@coyote.csusb.edu

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EARLY ATTACHMENT AND
MARITAL SATISFACTION IN EARLY ADULTHOOD

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Psychology:
Child Development

by
Seyed Hadi Hosseini Yassin

December 2014

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Approved by:

Dr. Laura Kamptner, Chair, Psychology

Dr. Robert Ricco, Committee Member

Dr. Michael Lewin, Committee Member

Dr. Matt Riggs, Committee Member

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between early attachment and marital satisfaction. Whereas partner attachment has been found to be related to marital satisfaction, little research has examined the relationship of early attachment to marital satisfaction. It was hypothesized that early attachment would impact the three components of marital satisfaction, i.e., communication, sexual satisfaction, and love/partner attachment in early adulthood. Participants were 35 male and 119 female college students ages 18 to 40 years ($M = 27$ yrs), who completed a questionnaire comprised of Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) (Spanier, 1976), the sexual satisfaction subscale from the ENRICH measure (Olson, Fournier, & Druckman, 1983), the Communications Patterns Questionnaire (CPQ) (Christensen & Sullaway, 1984), the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA), (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987), and the Experience in Close Relationships -Revised (ECR -R) Questionnaire (Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000). Results supported the hypothesized relationship between early attachment and marital satisfaction as early attachment was found to have a direct effect on partner attachment and an indirect effect on communication and sexual satisfaction. The results of this study suggest that early secure interactions between a child and caregiver promotes adult partner attachment, which in turn impacts marital satisfaction.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

According to research, marriage has a significant number of benefits for adults including psychological well-being, physical health, and economic stability. These benefits are related, however, to the quality and the stability of the marriage, not simply being married. The current study examines how early attachment experiences impact the three primary components of marital satisfaction identified in research, i.e., effective communication, sexual satisfaction, and love/partner attachment.

Marriage is a complex union which has changed over time and across cultures. In ancient times, women were considered to be “owned” by men, and a marriage could not be dissolved except by the death of one’s spouse (Waite, 2005). In ancient Athens, the majority of girls married between 14 to 18 years of age (very soon after their menarche) to husbands who were often a decade or more older (Abbott, 2010). In many parts of the world, even babies have been married off by their parents: adults in traditional India and China, for example, practiced *t’ung yang-hsi* (from 926 A.D. until the 20th century) where in-laws raised their daughters-in-law from infancy to become a wife for their son (Abbott, 2010). The belief was that this would create more submissive, obedient, and hard-working brides who would be completely familiar with their in-laws’ household rules and routines (Abbott, 2010). In the 1600s, European parents often married off their daughters at or before the age of puberty

(Abbott, 2010); they considered marriage to be an economic arrangement between families through which the bride could improve her family's status, economic stability, and fortune (Peterson, 1997). From the 1690s to the 1870s, "wife sale" (i.e., a type of divorce where a husband could present his wife with a rope around her neck in public and then sell her to another man) was common in the rural areas and small towns of England (Peterson, 1997).

The notion of men's "superior" status over women in marriage was not restricted to the small towns of England. According to the English common law and in all American colonies and states until the middle of the 19th century, married women did not have any legal rights. Women could not own property, sign a contract, or have control over any of their assets (Peterson, 1997). In 1848, New York was the first state that passed a law allowing married women to own property (Peterson, 1997).

The current meaning of marriage in the U.S. and other countries is substantially different from its historical meaning as a social and economic advancement of oneself and/or family in society (including the domination of a husband over his wife). Marriage in most advanced countries is now a social and legal contract between two equal people who commit to romantically loving and caring for one another while sharing the difficulties and benefits of marital life (Girgis, George, & Anderson, 2010). For most people, marriage also has religious meanings (Waite & Lehrer, 2003), which is why marriages

are usually performed with a ceremony at religious locations (Waite & Lehrer, 2003).

Today, fewer people are getting married in the U.S. and elsewhere, and they are waiting a longer time to do so (Waite, 2005). In 2005, for example, 123 million adults over the age of 18 were married in the U.S. (56% of the adult population). Surprisingly, the percentage of the population over 55 years of age who have been married at some point in their lives is far higher (96%) than the entire population over 18 years (75%) who have ever married (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2006). This suggests that there are more older married couples than younger ones. Premarital cohabitation may have contributed to the current delay in first marriage for both men and women: the percentage of women cohabiting (i.e., living with a man in a sexual relationship) rose from 3% in 1982 to 11% in 2006-2010, with a higher percentage in some groups including Hispanic and less educated individuals (Copen, Daniels, Vespa, & Mosher, 2012). In other words, the percentage of women currently in a first marriage has decreased over the past several decades from 44% in 1982 to 36% in 2006–2010.¹

¹ In 2006-2010, Asian (49%) and foreign-born Hispanic women (46%) had the highest percentages of individuals who were married for the first time. Foreign-born Hispanic women also showed the highest percentage of those who were cohabiting (16%) compared with 11% white women and 9.3% black women (National Health Statistic Reports, 2012). Men show similar trends. Cohabiting unions are most prevalent for foreign Hispanic men (20%), followed by U.S.-born Hispanic, black (13%), and white men (10%) (National Health Statistic Reports, 2012).

Benefits of Marriage

Studies suggest that marriage has a number of benefits for adults, including psychological well-being, physical health, and economical stability.

In the United States, married individuals have better outcomes on a variety of measures of psychological well-being compared to unmarried individuals (Waite & Lehrer, 2003). Adults who marry and remain married have better mental and emotional well-being, and lower rates of clinical depression compared to unmarried individuals (Waite, 2005; Wilson & Oswald, 2005). Moreover, longitudinal studies have found that married people who stay married to the same person have better mental health outcomes compared to widowed, divorced, separated, or never-married individuals (Ko, Berg, Butner, Uchino, & Smith 2007; Smith et al., 2009).

Although both men and women gain psychological and emotional benefits from marriage, studies indicate that men often benefit more than women (Wilson & Oswald, 2005). This is in part due to the fact that emotional support can come from sources outside of marriage for women since women's social support networks are typically more extensive than men's (Schumaker & Hill 1991; Wilson & Oswald, 2005). In addition, married men are less likely to be depressed than single men (although there is no significant difference between married and single women in this regard). Surprisingly, compared to married individuals, cohabiters show higher levels of depression and alcohol abuse (Wilson & Oswald, 2005). These marriage benefits may be due to the

quality and the stability of the marriage, not simply just living with someone (Wilson & Oswald, 2005).

In addition to having psychological benefits, marriage has also been found to provide physical health benefits. People who marry and stay married tend to live longer and healthier lives than people who never marry or who are divorced (Waite, 2005). Married individuals make fewer visits to the doctor, are at reduced risk of hypertension (Kaplan & Kronick, 2006), and are less likely to experience long-term illnesses or disabilities compared to unmarried adults (Waite, 2005). Married individuals who stay married also have better survival rates against illnesses (Murphy et al., 1997) and have fewer physical problems and a lower risk of death (Goodwin et al., 1987; Waite & Gallagher, 2000). A study by Helmer et al. (1999) also found a significantly higher risk of Alzheimer's disease among individuals who never married (Wilson & Oswald, 2005).

These health benefits are thought to be derived from several factors, including the impact of marriage on stress levels, less risky behavior, and healthier lifestyles by married individuals (Ross et al., 1990). According to Waite (2005) and Prigerson et al. (1999), married couples differ from those who are not married on exposure to stress, severity of stress, and access to restorative behavior after stress, with married people having less stress, better support to cope with stress, and lower rates of depression compared to unmarried individuals. In addition, married people are less likely to take risks

with their health, and are less likely to engage in risky behaviors. Finally, Prigerson et al. (1999) found that married people have much better sleep and less depression which also contributes to better health.

Economic benefits are a third advantage of marriage for individuals who marry and stay married (Chun & Lee, 2001; Wilson & Oswald, 2005). Ross, Mirowsky, and Goldsteen (1990) have defined a family as an “economic unit bound by emotional ties”. Marriage can create an increase in the amount of real income per partner. Ross et al. (1990), for example, found that individuals who are married have fewer economic hardships compared to single people. In addition, the economic benefits of marriage are especially significant for women (Ross, Mirowsky, & Goldsteen, 1990), with married women from low socio-economic backgrounds less likely to suffer from poverty or other material hardship compared to their peers who are not married (Wilson & Oswald, 2005).

The positive impact of marriage is thus well documented in the research literature. If the marriage is of low quality, however, individuals are not likely to receive the same type of benefits compared to those who are in a happy and satisfying relationship (Hawkins & Booth, 2005). According to a 12-year longitudinal study by Hawkins and Booth (2005), long-term low-quality marriages have significant negative effects on overall well-being. Compared to happily married, divorced, or unmarried individuals, couples who remain in an unhappy marriage have lower levels of happiness, life satisfaction,

self-esteem, and poorer overall health as well as an increase in the level of psychological distress (Hawkins & Booth, 2005).

While happy marriages can provide positive benefits due to the presence of a spouse who can be a consistent source of social and emotional support (Waite & Gallagher, 2000), unhappily married individuals do not find a great deal of meaning in their spousal role and do not provide social and emotional support for one another, which can harm their self-esteem (Hawkins & Booth, 2005). Furthermore, being unhappily married can negatively impact life satisfaction, relationships with family, friends, and even career satisfaction (Hawkins & Booth, 2005). Individuals with low marital happiness also tend to have the lowest levels of psychological well-being (Hawkins & Booth, 2005; Kamp, Dush, & Amato, 2005). In sum, marriage provides many benefits when the quality of the marriage is positive and satisfying.

Marital Satisfaction

Marital satisfaction is the result of a positive, successful marriage. Although research has found that marriage can result in mental and physical well-being (Johnson, Backlund, Sorlie, & Loveness, 2000), it is the "quality" of the marriage that results in these benefits (Dush, Tylor, & Kroeger, 2008). Recent research studies have identified several factors associated with marital satisfaction, i.e., demographic and belief similarities, personality qualities, communication, sexual satisfaction, love, and partner attachment.

Demographic and Belief Similarities

The tendency to choose partners who are similar to one's self is called "homogamy". Homogamy has been reported for many characteristics including similarity in socioeconomic status (Chu, Hardaker, & Lycett, 2007), religious beliefs (Asmari, Solberg, & Solon, 2008), years of education (Greitemeyer, 2007), physical attractiveness (Penton-Voak, Perrett, & Peirec 1999), and age (Buss & Shackelford, 2008). Even in culturally-diverse settings, individuals lean more towards partners with similar and visible qualities (e.g., racial characteristics) (Blackwell & Lichter, 2004). In general, studies have found that similarities between couples are related to marital satisfaction and the stability of marital relationships (O'Rourke, Claxton, Chou, Smith, & Hadjistavropoulos, 2011). Because homogamy may serve to reduce marital friction, spouses who have similar attitudes, personalities, or backgrounds may be less prone to engage in maladaptive conflicts with one another (Arrindell & Luteijn, 2000).

Personality Qualities

Marital Satisfaction is a dynamic of romantic relationships which has been associated with certain personality qualities (Deal, Halverson, & Havill, 2005; Rourke et al., 2011). Neuroticism, for example, has been found to have negative impact on marital satisfaction in that high levels of neuroticism are related to lower levels of marital satisfaction and stability in relationship (Fisher & McNulty, 2008; Schmitt, Kliegel, & Shapiro, 2007). Neuroticism in one's personality might cause them to have less satisfaction in life, possibly because

they interpret the events of life more negatively (Fisher & McNulty, 2008). According to Costa and McCrae (1992), “people high in neuroticism are prone to have irrational ideas, be less able to control their impulses, and to cope more poorly than others with stress” (p. 14) this might be the reason that neuroticism tends to be related to negative outcomes in a marital relationship.

According to some research, extraversion is related to marital satisfaction (Watson et al., 2000) in that extraverts are usually happy, positive, and interested in social interactions (Watson et al., 2000). According to a study by Bono and colleagues (2002), participants who had higher scores on extraversion reported fewer problems in their relationships (Bono et al., 2002). Marital satisfaction for husbands may be positively correlated with wives' extraversion (Chan et al., 2007), while extraversion in husbands has been found to be related to lower levels of marital satisfaction (Belsky & Hsieh, 1998). (There is no clear explanation for this gender difference).

Finally, based on the findings of some studies, decreased partner conscientiousness, openness, and agreeableness during the early years of marriage are related to diminished marital satisfaction (e.g., Watson & Humrichouse, 2006).

Communication

Communication skills have been identified as “key” to successful, satisfying marital relationships (e.g., Bienvenu, 1970; Gottman, 1982). With effective communication skills, couples spend more time sharing their personal

emotions and less time in conflict (Kirchler, 1989). According to studies, the main factors associated with positive communication include active listening, self-disclosure, and conflict resolution.

First, active listening is a particular way of listening and responding to others that entails paying respectful attention to the content and feelings expressed by another person (Pfeiffer, 1998). It is a process of hearing and understanding, and expressing to the other that he or she is being heard and understood (Amato & Rogers, 1999; Pfeiffer, 1998). During active listening, a partner responds “actively” to another while keeping her attention focused completely on the speaker (Amato & Rogers, 1999; Pfeiffer, 1998). Active listening is also the most common and useful technique recommended for resolving conflict (Espinosa, 2003). Benefits for those individuals who have been “listened to” include becoming more emotionally mature, being less defensive, and being more democratic and less authoritarian (Rogers & Farson, 1987). Active listening builds deep, positive relationships and alters in a constructive manner the attitudes of the person being listen to (Rogers & Farson, 1987).

A second key factor of positive communication is self-disclosure, i.e., when one partner purposely reveals personal information to another (Derlega, Metts, Petronio, & Margulis, 1993). Self-disclosure is an important aspect of relationship dynamics as it contributes to the development and maintenance of marital satisfaction. According to Laurenceau et al. (2004), two people cannot

be in an intimate relationship if they cannot express their emotions and if they don't share some personal, somewhat confidential information with each other. Fitzpatrick and Sollie (1999) state that the level of self-disclosure can predict marital happiness over time, with couples who are able to share their emotions with their partners and talk about their difficulties being more satisfied with their relationships (Finkenauer & Hazam, 2000). Curiously, studies suggest that couples shouldn't necessarily discuss *everything*. While moderate levels of self-disclosure are associated with high levels of marital satisfaction, both low and high levels of self-disclosure are associated with low levels of marital satisfaction (e.g., Schumm et al., 1986). It is suggested that couples productively discuss those problems that can have a resolution or can result in a change in behavior (e.g., Mackey, Diemer, & O'Brien, 2004).

A third factor related to positive communication is conflict resolution. Hocker and Wilmot (1978) define conflict as a situation where two or more parties have conflicting goals which cause one partner's goals to interfere with the other being able to achieve their goals. Gottman (1999) has found that the quality of communication (including being respectful and/or using humor) between couples when they try to resolve a conflict (e.g., over money, sex, in-laws) is associated with changes in marital satisfaction and divorce. In addition, a couple's sense of satisfaction within a marriage can be linked to the ability to successfully manage conflict more than most other variables within a relationship (Greeff & Bruyne, 2000). If couples don't have the skills to resolve

their problems, new problems will build up, old ones will become chronic, and marital satisfaction will deteriorate (Espicosa, 2003).

In sum, studies indicate that poor communication skills are a key reason why unhappy couples suffer from marital dissatisfaction and distress (Litzinger & Gordon, 2005), with distressed couples reporting more destructive communication behavior and conflict avoidance (Stephan, 2005). Frequent use of negative communication styles e.g., criticizing, complaining, and making sarcastic comments, are related to marital distress and dissatisfaction (Gottman & Krokoff, 1989). With poor communication skills, couples are unable to express their emotions to one another which can cause them to be defensive or withdraw from a conflictive situation, which can lead to marital dissatisfaction. According to a longitudinal study by Amato and Rogers (1997), couples who later divorced vs. those who remained together were found to communicate less clearly, listen to their spouses less thoughtfully, self-disclose less often, express negative emotions (and few positive emotions), and spend less time together.

Sexual Satisfaction

Satisfaction in a sexual relationship is also a vital factor for creating and maintaining a happy, satisfying, and stable marital relationship (Christopher & Sprecher, 2000; Litzinger & Gordon, 2005; Young et al., 2000). Research has shown that physical affection, frequency of sex, and the quality of the couple's

sexual relationship have a great deal to do with marital satisfaction and, in turn, help reduce marital instability (Yeh, Lorenz, Wickrama, & Conger, 2006).

First, the physical components of intimacy (e.g., physical closeness, touching, hugs, cuddles, holding hands, etc.) are associated with greater relationship satisfaction (Floyd et al., 2009; Floyd et al., 2005; Gullledge, Gullledge, & Stahmann, 2003). Compared to those who have a less physically affectionate relationship (Dainton et al., 1994), physical affection results in positive affect (as well as reciprocal behavior) on the part of the recipient (Patterson, 1976).

In addition, the frequency of sexual relations appears to contribute to greater relationship stability and marital satisfaction compared to less frequent sexual relations (Yabiku & Gager, 2009). Lower levels of sexual frequency and/or satisfaction are associated with higher rates of marital conflict and even divorce (Yabiku & Gager, 2011).

Finally, the quality of sexual relations is also a factor in sexual satisfaction. Spouses who engage in more gratifying sexual interactions are more satisfied with and dedicated to their relationships (Byers, 2005). Fulfillment of sexual desires contributes to making a partnership more pleasant, and the love between a couple helps make sex more gratifying (Yucel & Gassanov, 2010). Satisfying sexual relations between a couple can decrease the level of stress and improve one's mood in a way that cannot be achieved through masturbation alone (Burlison et al., 2007). Sexual

satisfaction thus increases relationship satisfaction, and vice versa (Burlleson et al., 2007).

By contrast, a dysfunctional sexual relationship between spouses can drain the marriage of its intimacy and satisfaction (McCarthy, 2003). Sexual dysfunction may result in such psychological symptoms as low mood, poor self-esteem, performance anxiety, and guilt (Werneke, Northey, & Bhugra, 2006). It can also contribute to and possibly even cause depression which can detract from marital satisfaction (Werneke, Northey, & Bhugra, 2006).

Studies have also found that while communication and sexual satisfaction independently predict marital satisfaction, there is a significant interaction between these two factors (Litzinger & Gordon, 2005): if there is constructive communication between the spouses, then sexual satisfaction will not have a significant impact on marital satisfaction, i.e., couples who have effective communication skills will most likely feel satisfied and successful as a couple, and their sexual relationship fails to add anything beyond their existing level of satisfaction with their relationship. By contrast, if a couple lacks effective communication skills but has a satisfying sexual relationship, their degree of sexual satisfaction can overshadow a lack of communication and they will have greater marital satisfaction than if they were to have a less satisfying sexual relationship. Thus, sexual satisfaction can compensate for the negative effect of unsatisfying communication on marital satisfaction (Litzinger & Gordon, 2005).

Love

Love has been identified as one of the important factors associated with marital satisfaction. According to Schwartz (2007), love is a very broad term that has been defined as a deep and tender feeling of affection for another which arises from kinship or personal ties, or recognition of attractive qualities. Love has also been described as a deep emotional bond, mutual caring and attraction, together with trust and closeness (Riehl-Emde, Thomas, & Willi, 2003).

There have been a number of theories which have attempted to define and explain love. One of the most well-known, recent theories of love is Sternberg's Triangular Theory (1986, 2006). According to Sternberg (1986), love consists of three components: intimacy, passion, and commitment. "Intimacy" is associated with a preference and readiness for experiences of close, warm, and communicative interpersonal exchanges (McAdams & Vaillant, 1982), while "passion" describes "almost any strong emotional state" (Baumeister & Bratslavsky, 1999, p. 51), and is defined as "a state of profound physiological arousal" (Baumeister & Bratslavsky, 1999, p. 51). Finally, "commitment" in the short term involves the decision that one loves another person; and in the long term, the commitment to maintain that love (Sternberg, 1986, 1997, 2006). According to Sternberg (2006), different combinations of these three factors result in different types of love: 1) a "complete" love is a combination of all three components, which is called "consummate" love

(which is difficult to obtain), 2) “romantic” love, which is derived from the combination of intimacy and passion where partners are physically and emotionally attracted to each other but without commitment to the relationship, 3) “infatuated” love, which is driven by passion alone without intimacy or commitment, and 4) love with both passion and commitment but no intimacy, which is referred to as “Fatuous” love (Drigotas et al., 1999; Sternberg, 2006). Sternberg believes that over the course of a successful relationship, passion usually decreases, but intimacy and commitment increase (Acevedo & Aron, 2009). Numerous studies of romantic relationships show that intimacy, passion, and commitment vary across relationship stage and are related to relationship satisfaction (Tung, 2007).

Regardless of marital status, people who report being in love with their partner consider themselves as happier (Willi, 1997). For those who are married, love is more likely to be mutual and they tend to have more successful relationships (Willi, 1997). Therefore, being in love is an important quality for a satisfying relationship, and its absence cannot be compensated for by other factors such as sympathy, respect, or rational argument (Willi, 1997).

Research has found love to be very beneficial for the marital relationship and satisfaction. Surprisingly, studies that have examined the quality and stability of marriages have found that love is the single most important factor related to couples’ overall feeling of well-being (Riehl-Emde, Thomas, & Willi, 2003). According to Riehl-Emde, Thomas, and Willi (2003),

many people feel committed to their relationship because they are in love with each other.

Additional studies support the significant relationship between romantic love with overall happiness in life (Aron & Henkemeyer, 1995), greater life satisfaction, better overall physical health, and lower psychological symptoms (Acevedo & Aron, 2009; Traupmann, Eckels, & Hatfield, 1982). Moreover, it has been suggested that there is a strong link between love and self-esteem (Acevedo & Aron, 2009). According to Hendrick and Adler (1988), an Erotic love style (i.e., an intense, passionate love) is related to high relationship satisfaction, while a Ludic (i.e., game-playing) love style is negatively related to relationship satisfaction.

Partner Attachment

Adult romantic love has also been described as an “attachment” relationship whereby partners seek to be close to one another, especially when they are upset, and it provides them with a secure base from which they can interact with the world (Hazan & Shaver, 1987, 1990). Researchers have identified three main “styles” of adult attachment which impact how individuals perceive and respond to intimacy: secure, anxious, and avoidant.

Individuals with positive views of themselves and others are “**secure**” individuals who feel comfortable with intimacy and are usually warm and affectionate towards others. These individuals do not often worry about being abandoned by their partners (Butzer & Campbell, 2008), and they express

more adaptive functioning in romantic relationships compared to individuals who are insecure (Lopez, Riggs, Pollard, & Hook, 2011). A secure attachment pattern in adulthood is also associated with higher levels of passion and commitment, which results in higher degrees of relationship satisfaction (Madey & Rodgers, 2009). According to Madey and Rodgers (2009), a secure attachment provides a sense of emotional closeness in the couple's relationship, comfort in being near the partner, trust, and a willingness to discuss and resolve issues with the partner. This in turn results in greater relationship satisfaction.

By contrast, "*anxiously*" attached adults are described as worried about being rejected or abandoned by their romantic partners, and they crave intimacy and closeness (Butzer & Campbell, 2008). In addition, they are often concerned about their relationships and do not feel confident in their partner's ability to love them back (Butzer & Campbell, 2008). Also, individuals with this anxious style view themselves as being unappreciated, misunderstood, and as a romantic partner are typically unreliable and either incapable or reluctant to commit themselves to permanent relationships (Simpson, 1990). In addition, these individuals usually exhibit considerable ambivalence toward their romantic partners (Simpson, 1990).

Finally, "*avoidant*" adults express independence from their romantic partner by constantly trying to minimize closeness and intimacy (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). They are less invested in their relationships, and they

consistently try to remain psychologically and emotionally independent of their partners (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). Individuals with this avoidant style find it difficult to completely trust and rely on others, and they feel uncomfortable getting close to another person. In addition, they become nervous when someone becomes too close to them (Simpson, 1990). They typically have images of themselves as being doubtful, unfriendly, and skeptical, and as a romantic partner they tend to be untrustworthy in committing themselves in relationships (Simpson, 1990).

Insecure attachment statuses in adulthood result in a lessened ability to establish intimacy, passion, and commitment (Madey & Rodgers, 2009). In fact, attachment insecurity is associated with marital dissatisfaction, poor communication, and poor supportive behavior in a marriage (Davila et al., 1999). Bouthillier, Julien, Dube, Belanger, and Hamelin (2002) also found that adults who have been classified by the Adult Attachment Interview as insecure are more likely to use more negative strategies and emotion during a conflict with their romantic partner (i.e., more expressions of contempt, withdrawal, and stonewalling) and to have less positive emotions overall (Creasey & Ladd, 2005). Similarly, a spouse's unhappiness may likely be caused by attachment-related fears (e.g., fear of abandonment or lack of intimacy by partner) (Davila, Bradbury, 2001). It has also been suggested that attachment insecurity can put spouses at risk for staying in an unhappy marriage because they feel unworthy and that no one else would ever want to love them (Davila

et al., 1999; Davila & Bradbury, 2001). Researchers have theorized that marital distress is, in fact, grounded in adult attachment problems (e.g., Kobak, Ruckdeschel, & Hazen, 1994).

The roots of these different adult attachment statuses are related to an individual's early interactions with their parents. Early attachment researchers such as Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall (1978) and Bowlby (1982) argue that early interactions between infant and caregiver, especially the mother, create an "internal working model" which guides the quality of interactions with others and beliefs about self and relationships throughout development (Bowlby, 1973, 1980; Bretherton, 1990). These mental models of relationships also organize personality development (Bretherton, 1990). Parents therefore become the foundation of how children learn to represent themselves and others by providing children with examples and ultimately working models of how to manage their relationships with others (Bowlby, 1973, 1982). When parents provide their child with a securely attached relationship, they simultaneously provide that child with the belief that they are trustworthy, and worthy of being loved and cared for (Bowlby, 1973). These models direct children's behavior in other social encounters (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1982), and they function as affective cognitive filters that provide children with a view of themselves and their social world as well as influencing children's responsiveness to social partners (Engels, Finkenauer, Meeus, & Dekovic, 2001).

Children who are securely attached to their caregivers during early life develop more socially and emotionally competent behavior (i.e., better social skills, more positive and less negative affect, and more focused attention) and have more flexible emotional regulation skills (Cassidy, 1994; Sroufe, 1996), cognitive functioning, and physical and mental health. Insecurely attached² children, by contrast, tend to experience negative outcomes in these developmental domains (Waters, 2000; Cassidy, 1994).

Early attachment history also impacts adolescent development, with securely attached adolescents less likely to engage in heavy drinking, drug use, and risky sexual behavior and they have lower rates of teenage pregnancy (Cooper, Shaver, & Collins, 1998). In addition, securely attached adolescents also have fewer mental health problems (such as depression, anxiety, inattention, delinquency, conduct disorder, and aggression) (Cooper, Shaver, & Collins, 1998), more constructive coping skills (Howard & Medway, 2004), better self-esteem, social skills, and confidence (Allen et al. 2002; Bowlby, 1982). They also manage the transition to high school more successfully, have more positive relationships with family and peers, and experience less conflict in their relationships (Ducharme, Doyle & Markiewicz, 2002). Securely attached adolescents are provided a place where they feel safe to develop and strengthen their social skills and develop emotional

² Secure attachment results when primary caregivers are sensitive/responsive to infants; insecure ambivalent results when caregivers are insensitive/inconsistent to infants; insecure avoidant results when caregivers are neglectful/rejecting to infants.

competence amongst family and peers (Kerns & Stevens, 1996; Rice, 1990; Youngblade & Belsky, 1992). Through secure attachment and interactions with their parents, young people learn how to initiate and maintain satisfying and warm friendships (Engels, Finkenauer, Meeus, & Dekovic, 2001). By contrast, insecurely attached adolescents show more depressive symptoms compared to those who are securely attached (Doyle, Brendgen, Markiewicz, & Kamkar, 2003); they have more internalizing problems and lower self-esteem (Doyle & Markiewicz, 2005), greater psychological distress, poorer self-concept, and higher levels of anger and hostility (Cooper et al., 2008). Insecure-avoidant adolescents' self-isolation and self-criticism tend to make them especially vulnerable to depressive symptoms (Blatt & Homann, 1992).

As described above, early attachment status also influences adult partner relationships and interaction styles (Hamilton, 2000). The research literature demonstrates how the attachment status of a child during the first years of life can shape the emotional quality of romantic relationships in early adulthood (Simpson, Collins, Tran, & Haydon, 2007), impact adults' behavior with partners when under stress (Simpson, Rholes, & Nelligan, 1992), and influence relationship satisfaction and communication (Davila, Karney, & Bradbury, 1999). Early attachment representations can also direct adults' expectations about relationships (Collins, 1996). Moreover, a longitudinal study by Dinero et al. (2011) found that early family interactions such as high levels of warmth, caring, and sensitivity, and lower levels of hostility can

predict similar behavior toward the adult romantic partner and greater security in self-reported attachment representations at 25 years of age.³

In spite of the vast literature on adult attachment status and close relationships in adulthood, most of these studies fail to link *early* attachment style with the key components of marital satisfaction discussed earlier, i.e., communication, sexual satisfaction, and love. Previous research studies don't clearly indicate in detail how early attachment is related to the key components of effective communication, sexual satisfaction, or adult partner attachment. The majority of existing studies have, in contrast, assessed the effect of *adults'* attachment style on marital satisfaction rather than the effect of *early* attachment on marital satisfaction.

Summary and Purpose of Study

In sum, the quality of marriage can significantly impact physical and emotional well-being. Compared to those who are happily married, divorced individuals (or those who remain in an unhappy marriage) tend to have lower levels of happiness, life satisfaction, self-esteem, and poorer overall health as well as an increase in the level of psychological distress. According to research, the three *primary* components of marital satisfaction include effective communication, sexual satisfaction, and love/partner attachment.

³ Simpson et al. (2007) suggests that the impact of early attachment patterns on later romantic relationships is indirect and is mediated by the personal relationships outside the nuclear family such as social competencies in elementary school and friendship during adolescence.

Adult attachment style has been found to impact communication, sexual satisfaction, and love. Specifically, a secure adult attachment can provide a sense of emotional closeness in the couple's relationship, intimacy, trust, and willingness to discuss and resolve issues with the partner. These factors in turn result in greater relationship satisfaction. In contrast, an insecure adult attachment is associated with marital dissatisfaction, poor communication, and poor supportive behavior in a marriage.

Although research on adult romantic relationships has emphasized the crucial role that adult attachment security plays in the formation and maintenance of couple relationships, current research lacks sufficient attention to the relationship of *early* attachment style on the key components of marital satisfaction i.e., communication, sexual satisfaction, and love. As discussed above, early attachment experiences have a significant impact on adult social and emotional competence. Early interactions between infant and caregiver, especially the mother, guide the quality of interactions with others (Bowlby, 1973, 1980; Bretherton, 1990). Children who are securely attached to their caregivers during early life develop more socially and emotionally competent behavior and have more flexible emotional regulation skills (Cassidy, 1994; Sroufe, 1996). Through secure attachment and interactions with their parents, young people learn how to initiate and maintain satisfying and warm friendships (Engels, Finkenauer, Meeus, & Dekovic, 2001).

The purpose of this study, then, is to examine the impact of early attachment style on the formation of the three components of marital satisfaction (i.e., communication, sexual satisfaction, and love/partner's attachment) in early adulthood. It is expected that there will be a positive and significant impact of early attachment security on positive communication, sexual satisfaction, and love/ partner attachment (see Figure 1).

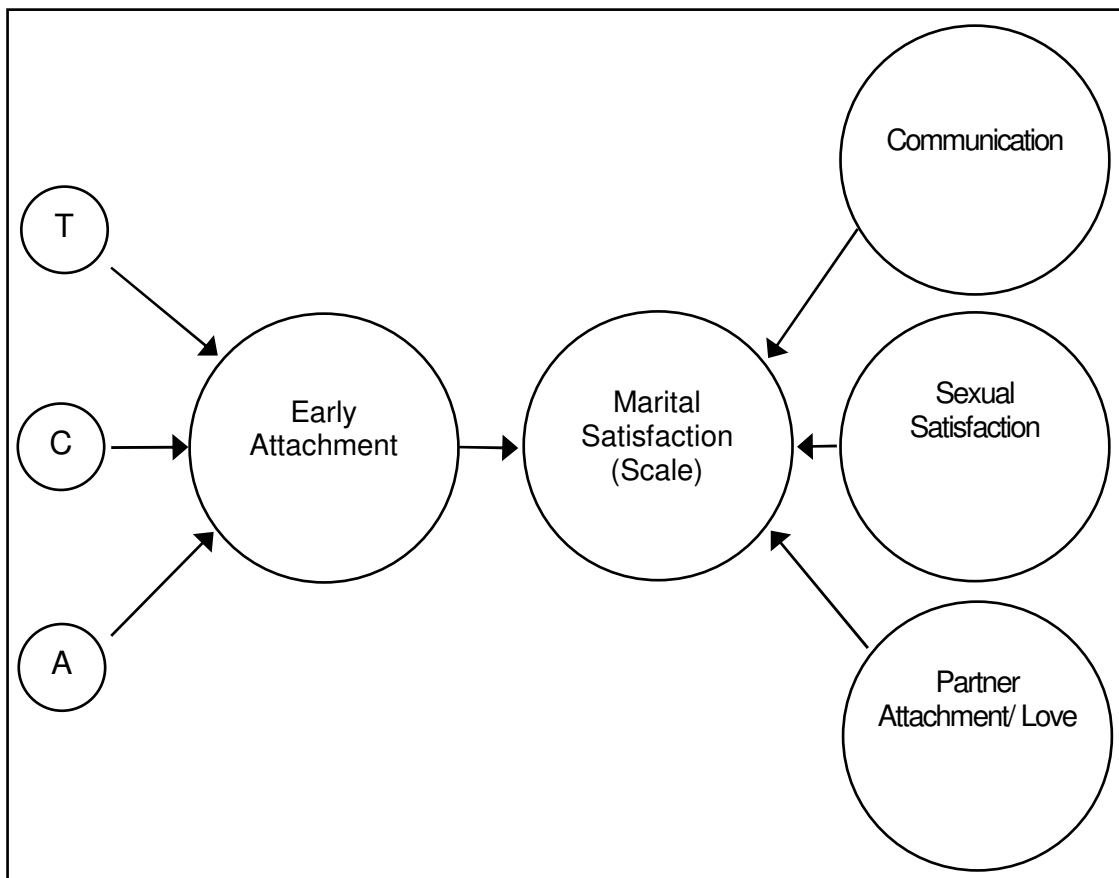


Figure 1. Expected Impact of Early Attachment Security on Marital Satisfaction

CHAPTER TWO

METHOD

Participants

Participants were 154 ethnically and socioeconomically diverse volunteers from California State University, San Bernardino and University of California, Los Angeles. All were married for the first time, and ranged in age from 18 to 40 years ($m = 27$ years). The sample consisted of 35 males (22.7%) and 119 females (77.3%) who were married for 1-10 years ($m = 4.5$ years). The sample was largely comprised of Hispanic (36.4%) and Caucasian (34.4%) individuals (other ethnicities included Middle Eastern [9.7%]; African-American [7.1%]; Asian [5.8%]; and other [6.5%]). Socioeconomic status, based on fathers' educational level, was diverse: 28% had a B.A. or higher; 26% had some college/trade school; 24% were high school graduates; and 22% did not complete high school. Most of the participants (59.1%) didn't have children. (The majority of those who reported having children had one child). Most of the participants reported not having any previous individual or couples therapy (84.3%).

Measures

The questionnaire consisted of the following measures: marital satisfaction, communication, sexual satisfaction, early attachment, partner attachment, and demographics.

Marital Satisfaction

To measure marital satisfaction, the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) (Spanier, 1976) was used (Appendix A). This 32-item measure assessed relationship satisfaction with four subscales: Dyadic Consensus (13 items; the degree to which the participant and their partner agreed or disagreed on different problems); Dyadic Satisfaction (10 items; how partners view the stability of their marriage and how they resolve conflicts); Affectional Expression (4 items; the extent to which couples agree about how they express affection to one another); and Dyadic Cohesion (5 items; how often partners experience positive exchanges with one another). Participants responded to the Likert items on a 6-point scale (1 = always disagree, 6 = always agree). There were also two dichotomous [Yes/No] questions). The DAS has been shown to have high levels of internal consistency and validity, with constructive validity and internal consistency being .88 and test-retest reliability being .96 (Spanier, 1982).

Sexual Satisfaction

To measure sexual satisfaction, the sexual satisfaction subscale from the Fournier, Olson, and Druckman (1983) ENRICH (Evaluating & Nurturing Relationship Issues, Communication, Happiness) inventory was used (Appendix B). The 10-item subscale examined the participants' feelings about their sexual relationship with their partner. Items reflect attitudes about sexual issues, sexual behavior, birth control, and sexual fidelity. Respondents

answered each item on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Higher scores indicate greater satisfaction with the sexual relationship. Sample questions include: "Sometimes I am concerned that my spouse's interest in sex is not the same as mine" and "Our sexual relationship is satisfying and fulfilling to me". Constructive validity and internal consistency (*alpha*) for this scale is .85 and test-retest reliability is .92 (Olson, McCubbin et al., 1983).

Communication

To measure communication, the Communication Patterns Questionnaire (CPQ) (Christensen & Sullaway, 1984) was used (Appendix C). The Communication Patterns Questionnaire is a self-report assessment which assesses the communication patterns that couples demonstrate when discussing a relationship problem. This 35-item questionnaire assesses behavior when a problem arises in the relationship, behavior during a discussion of a problem, and behavior after a discussion of a problem. Respondents indicated the degree to which the interaction pattern described by each item occurred within their relationship by using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = very unlikely, 5 = very likely). Participants then received three subscale scores for: Positive Communication (i.e., mutual discussion, expression, and negotiation), Negative Communication (i.e., mutual blame, mutual threat, and verbal aggression by the man and by the woman), and Demand (i.e., one partner initiates discussion, demands, criticizes, or nags, while the other

partner avoids or withdraws from discussion). High scores indicate adaptive, constructive communication skills, and low scores demonstrate destructive communication skills. The internal consistency is variable among the subscales ranged from .62 to .86 with a mean of .71.

Early Attachment

To assess early attachment, the 25-item maternal scale from the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987) was used (Appendix D). This self-report scale was designed to assess adolescent or young adult attachment with their mother during the first 16 years of their life. The scale consists of three subscales, including Trust (i.e., the degree of mutual trust, understanding, and respect between mother and child), Communication (i.e., the quality of communication between the mother and child, including how easy it is for the child to share their problems with mother, and how easily the mother can read the child's feelings), and Anger/Alienation (i.e., the extent of feelings of anger, alienation, and isolation of child feels toward the mother, the inability for the child to talk over problems with mother, and the level to which the mother was upset, inattentive, and insensitive to the child). Participants responded to the 25 items on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Almost Never or Never; 5 = Almost Always or Always). Internal consistency has been reported as .91 for the Trust subscale, Communication .91, and Alienation .86. Test-retest reliability is .93.

Partner Attachment

Adult partner attachment was assessed with the Experience in Close Relationships-Revised (ECR-R) Questionnaire (Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000) (Appendix E). The ECR-R is a 36-item questionnaire that measures adult attachment style on two subscales of attachment: Anxiety (Items 1-18, i.e., “I’m afraid that I will lose my partner’s love”) and Avoidance (Items 19-36, i.e., “I prefer not to be too close to romantic partner”). Participants responded to each item on a 5-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree). The internal validity of this questionnaire has been reported as .89 for the anxiety dimension and .93 for the avoidant dimension.

Demographics

Participants were asked to complete a background information form, including their age, gender, educational level, and parents’ educational level. Also, participants were asked about the length of marriage in their current relationship, whether this was their first marriage or if they had a previous marriage, the number of children and their ages, and whether they have had any individual or couples’ counseling.

CHAPTER THREE

RESULTS

Data Screening

Prior to the analysis, the data were examined for the assumptions of multivariate analysis and to make sure the assumptions of SEM were met. All variables in the SEM were screened for outliers; three univariate outliers were found outside $z = 3.5$, which were subsequently removed. All variables were then screened for univariate normality; all were considered normally distributed except the two adult attachment subscales (ECR-avoidance and ECR-anxiety) which were positively skewed.

Appendix F outlines the descriptive statistics of the sample after removing the outliers from the data.

The final variables for use in SEM were then assessed for issues of multicollinearity, linearity, and homoscedasticity of residuals. No issues of multicollinearity were detected; all correlations between the variables were below $\pm .80$ and tolerance levels in the resulting multicollinearity statistics were above $.20$. A residual analysis was conducted with the three residual outliers removed; results indicated that the assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity of residuals were met. Upon completion of these screening analyses, the data were considered suitable for SEM, with a final sample size of $N = 154$.

The Hypothesized Model

Using EQS, the hypothesized relationships were tested among Marital Satisfaction, a variable with five indicators (Dyadic Consensus, Dyadic Satisfaction, Dyadic Cohesion, Affectional Expression, and Sexual Satisfaction), Early Attachment, a variable with three indicators (Trust, Communication, Alienation), Partner Attachment, a variable with two indicators (Avoidance and Anxiety), and Communication, a variable with three indicators (Demand, Negative Communication, and Positive Communication). The resulting model is shown below in Figure 2. Circles represent latent variables, rectangles represent measured variables. In this study, we expected that there would be a positive and significant impact of early attachment security on positive communication, sexual satisfaction, and partner attachment.

Model Estimation

All variables were correlated with one another as expected. The hypothesized model was tested and the omnibus model fit the data very well. The multivariate Kurtosis test indicated that Normalized Estimate is $z = 9.2$. Therefore, it violated the assumption of Multivariate Kurtosis so the robust independent model was used. Also, support was found for the hypothesized model in terms of Satorra-Bentler scaled χ^2 test statistic $\chi^2 (59, N = 154) = 103.07$ (chi-square is less than two times the number of degrees of freedom), comparative fit index (CFI) = .950, and Root Mean-Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = .071 (Ullman, 2001). The

only post hoc adjustments to the model were three pairs of item-level error terms that were allowed to covary.

Direct and Indirect Effects

Direct effects are those parts of the exposure effect which are not mediated by a given set of potential mediators. Direct effects also measure the extent of changes in the dependent variable when the independent variable increases by one unit (Pearl, 2001). By contrast, indirect effects are those parts of the exposure effect which are mediated by a given mediator or a set of potential mediators. An indirect effect measures the changes in the dependent variable when the independent variable is held fixed and the mediator(s) changes by the amount it would have changed had the independent variable increased by one unit (Pearl, 2001). An example of an indirect effect in the resulting model is the relationship between Early Attachment and Marital Satisfaction: Partner Attachment mediated the relationship between these two variables (standardized coefficient for indirect effect = .36 $p < .05$), suggesting that Partner Attachment (mediator variable) effects Marital Satisfaction (dependent variable) and Early Attachment (independent variable) effects Partner Attachment. In other words, Early Attachment indirectly affects Marital Satisfaction through its positive impact on Partner Attachment.

According to these results, Partner Attachment was directly and significantly related to Marital Satisfaction (standardized coefficient = .92), meaning that greater Partner Attachment predicted greater Marital

Satisfaction. Also, Early Attachment had a significant and direct relationship with Partner Attachment (standardized coefficient = .40), suggesting that early secure attachment predicted better partner attachment. Also, Marital Satisfaction was a major predictor of Communication (standardized coefficient = .87), suggesting that the more positive the communication, the higher the marital satisfaction (and, conversely, higher negative communication [standardized coefficient = -.50] or demand communication [standardized coefficient = -.66], the lower the marital satisfaction). In addition, Sexual Satisfaction positively affected Marital Satisfaction (standardized coefficient = .77).

The second indirect relationship was between Early Attachment and Communication (standardized coefficient for indirect effect = .31 $p < .05$) with Partner Attachment and Marital Satisfaction mediating the relationship between Early Attachment and Communication. Also, the relationship between Early Attachment and Sexual Satisfaction was mediated by both Partner Attachment and Marital Satisfaction (standardized coefficient for indirect effect = .28 $p < .05$). Finally, the relationship between Partner Attachment and Communication was mediated by Marital Satisfaction (standardized coefficient for indirect effect = .80 $p < .05$): greater partner attachment predicted more positive communication between partners.

Whereas the hypothesized model predicted a direct effect between Early Attachment and Marital Satisfaction, the resulting model suggested that

Partner Attachment mediated the relationship between these two variables. In other words, Early Attachment can indirectly affect Marital satisfaction and its components (i.e., Sexual Satisfaction, and Communication) through its positive impact on Partner Attachment. Greater early secure attachment predicts partner attachment, which in turn impacts marital satisfaction.

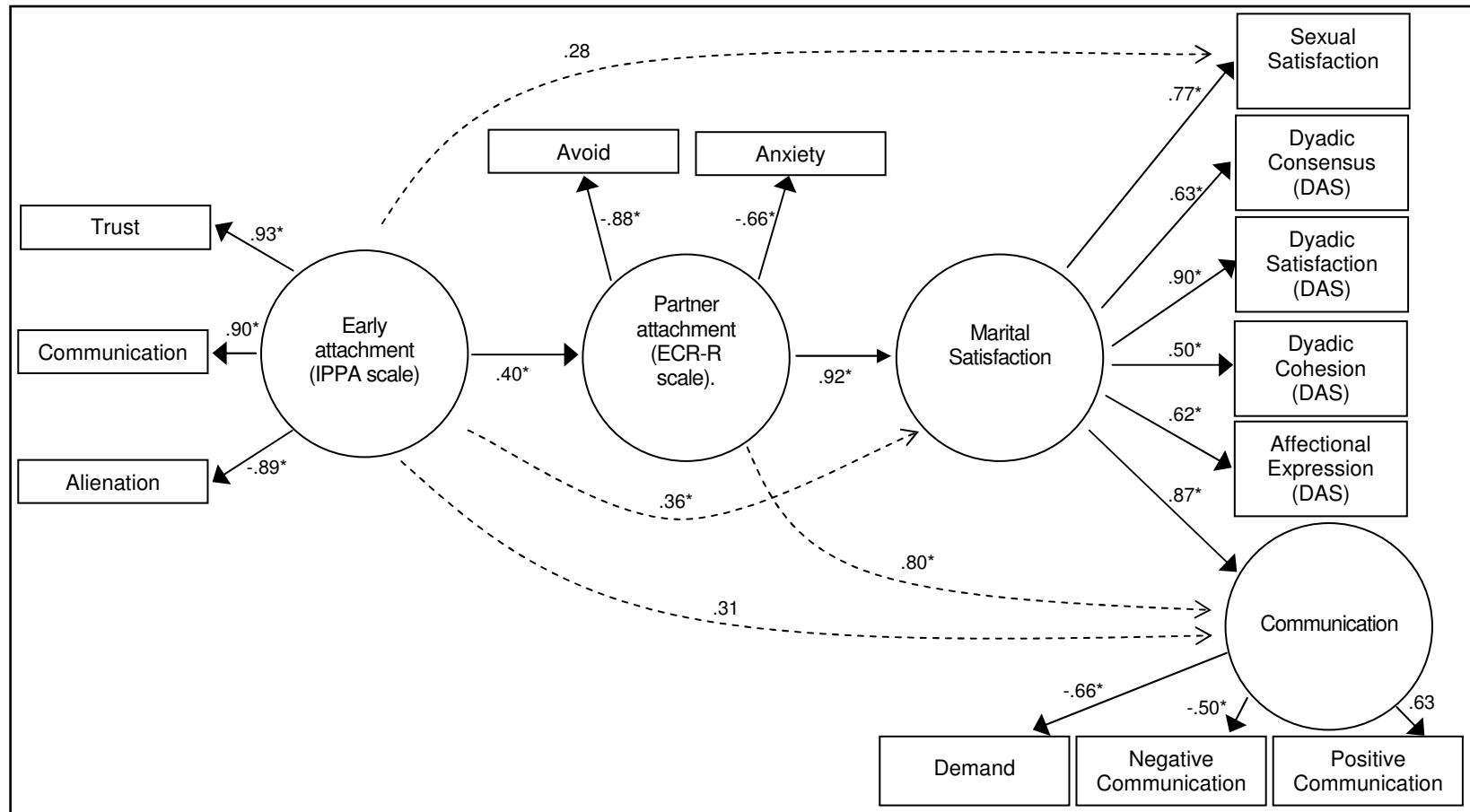


Figure 2. Model Results⁴

⁴ See Table 1 for definitions of variables

Table 1. Definitions of Early Attachment, Partner Attachment, and Marital Satisfaction Variables

<u>Variables</u>	<u>Definition</u>
Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA)	
Trust	The degree of mutual trust, understanding, and respect between mother and child.
Communication	The quality and extent of verbal communication between the mother and child, including how easily the mother was communicating with her child, and how easily the mother could read the child's feelings.
Alienation	The extend of feelings of anger, alienation, and isolation of child toward the mother, the inability of the child to talk over problems with the mother, the extent to which the mother was upset, inattentive, and insensitive to the child.
Experience in Close Relationship-Revised (ECR-R)	
Anxiety	Worry about being rejected or abandoned by romantic partner.
Avoidance	Constantly tries to minimize closeness and intimacy.
Sexual Satisfaction Scale	Frequency of sex, and the quality of the couple's sexual relationship.
Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS)	
Dyadic Consensus	The extent to which the participant and their partner agree on a number of issues.
Dyadic Satisfaction	Perceived stability and satisfaction of the marriage.
Dyadic Cohesion	The frequency of positive interactions between the couple.
Affectional Expression	Demonstration of physical affection.

<u>Variables</u>	<u>Definition</u>
Communication Patterns Questionnaire (CPQ)	
Positive interaction	Mutual Constructive Communication (mutual discussion, expression, and negotiation).
Negative Communication	Mutual Avoidance (mutual blame, mutual threat, and verbal aggression).
Demand	One spouse initiates discussion, demands, criticizes, or nags, while the other spouse avoids or withdraws from discussion.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION

This study examined the impact of early attachment on the three components of marital satisfaction, i.e., communication, sexual satisfaction, and love/partner attachment in early adulthood. The findings of this study provide some support for the hypothesized relationship between early attachment and marital satisfaction as early attachment was found to have a direct effect on partner attachment (which in turn had a significant impact on the components of marital satisfaction [i.e., sexual satisfaction, dyadic consensus, dyadic satisfaction, dyadic cohesion, affectional expression, and communication]), and it also had an indirect effect on communication and sexual satisfaction. Unlike previous studies which have focused primarily on the role of *adult* attachment security on the formation and the maintenance of romantic relationship (e.g., Bouthillier et al., 2002), this study focused on the impact of *early* attachment on the formation of the key components of marital satisfaction (i.e., communication, sexual satisfaction, and love/partner attachment). In sum, the model provides some support for the notion that early attachment plays an indirect role in later marital satisfaction. Greater early secure attachment predicts partner attachment, which in turn impacts marital satisfaction.

The relationship between partner attachment and marital satisfaction was stronger than the relationship between early attachment and partner

attachment. Perhaps one of the reasons for such a difference could be that early attachment is not the only factor associated with partner attachment. According to Bowlby (1980), an individual's attachment style is capable of changing the other partner's insecure attachment status through the influence of a new emotional relationship provided by positive interactions between a couple. This would allow the individual to reflect on and reinterpret the meaning of past and present experiences. Partner attachment and marital satisfaction may also have been highly correlated because the items used in the two scales are similar in that they are referring to the relationship with one's partner. In contrast, early attachment items pertained primarily the relationship between a child and his/her primary caregiver.

Early Attachment and Partner Attachment

The findings in the model are consistent with previous research which has found that the root of the different adult attachment statuses is based primarily on one's early interactions with their caregiver (e.g., Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). According to Bowlby (1980), interactions between an infant and caregiver result in the creation of an "internal working model" which directs the quality of interactions and relationships with others throughout development (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1973, 1980; Bretherton, 1990). This model of relationships impacts others' social encounters, interactions with other people, and responsiveness to social partners (Engels, Finkenauer, Meeus, & Dekovic, 2001). In addition, it also

organizes personality development which can influence an individual's ability to form a secure relationship with their partner (Bretherton, 1990).

Similarly, researchers outline how the attachment style of a child during the first years of life can form the emotional quality of romantic relationship in early adulthood (Simpson, Collins, Tran, & Haydon, 2007; Hamilton, 2000), and provide more flexible emotional regulation skills (Cassidy, 1994). Securely attached children develop more socially and emotionally competent behaviors (i.e., better social skills, more positive and less negative affect, and more focused attention), cognitive functioning, and physical and mental health (Cassidy, 1994; Sroufe, 1996). In contrast, insecurely attached children tend to experience negative outcomes in these developmental domains (Waters, 2000).

Early attachment security also impacts mental health (such as depression, anxiety, inattention, delinquency, conduct disorder, and aggression) (Cooper, Shaver, & Collins, 1998; Sroufe, 1996), coping skills (Howard & Medway, 2004), self-esteem, social skills, and confidence which will help them to manage their relationships with others during the later years of life (Allen et al. 2002; Bowlby, 1982). A securely attached relationship between a child and its caregiver provide the child with the belief that they are trustworthy, and worthy of being loved and cared for (Bowlby, 1973). A longitudinal study by Dinero et al. (2011) found that early family interactions such as high levels of warmth, caring, sensitivity, and lower levels of hostility

can predict similar behaviors toward the adult romantic partner and greater security in self-reported attachment representations at 25 years of age.

Early Attachment and the Components of Marital Satisfaction

One of the main findings of this study was the relationship between early attachment security and communication in early adulthood. Results showed an indirect and significant relationship between these two variables. This finding is consistent with research by Guerrero (1996) which found that individuals with a positive early working model viewed themselves as secure, lovable, and high in self-worth, and that they usually engaged in communication with others in a manner that reflected their confidence (Guerrero, 1996). A secure attachment style between a child and his/her caregiver could provide a child with a trusting and secure environment where they feel loved and cared for.

In addition, the model describes a relationship between early attachment and sexual satisfaction. Partners who have a secure attachment status tend to be more intimate and affectionate towards each other, and have warm relationships with others (Butzer & Campbell, 2008). Such couples tend to express more adaptive functioning in romantic relationships compared to individuals who are insecure (Lopez, Riggs, Pollard, & Hook, 2011). A secure attachment pattern also creates a more passionate and committed relationship between couples, and provides trust and comfort in being near the partner (Madey & Rodgers, 2009).

A secure relationship with physical contact between an infant and its caregiver may provide a trustworthy and secure environment for the infant so they feel loved and cared for, a pattern that may later help them to feel more secure and passionate towards their partners (Engels, Finkenauer, Meeus, & Dekovic, 2001).

Partner Attachment and Components of Marital Satisfaction

Another important finding of this study was the significant, direct relationship between partner attachment and marital satisfaction. These findings are consistent with previous research which has found that a secure attachment style in adulthood is associated with higher levels of passion and commitment, which result in higher levels of marital satisfaction (Madey & Rodgers, 2009). A secure partner attachment provides a sense of emotional closeness in a couple's relationship, comfort in being near the partner, trust, and a willingness to discuss and resolve issues (Madey & Rodgers, 2009). This in turn results in greater relationship satisfaction (Madey & Rodgers, 2009). In contrast, an insecure partner attachment is likely to contribute to marital dissatisfaction and distress because individuals are likely to have a lessened capacity for establishing intimacy, passion, and commitment (Madey & Rodgers, 2009). Insecure partner attachment has been associated with marital dissatisfaction and poor supportive behavior in a marriage (Davila et al., 1999). Insecurely attached couples use more negative strategies and emotions during a conflict with their romantic partner (i.e., more expressions of

contempt, withdrawal, and stonewalling) (Creasey & Ladd, 2005). Hazen and colleagues (1994), in fact, believe that the root of marital distress is an attachment problem (e.g., Kobak, Ruckdeschel, & Hazen, 1994). Therefore, adult attachment style has a significant impact on the quality of marriage and the formation and maintenance of marital satisfaction. The more secure the partner attachment, the higher the marital satisfaction.

Another main finding of this study is the relationship between partner attachment and communication: there was a significant, indirect effect between partner attachment and communication. This finding is supported by Davila and colleagues who found that couples' attachment insecurity is associated with poor communication and poor supportive behavior in a marriage (Davila et al., 1999), with distressed couples reporting more destructive communication behavior and conflict avoidance (Estephan, 2005). Secure attachment provides a sense of emotional closeness in a couple's relationship, and a willingness to discuss and resolve issues with their partner which will result in greater relationship satisfaction (Madey & Rodgers, 2009).

In addition, it was hypothesized that there would be a significant, positive relationship between communication and marital satisfaction. This hypothesized relationship was supported by the results. These findings are consistent with the previous studies which indicate that a poor communication style is a key factor in marital dissatisfaction and distress (Litzinger & Gordon, 2005). According to research, the frequent use of a negative or demanding

communication style is related to a lower-quality, unsatisfying marital relationship (Gottman & Krokoff, 1989). Communication is one of the most effective and influential factors related to marital satisfactions (Gottman, 1999). Bienvenu and Gottman have indicated that communication skills have been identified as “key” to successful, satisfying marital relationships (e.g., Bienvenu, 1970; Gottman, 1982).

Limitations and Future Research

There were several limitations to this study. First, the questionnaires used in this study had some redundant items. Some of the items were repeated in other scales and were measured twice, which could affect the accuracy of measurement. Future studies may consider this limitation and customize the questionnaire in order to avoid redundancy among the items.

A second limitation was the use of self-report measures for each variable, which could have increased the likelihood of self-report bias. For instance, regarding the measures of partner attachment or marital satisfaction among couples, some individuals may have wanted to portray themselves as being more comfortable and confident in their partner relationships than they actually felt.

Future research could explore the impact of gender differences on early attachment and marital satisfaction. Whether there is a difference between males and females regarding the effect of early attachment on communication,

sexual satisfaction, or even partner attachment during early adulthood is a topic for future study.

Also, future studies could explore how each partner's attachment style can affect the other partner's attachment style and their joint interaction patterns. Bowlby (1980) discussed how an individual's attachment style is capable of changing the other partner's insecure attachment status.

Conclusions and Implications

The results of this study suggest that early secure interactions between a child and caregiver may be at least one significant factor in later marital satisfaction. Early attachment impacts later partner attachment, which in turn impacts a number of factors related to marital satisfaction (e.g., communication, sexual satisfaction, etc.).

Whereas the hypothesized model predicted a direct effect between Early Attachment and Marital Satisfaction, the resulting model suggested that Partner Attachment mediated the relationship between these two variables.

Therapists may find the results of this study helpful in understanding some of the causes as to why couples engage in a negative interaction style and suffer from marital distress. Also, the findings of the current study point to the importance of the quality of a child's early attachment to later adult partner relationships and marital satisfaction. Findings from this study may help parents understand how their daily communications and interactions with their

children can impact their children's emotional and social skills, and how this can impact relationships with future partners.

APPENDIX A
DYADIC ADJUSTMENT SCALE (DAS)

Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS)

Instruction: Most persons have disagreements in their relationships. Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list.

		Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Occasionally Disagree	Frequently Disagree	Almost Always Disagree	Always Disagree
1	Handling family finances						
2	Matters of recreation						
3	Religious matters						
4	Demonstrations of affection						
5	Friends						
6	Sex relations						
7	Conventionality (correct or proper behavior)						
8	Philosophy of life						
9	Ways of dealing with parents or in-laws						
10	Aims, goals, and things believed important						
11	Amount of time spent together						
12	Making major decisions						
13	Household tasks						
14	Leisure time interests and activities						
15	Career decisions						
16	How often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separation, or terminating your relationship?						
17	How often do you or your mate leave the house after a fight?						

		Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Occasionally Disagree	Frequently Disagree	Almost Always Disagree	Always Disagree
18	In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?						
19	Do you confide in your mate?						
20	Do you ever regret that married? (or lived together)						
21	How often do you and your partner quarrel?						
22	How often do you and your mate "get on each other's nerves?"						

		Every Day	Almost Everyday	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
23	Do you kiss your mate?					

		All Of Them	Most Of Them	Some Of Them	Very Few Of Them	None Of Them
24	Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together?					

How often would you say the following events occur between you and your mate?

		Never	Less Than Once A Month	Once Or Twice A Month	Once Or Twice A Week	Once A Day	More Often
25	Have a stimulating exchange of ideas						
26	Laugh together						
27	Calmly discuss something						
28	Work together on a project						

These are some things about which couples sometimes agree and sometime disagree. Indicate if either item below caused differences of opinions or were problems in your relationship during the past few weeks. (Check yes or no).

		Yes	No
29	Being too tired for sex		
30	Not showing love		

31. The columns on the following line represent different degrees of happiness in your relationship. The middle point, "happy," represents the degree of happiness of most relationships. Please fill in the column which best describes the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship.

Extremely Unhappy	Fairly Unhappy	A Little Unhappy	Happy	Very Happy	Extremely Happy	Perfect

32. Which of the following statements best describes how you feel about the future of your relationship?

- A) I want desperately for my relationship to succeed, and *would go to almost any length* to see that it does.
- B) I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and *will do all I can* to see that it does.
- C) I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and *will do my fair share* to see that it does.
- D) It would be nice if my relationship succeeded, but *I can't do much more than I am doing now* to help it succeed.
- E) It would be nice if it succeeded, but I *refuse to do any more than I am doing now* to keep the relationship going.
- F) My relationship can never succeed, and *there is no more that I can do* to keep the relationship going.

Developed by Spanier, G. B. (1976). Measuring Dyadic Adjustment: New Scale for Assessing the Quality of Marriage and Similar Dyads. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 38, 15-28.

APPENDIX B
EVALUATION AND NURTURING RELATIONSHIP ISSUES,
COMMUNICATION, HAPPINESS (ENRICH)

**Evaluation and Nurturing Relationship Issues,
Communication, Happiness (ENRICH)**

Instruction: This questionnaire is going to measure your feelings about the affectional and sexual relationship with your partner. Please rate each item on a scale by checking whichever column applies.

	<u>QUESTIONS:</u>	Strongly Agree	Some-what agree	Agree	Some-What disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	I am comfortable talking with my partner about sexual issues					
2	I am completely satisfied with the amount of affection my partner gives me.					
3	My partner uses or refuses sex unfairly.					
4	I am satisfied with our openness in discussing sexual topics.					
5	We try to find ways to keep our sexual relationship interesting and enjoyable.					
6	I am concerned that my partner is interested in viewing sexually explicit material.					
7	I am reluctant to be affectionate with my partner because he/she often interprets it as a sexual advance					
8	I am concerned that my partner's interest in sex might be different than mine.					
9	I am concerned that my partner may not be interested in me sexually					
10	Our sexual relationship is satisfying and fulfilling to me.					

Developed by Fournier, D. G., Olson, D. H. & Druckman, J. M. (1983).
Assessing marital and premarital relationships: The
PREPARE/ENRICH Inventories. In E. E. Filsinger (Ed.), *Marriage and
family assessment* (pp. 229-250). Newbury, CA: SAGE Publishing.

APPENDIX C
COMMUNICATION PATTERNS QUESTIONNAIRE (CPQ)

Communication Patterns Questionnaire (CPQ)

Instructions: We are interested in how you and your partner typically deal with problems in your relationship. Please rate each item on the scale by checking whichever column applies.

A. When Some Problem in the Relationship Arises:

		Very Unlikely	Some What Unlikely	Likely	Some What likely	Very likely
1	Both members avoid discussing the problem.					
2	Both members try to discuss the problem.					
3	Man tries to start a discussion while Woman tries to avoid a discussion. (Male Demand/Female Withdraw)					
4	Woman tries to start a discussion while Man tries to avoid a discussion. (Female Demand/Male Withdraw)					

B. During a Discussion of a Relationship Problem:

		Very Unlikely	Some What Unlikely	Likely	Some What Likely	Very Likely
5	Both members blame, accuse, and criticize each other					
6	Both members express their feelings to each other. (Mutual Constructive Communication)					
7	Both members threaten each other with negative consequences.					
8	Both members suggest possible solutions and compromises. (Mutual Constructive Communication)					
9	Man nags and demands while Woman withdraws, becomes silent, or refuses to discuss the matter further. (Male Demand/Female Withdraw)					

		Very Unlikely	Some What Unlikely	Likely	Some What Likely	Very Likely
10	Woman nags and demands while Man withdraws, becomes silent, or refuses to discuss the matter further. (Female Demand/Male Withdraw)					
11	Man criticizes while Woman defends herself.					
12	Woman criticizes while Man defends himself.					
13	Man pressures Woman to take some action or stop some action, while Woman resists. (Male Demand/Female Withdraw)					
14	Woman pressures Man to take some action or stop some action, while Man resists. (Female Demand/Male Withdraw)					
15	Man expresses feelings while Woman offers reasons and solutions.					
16	Woman expresses feelings while Man offers reasons and solutions.					
17	Man threatens negative consequences and Woman gives in or backs down.					
18	Woman threatens negative consequences and Man gives in or backs down.					
19	Man calls Woman names, swears at her, or attacks her character.					
20	Woman calls Man names, swears at him, or attacks his Character					
21	Man pushes, shoves, slaps, hits, or kicks Woman.					
22	Woman pushes, shoves, slaps, hits, or kicks Man.					

C. After the Discussion of a Relationship Problem:

		Very Unlikely	Some What Unlikely	Likely	Some What Likely	Very Likely
23	Both feel each other has understood his/her position					
24	Both withdraw from each other after the discussion					
25	Both feel that the problem has been solved.					
26	Neither partner is giving to the other after the Discussion.					
27	After the discussion, both try to be especially nice to each other.					
28	Man feels guilty for what he said or did while Woman feels hurt.					
29	Woman feels guilty for what she said or did while Man feels hurt.					
30	Man tries to be especially nice, acts as if things are back to normal, while Woman acts distant.					
31	Woman tries to be especially nice, acts as if things are back to normal while Man acts distant.					
32	Man pressures Woman to apologize or promise to do better, while Woman resists.					
33	Woman pressures Man to apologize or promise to do better, while Man resists.					
34	Man seeks support from others (parent, friend, children).					
35	Woman seeks support from others (parent, friend, children).					

Developed by Christensen, A., & Sullaway, M. (1984). *Communication patterns questionnaire*. Unpublished questionnaire, University of California, Los Angeles.

APPENDIX D
INVENTORY OF PARENT AND PEER ATTACHMENT (IPPA)

Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA)

Instructions: Please carefully read each item below and choose the best response. Mark its corresponding “letter” to the left of each number. Please be sure to answer every item.

Each of the statements below asks about your feelings about your mother or person acted in place of your mother. Please read each statement and mark the ONE letter that tells how true the statement was for you WHEN YOU WERE A CHILD.

	QUESTIONS:	Almost Never Or Never True	Not Very Often True	Someti mes True	Often True	Almost Always Or Always True
1	My mother respects my feelings.					
2	I feel my mother does a good job as a mother.					
3	I wish I had a different mother.					
4	My mother accepts me as I am.					
5	I like to get my mother’s point of view on things I am concerned about.					
6	I feel it’s no use letting my feelings show around my mother.					
7	My mother can tell when I am upset about something.					
8	Talking over my problems with my mother makes me feel ashamed or foolish.					
9	My mother expects too much of me.					
10	I get upset easily around my mother.					
11	I get upset a lot more than my mother knows about.					
12	When we discuss things, my mother cares about my point of view.					
13	My mother trusts my judgment.					
14	My mother has her own problems, so I don’t bother her with mine.					

	QUESTIONS:	Almost Never Or Never True	Not Very Often True	Someti mes True	Often True	Almost Always Or Always True
15	My mother helps me to understand myself better.					
16	I tell my mother about my problems and troubles.					
17	I feel angry with my mother.					
18	I don't get much attention from my mother.					
19	My mother helps me to talk about my difficulties.					
20	My mother understands me.					
21	When I am angry about something, my mother tries to be understanding.					
22	I trust my mother.					
23	My mother doesn't understand what I am going through these days.					
24	I can count on my mother when I need to get something off my chest.					
25	If my mother knows something is bothering me, she asks me about it.					

Developed by Armsden, G. C., & Greenberg, M. T. (1987). The inventory of parent and peer attachment: Relationships to well-being in adolescence. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 16(5), 427-454.

APPENDIX E
EXPERIENCE IN CLOSE RELATIONSHIP-REVISED (ECR-R)

Experience in Close Relationship-Revised (ECR-R)

Instruction: The statements below concern how you feel in emotionally intimate relationships. We are interested in how you *generally* experience relationships, not just in what is happening in a current relationship. Respond to each statement by checking a column to indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statement.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I'm afraid that I will lose my partner's love.					
2	I often worry that my partner will not want to stay with me.					
3	I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me.					
4	I worry that romantic partners won't care about me as much as I care about them.					
5	I often wish that my partner's feelings for me were as strong as my feelings for him or her.					
6	I worry a lot about my relationships.					
7	When my partner is out of sight, I worry that he or she might become interested in someone else.					
8	When I show my feelings for romantic partners, I'm afraid they will not feel the same about me.					
9	I rarely worry about my partner leaving me.					
10	My romantic partner makes me doubt myself.					
11	I do not often worry about being abandoned.					
12	I find that my partner(s) don't want to get as close as I would like.					

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
13	Sometimes romantic partners change their feelings about me for no apparent reason.					
14	My desire to be very close sometimes scares people away.					
15	I'm afraid that once a romantic partner gets to know me, he or she won't like who I really am.					
16	It makes me mad that I don't get the affection and support I need from my partner.					
17	I worry that I won't measure up to other people.					
18	My partner only seems to notice me when I'm angry.					
19	I prefer not to show a partner how I feel deep down.					
20	I feel comfortable sharing my private thoughts and feelings with my partner.					
21	I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on romantic partners.					
22	I am very comfortable being close to romantic partners.					
23	don't feel comfortable opening up to romantic partners.					
24	I prefer not to be too close to romantic partners.					
25	I get uncomfortable when a romantic partner wants to be very close.					
26	I find it relatively easy to get close to my partner.					
27	It's not difficult for me to get close to my partner.					

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
28	I usually discuss my problems and concerns with my partner.					
29	It helps to turn to my romantic partner in times of need.					
30	I tell my partner just about everything.					
31	I talk things over with my partner.					
32	I am nervous when partners get too close to me.					
33	I feel comfortable depending on romantic partners.					
34	I find it easy to depend on romantic partners.					
35	It's easy for me to be affectionate with my partner.					
36	My partner really understands me and my needs.					

Developed by Fraley, R. C., Waller, N. G., & Brennan, K. A. (2000). An item-response theory analysis of self-report measures of adult attachment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78, 350-365.

Background information; please complete the following;

- a) Your age: _____
- b) Your sex: ___ male ___ female
- c) Do you have a child/children of your own? ___ yes ___ no
If so how many and their ages: _____
- d) Your ethnicity: ___ Hispanic ___ African American
 ___ Asian ___ Native American
 ___ Caucasian ___ Middle Eastern ___ other
- e) The highest level of education that you and your parents completed.
- | | You | Mother | Father |
|----------------------------------|-----|--------|--------|
| Did not complete high school | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| High school graduate | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| Some college or trade school | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| Graduated with Bachelor's degree | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| Some graduate school | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| Graduate or professional degree | ___ | ___ | ___ |
- f) Who was your primary caregiver when growing up?
___ mother ___ both
___ father ___ other _____
- g) While growing up, which adult(s) resided in your home?
___ Mother only
___ Father only
___ Mother and father
___ Other: please explain _____
- h) Is this your first marriage ___yes ___ no
- i) If not your first marriage, how many times have you been married?

- j) Length of current marriage _____
- k) Have you ever attended individual or couples therapy ___ yes ___ no

Developed by Seyed Hadi Hosseini Yassin

APPENDIX F
INTERCORRELATIONS AMONG EARLY ATTACHMENT,
PARTNER ATTACHMENT, AND MARITAL
SATISFACTION VARIABLES

**Intercorrelations Among Early Attachment, Partner Attachment,
and Marital Satisfaction Variables**

	\bar{X}	Sd	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1- TRUST (IPPA)	39.9	9.3	1												
2- COMMUNICATION (IPPA)	32.3	8.9	.83	1											
3- ALIENATION (IPPA)	13.3	5.8	-.83	-.80	1										
4- AVOIDANCE (ECR-R)	32.7	13	-.27	-.30	.25	1									
5- ANXIETY (ECR-R)	35.6	14	-.31	-.28	.35	.59	1								
6- SEXUAL SATISFACTION	4.0	.77	.32	.32	-.29	-.63	-.55	1							
7- DYADIC CONSENSUS	63.1	6.7	.26	.28	-.19	-.49	-.31	.40	1						
8- DYADIC SATISFACTION	49.1	5.9	.29	.30	-.23	-.74	-.47	.48	.60	1					
9- DYADIC COHISION	22.5	4.0	.27	.28	-.22	-.43	-.15	.37	.48	.45	1				
10- AFFECTIONAL EXPRESSION	13.0	2.3	.24	.28	-.18	-.41	-.29	.58	.55	.49	.40	1			
11- POSITIVE COMMUNICATION	11.3	2.7	.19	.22	-.15	-.45	-.25	.37	.38	.52	.50	.31	1		
12- NEGATIVE COMMUNICATION	8.4	1.9	-.22	-.22	.25	.33	.36	-.21	-.42	-.49	-.12	-.25	-.28	1	
13- DEMAND	14.3	4.7	-.23	-.27	.34	.46	.45	-.41	-.31	-.50	-.17	-.35	-.38	.33	1

APPENDIX G
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER

**Human Subjects Review Board
Department of Psychology
California State University,
San Bernardino**

PI: Kamptner and Yassin
From: Michael R. Lewin
Project Title: Marriage Relationships Study
Project ID: H-14-WI-13
Date: 2/10/14

Disposition: Administrative Review

Your IRB proposal is approved. This approval is valid until 2/10/2015.

Good luck with your research!



Michael R. Lewin, Co-Chair
Psychology IRB Sub-Committee

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