COUPLE COMMUNICATION, ATTACHMENT STATUS, AND RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION

by

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Abstract

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Researchers have been working to understand how relationships begin, what makes them last, what the ingredients are for a satisfying relationship, and what predicts their dissolution. Adult attachment has been found to be associated with the formation, satisfaction, maintenance of, and communication within romantic relationships. The present study explores the associations among adult attachment, communication, and marital and premarital satisfaction. Most studies rely on an individual's self-report of his or her intimate relationship, while few base their conclusions on observations of relationship interaction. This study looks at specific, audiotaped, interactions between couples as well as self-reports of attachment style, communication style, and relationship satisfaction. There were a number of significant findings that indicate a relationship between couple communication, relationship satisfaction, and attachment status. In addition, there were replications of previous findings on couple communication, couple attachment, and relationship satisfaction. The majority of hypotheses were supported: relationship satisfaction was significantly linked to attachment status, positive aspects of communication were linked to women's attachment status, men's use of Support Validation was significantly related to their partners' attachment status, couple communication and relationship satisfaction were significantly related, and relationship satisfaction (specifically problem intensity) was significantly associated with couple communication. The present study evidences

a connection between couples' intrapsychic attachment representations (as measured by self-reports) and their interpersonal relationship communication behavior (as observed using the IDCS). It makes a major contribution to the couple attachment literature by linking the intrapsychic sphere of attachment to the interpersonal sphere of communication behavior.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

There has been a plethora of research that explores couple functioning. Researchers have been working to understand how relationships begin, what makes them last, what the ingredients are for a satisfying relationship, and what predicts their dissolution. While the divorce rate in the United States has slowly and steadily declined since its peak in the 1970s, (due largely to the later age at which most individuals are marrying for the first time) nearly 36% of all marriages in 2007 still ended in divorce (http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr56/nvsr56_21.htm). Research has also shown that a large proportion of couples that stay married are in unsatisfying relationships (Davila & Bradbury, 2001).

Divorce and marital unhappiness can lead to problems both within and outside the family. Research indicates that divorce and relationship discord can have a detrimental impact on the mental and physical health of both partners and their children (Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000; Gottman, 1994). Divorced and martially distressed individuals frequently experience depression, anxiety, and substance abuse which affects both them and their children. The children of divorced or martially distressed parents often experience behavioral, emotional (including depression and anxiety), academic, and social problems (Jouriles, Farris & McDonald, 1991; Repetti, Taylor, & Seeman, 2002). Depression has been found to be the most common result of relationship distress (Gotlib & McCabe, 1990). The risk of suicide and admission to mental hospitals increases significantly for men following divorce (Zeiss, Zeiss, & Johnson, 1980). Unhappily married women experience more depressive symptoms than either happily married or unmarried women (Aneshensel, 1986). In addition to depression, substance abuse disorders (especially alcoholism) have been associated with relationship conflict. Because of the negative effects of divorce and relationship discord on individuals and their families,

understanding how relationships function (or fail to do so) and preventing relationship discord and divorce is of utmost importance.

Relationship satisfaction has been found to drop and keep dropping (as opposed to the u-shaped curve once believed to reflect relationship satisfaction over the course of a relationship) (Belsky, Spanier & Rovine, 1983; Johns & Belsky, 2007). Forty years of research has examined what determines relationship satisfaction and stability in an effort to understand how to help couples increase both. Research has repeatedly found a strong association between problematic communication patterns and relationship distress (Gottman, 1994; Markman, Stanley, & Blumberg, 1994). Gottman, Coan, Carrer and Swanson (1998) found several specific patterns of communication to be predictive of relationship dissolution.

The marital literature points to two sets of variables that impact the nature of marriage: the interaction between partners and each partner's internal beliefs, attributions, and fantasies about the relationship (Breman et al., 1994).

Although communication patterns are important to relationship functioning, individual and other dyadic interactions also affect relationship satisfaction and communication. Adult attachment has been found to be associated with the formation, satisfaction, maintenance of, and communication within romantic relationships (Cozzarelli, Hoesktra, & Bylsma, 2000; Hazan & Shaver, 1994; Mikulincer, Florian, Cowan, & Cowan, 2002; Senchak & Leonard, 1992). Secure spouses have been found to engage in more adaptive support seeking, receipt, and provision from their partners (Davila & Kashey, 2009). Attachment security has also been linked with more relationship intimacy (Mayseless, Sharabany & Sagi, 1997), less relationship ambivalence (Volling, Notaro, & Larsen, 1998) and a more positive climate within the marriage (Diehl, Elnick, Bourbeau, & Labouvie-Vief, 1998).

The present study explores the associations among adult attachment, communication, and marital and premarital satisfaction. Most studies rely on an individual's self-report of his or her intimate relationship, while few base their conclusions on observations of relationship interaction. This study will look at specific, audiotaped, interactions between couples as well as self-reports of attachment style, communication style, and relationship satisfaction. By analyzing a couple's communication patterns, along with their attachment status, and reports of relationship quality, this study will attempt to more accurately understand the links among attachment, communication, and overall couple satisfaction and functioning. Specifically, this study will examine how an individual's attachment style affects or moderates the relationship between communication and relationship satisfaction. In doing so this study aims to highlight how intrapsychic attachment representations may affect interpersonal behavior such as communication with one's romantic partner.

The review of the literature begins with a basic outline of infant-parent attachment theory. Next, the review examines couples and attachment, and the findings of the research done in this area. The final section looks at couples' communication, a key interpersonal aspect of relationship satisfaction and disruption. The potential moderator effects of attachment on the link between communication and relationship satisfaction are then described and the specific hypotheses of the study are outlined.

Literature Review

Infant-Parent Attachment

John Bowlby formulated the basic tenets of attachment theory and thereby revolutionized our thinking regarding a child's tie to his or her primary caregiver and this tie's disruption through separation, loss, and deprivation (Bretherton, 1992). Bowlby characterized attachment as an innate system in which an infant experiences anxiety when there is a real or perceived threat to proximity maintenance with the caregiver (Bowlby, 1982). According to Bowlby, attachment behavior was designed specifically to reestablish proximity with the caregiver. During infancy and childhood, attachment is the child's preeminent system and its full activation precludes the activation of other systems. When the attachment system is activated (due to separation or unresponsiveness from the caregiver) exploration, learning, and psychological growth cannot occur. "Human beings of all ages," wrote Bowlby, "are found to be at their happiest and to be able to deploy their talents to best advantage when they are confident that standing behind them, there are one or more trusted persons who will come to their aid should difficulties arise" (Bowlby, 1973, p. 8). According to Bowlby (1982), the universal response to the disruption of attachment to the caregiver (separation) begins with protest, followed by despair and eventually, if proximity is not reestablished, emotional detachment. As the child grows they develop internal working models which dictate what can expected from the attachment figure (primary caregiver). These models are based on repeated interactions with the caregiver and the child adjusts his or her behavior accordingly. This in turn translates into the child's beliefs about themselves, specifically their global and social self-esteem ("Am I worthy of love and care?"), which follows through to adulthood.

Mary Ainsworth's development of the Strange Situation made it possible to test Bowlby's theories empirically and also helped to expand attachment theory. It was Ainsworth

who used the term “secure base” to describe the primary caregiver as someone to whom the child could safely attach and then explore the world. Ainsworth’s

Strange Situation is an experiment conducted with one-year-old children which measures a child’s attachment status. Based on an infant’s reaction to separation with his/her primary caregiver, Ainsworth was able to determine the child’s attachment status as secure, anxious/ambivalent or anxious/avoidant. Anxious/ambivalent infants were found to be surprisingly angry when returned to their mothers after a three minute (or shorter) separation. While they cried and wanted contact with the returning mother, they refused to cuddle or “sink in” when picked up by her (Bretherton, 1992). These infants showed their ambivalence by kicking or swiping at their mothers. Anxious/avoidant infants seem to snub or avoid their mothers upon reunion even though they often searched for her while she was gone. In recent years a fourth category of disorganized/disoriented attachment has been added to the existing attachment classifications. This classification is seen as the result of a caregiver who is extremely depressed, disturbed or abusive.

Ainsworth also found that secure attachment in the infant was significantly correlated with maternal sensitivity. Additionally, Ainsworth’s categories were subsequently found to be fairly stable over time and across development. Despite this stability, the presence of a new attachment figure and/or a corrective emotional experience (certain types of therapeutic interactions, for example) have at times been found to move a person’s attachment status from insecurity toward security.

Ainsworth’s student Mary Main and her colleagues developed the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) in order to classify attachment in adults. The AAI is a structured interview in which adults are asked open-ended questions about their attachment relationships in childhood and about the influence of these early experiences on their own development. Main established

two overarching categories of adult attachment based on the AAI: secure (representing 55% of the population) and insecure (representing 45% of the population). The insecure group is further divided into two groups: dismissing (making up 25% of insecure adults) and preoccupied (making up 20% of insecure adults).

Individuals rated as secure on the AAI are able to give a coherent account of early attachment experiences on the AAI. It is not the quality of these memories nor their actual content that determines the security of the individual's attachment, but the coherence with which the individual delivers the narrative. Preoccupied individuals are not able to relay their attachment memories in an organized, consistent way and, in general, they idealize their parents (Bretherton, 1992). The AAI responses of dismissing adults describe parents who are idealized on a general level, but influences of early attachment experiences on later development are often denied.

Ainsworth's child attachment classifications correlated with Main's AAI findings. In other words, secure infants are likely to grow into secure adults, while avoidant infants are likely to be dismissing adults and anxious/ambivalent infants are likely to become preoccupied adults. It has also been found that a parent's attachment status predicts (up to 80%) their child's attachment classification (van Ijzendoorn as cited in Sonkin, 2005). Interestingly, no gender differences in regard to attachment status were found in any of the literature: men and women are just as likely to be securely or insecurely attached as both infants and adults. The literature has shown a person's internal attachment representations measured by the AAI to be expressed through the parent's interpersonal behavior with their child during the Strange Situation.

Attachment in Couples

> Intimate relationships to other human beings are the hub around which a person's life revolves, not only when he is an infant or a toddler, but throughout his adolescence and his years of maturity as well, and on into old age.
>
> -Bowlby, 1980

Unlike an infant's attachment to his or her caregiver, adult attachment (like that between romantic partners) is reciprocal. For the most part, infant attachment involves the child seeking soothing, comfort, and regulation from the caregiver, while adult attachment is a bidirectional process in which both partners are expected to give and receive care. Adult attachment moves us from external, observable means of attachment (physical comfort and care are crucial to an infant's sense of security) to internal means of attachment (older children and adults derive comfort from the simple knowledge that they can contact their attachment figures if needed) (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). Attachment dimensions in adults have been found to be related to various aspects of an individuals' working model of self and other. Attachment is specifically related to self-esteem, expressiveness, instrumentality, trust in others, beliefs about human nature, and styles of loving (Collins & Read, 1990).

Adult attachment involves the integration of three behavioral systems: attachment, care giving, and sexual mating (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). Not only do anxiety and stress promote proximity seeking in the attachment system, but they also promote the desire for comfort and protection and the desire to engage in sexual activity.

Hazen and Shaver (1987) were the first theorists to conceptualize romantic love as an attachment process. They proposed that an individual's adult attachment classification (as either secure, dismissing or preoccupied) would color their experience of their romantic partner. Hazen and Shaver used attachment as an organizational framework for their research on close relationships and found that securely attached adults are more likely than those who are insecurely attached to view their lovers as trust-worthy friends. Preoccupied individuals were found to be more likely to fall in "love at first sight" and then long intensely for their partners' reciprocation. Dismissing individuals were found to be least likely to accept their partners' faults.

In 1994 Hazan and Shaver outlined their theory of close relationships. They aimed to understand what attracts us to our partners, how relationships are formed and how they develop, how they are maintained, what makes a relationship satisfying and enduring, how relationships end, and how people react to the breakup of a serious romantic partnership. They found that we are most likely to choose a mate who will confirm our attachment expectations, even if those expectations are negative. They point out that attachment tends to be stable over time although it is not immutable. The two things that have been found to move individuals toward a more secure attachment classification are a corrective emotional experience and a rise in one's capacity to think about and reflect upon one's own internal working models. A corrective emotional experience reexposes the individual to interpersonal situations which were negative and/or threatening in the past, in a new, safe context. This thereby allows for a revision of the individual's internal working model of such an experience (Alexander & French, 1946). Both a corrective emotional experience and a rise in reflective capacity are two things that often occur over the course of a successful psychotherapeutic relationship. They are also conditions at times created within a romantic partnership (depending on the quality of the relationship and how it is subjectively experienced). This supports the social psychological research that shows our actions follow from beliefs and interpersonal schemas in a way that encourages repeated confirmation (Synder & Swann, 1978 as cited in Hazan & Shaver, 1994). Our internal working models may also have self-confirming effects on our social behavior and our ability to process social information. Following from this idea, Hazan and Shaver hypothesized that insecure attachment, which colors our expectations and perceptions of our partners, may underline many dysfunctional behaviors that contribute to relationship dissatisfaction.

It is important to keep in mind that in the context of a romantic relationship, secure attachment involves dependence on one's partner (Johnson, 2004). The goal of secure

attachment is not for partners to be independent from one another, but to cultivate healthy dependency which complements autonomy. In fact, secure attachment is seen to promote self-confidence and autonomy. Mikulincer (1995) found that secure attachment is associated with a more coherent, articulated, and positive sense of self. Thus, a sense of security enables us to more fully differentiate ourselves.

Studies of both dating and married couples provide strong supportive evidence on the link between attachment security and relationship satisfaction. Mikulincer, Florian, Cowan and Cowan (2002) identify three main paths that they believe the association between attachment security and the formation and maintenance of stable and satisfying couple relationships. First, the alleviation of a partner's distress due to proximity to the attachment figure will lead to a positive orientation toward togetherness and foster intimacy and closeness. This in turn, will encourage involvement in long-lasting couple relationships. Second, the positive mental representations of self and others that securely attached individuals have will foster the development of a cognitive-affective framework for the management of conflict. Third, attachment security will facilitate the satisfaction of other basic needs (e.g., exploration, affiliation, caregiving) within the relationship, which, in turn, will further increase relationship satisfaction.

Senchak and Leonard (1992) found that couples with two self-reported secure partners reported higher relationship satisfaction and intimacy than mixed (self-report measures showed one spouse to be insecure and the other to be secure) and insecure couples (both partners' self-reports classify them as insecure). Interestingly, no significant differences were found between mixed and insecure couples, implying that the attachment insecurity of one spouse may have an overriding influence on the quality of the marriage.

Studies have also linked a sense of attachment security with more relationship intimacy (Mayseless, Sharabany & Sagi, 1997), less relationship ambivalence (Volling, Notaro, & Larsen, 1998) and a more positive climate within the marriage (Diehl, Elnick, Bourbeau, & Labouvie-Vief, 1998).

Collins and Read (1990) found evidence for partner matching based on attachment status as well as similarity between one's partner's attachment status and the attachment status of one's parents (particularly the opposite sex parent). Women who perceived their fathers as having been warm and supportive were more likely to date men who are comfortable with closeness and are able to depend on others. This finding does not address the reversal frame often seen clinically. In these cases individuals with stable, loving parents seek out partners who are less stable and less likely to be securely attached because they are seen as more "exciting." For their part, Collins and Read found that women partnered with men who were comfortable with closeness (one hallmark of secure attachment) were far more likely to be satisfied with their relationship than women who were paired with other men. This measure of comfort with closeness in the men was more predicative of the woman's satisfaction than the man's measure of dependence or anxiety. Women paired with these men also rated their communication as better than women paired with men they perceived as uncomfortable with closeness. Men who described their mothers as cold or inconsistent were more likely to date women who were anxious. It is possible that these men are compensating for their mothers' coldness and distance by choosing a partner who is sure to be close (if not clingy) due to her anxiety about abandonment. Women's fears about abandonment more consistently predicted men's evaluations of the relationship then did the women's scores on comfort with closeness or dependency. Men paired with women who feared abandonment were least satisfied with their relationships.

Several authors differentiate between what they call generalized and specific attachment representations. The literature defines attachment representations developed during childhood as generalized while those developed with romantic partners are seen as specific. A person's specific attachment representations can be distinct from their generalized attachment representations in that specific representations are affected by context and are more likely to change over time (Davila, Karney & Bradbury, 1999). It should be kept in mind that one's generalized representations could be a reconstruction of childhood experiences based on present (adult) specific attachment experiences. It is important to call into question the directionality or bidirectionality of such representations.

Cozzarelli, Hoesktra, and Bylsma (2000) found a significant positive association between reports of secure attachment and relationship satisfaction within a current specific dating relationship. But, reports of global attachment style in close relationships were not significantly related to reported satisfaction within a specific dating relationship. This same pattern has been found in a study of married couples conducted by Cowan and Cowan (2001). These findings suggest that relationship-specific secure attachment better explains satisfaction within couple relationships than global measures of attachment security.

Treboux et al. (2004) conducted two studies to look at how an individual's status on the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) and their status on the Current Relationship Interview (CRI) would effect their relationship perceptions and their functioning within a relationship. The CRI was developed to assess specific representations of adult attachment that develop in the course of a relationship with a particular partner. The interview and scoring system parallel those of the AAI, and coherent discourse with respect to adult attachment relationships reflects the current functioning of the secure base within the particular relationship. Adults classified as secure on the CRI viewed their partnerships as secure bases and spoke to the idea of mutual support and

development. In other words, they see the core function of the relationship as to help each partner develop both as individuals and as a couple in times of stress and under ordinary circumstances. Individuals assessed as insecure on the CRI were incoherent in their discourse about their current relationship and placed strong emphasis on material goals, leisure activities, or closeness at the expense of individual development. At the same time, these individuals minimized discord, the need for support, or the value of shared experience and growth. There are multiple confounds that might also explain these findings. These include an individual's satisfaction with other areas of their life such as their work, their religious and/or spiritual beliefs, and their overall level of neuroticism.

Treboux et al. explain the incoherence found on the CRI in two ways. First, individuals who are insecure in regard to their current relationship may have a weak understanding of attachment overall. This may leave them unable to comprehend, appreciate, and integrate attachment experiences within the relationship regardless of their partner's behavior. Or, they may have a good overall understanding of attachment but may not have yet integrated attachment experiences within this particular relationship due to either confusion regarding their partner's behavior or the developmental stage of the relationship.

The researchers found no association between positive outcome and security for either "generalized" (AAI) or "specific" (CRI) attachment representations. Instead, they found that relationships functioned best when the relationship specific representation was consistent with or built upon a coherent generalized representation. In other words, individuals who were classified as secure on both the AAI and the CRI were most satisfied with their relationships, most confident with themselves, and reported the lowest levels of relationship conflict. In addition, negative events had little effect on these individuals' positive feeling about their relationship or their secure base behavior. This leads to the conclusion that a secure generalized attachment

representation is not sufficient to develop and maintain good relationship functioning. Instead, it is the synchronicity between the generalized and specific attachment representations at any given time which best predicts relationship functioning. But, a secure generalized attachment representation did make individuals slightly more likely to have a secure conceptualization of their current relationship.

Crowell and Treboux (2001) assessed 146 premarital dating couples with the AAI and with the CRI. Five years later, they found that the AAI did not predict marital breakup, but couples in which both partners were categorized as insecure on the CRI were more likely to have separated or divorced.

For their part, individuals classified as insecure on the AAI reported less relationship distress than expected. This is most likely because a certain level of distress feels familiar to insecure individuals and they do not register relationship conflict as emotionally salient. Not surprisingly, Treboux et al. found that individuals with an insecure AAI representation but a secure CRI representation functioned well but were on shaky ground- they tended to do well during low-stress times but functioned less well during stressful times. These individuals are most likely to remain in poorly functioning relationships until something goes drastically wrong. Individuals with a secure AAI representation and an insecure CRI representation were the most likely to get divorced. Because they have a secure generalized representation of attachment they are the most likely to be distressed by insecurity within their relationship. These individuals often get a 'warning sign' early on in the relationship that something is not right and they typically exit the relationship quickly (within the first six years of marriage). These findings could point to the fact that generalized attachment representations (as measured by the AAI) and specific attachment representations (as measured by the CRI), are two very different constructs

and therefore have different implications for an individual's functioning in different contexts at different points in time.

Overall, the findings in multiple studies on couples and attachment have shown that secure individuals, as compared to insecure individuals, are more likely to be involved in long-term couple relationships, have more stable couple relationships, and suffer from few difficulties and/or disruptions in the relationship (Mikulincer, Florian, Cowan & Cowan, 2002). It is not clear whether attachment patterns can be described as antecedent to marriage quality, or as playing a causal role in partners' ability to establish a positive couple relationship.

The point during the relationships' lifecycle at which these studies were conducted is significant. Most studies of marital satisfaction use newly married couples (often within the first four to six years of marriage) and it has been found that marital satisfaction tends to decrease steadily over time (Karney & Bradbury, 1997). More research examining couple functioning at various stages of their relationships is necessary.

Bowlby's theory of attachment accounted for the fact that an individual's attachment status may be the result of both earlier and current interpersonal circumstances. Davila, Karney and Bradbury (1999) found that a person's attachment representations can change over the course of their marriage. These researchers found that, on average, spouses became less anxious about abandonment and more secure as their marriages progressed. Specifically, they become more comfortable depending on others and less anxious about abandonment. It should be noted that this study was conducted on newlyweds in the first few years of marriage and it is not clear whether this increase in attachment security is a reflection of a relationship process or a more global maturation process. It is also notable that although, on average, attachment representations showed a trend toward security over the early years of marriage, there were significant individual fluctuations over time. These fluctuations were largely reflective of how

satisfied each individual was with their marriage. Clearly, relationship satisfaction and attachment security are bidirectional processes.

Treboux et al. (2004) conceptualized adult attachment as a construct which functions with dyadic compatibility. Attachment viewed as a construct differs from attachment seen as a trait in that it is not necessarily stable and can be affected by current and future relational experiences. The dyadic compatibility approach tries to account for the idea of health-promoting assortive mating (that two secure partners will have a well-functioning relationship, while one insecure partner paired with a secure mate will benefit from the secure partner's modeling and/or corrective experiences).

Davila and Kashy (2009) found that secure spouses evidenced more adaptive support seeking, receipt, and provision. Secure individuals (those highly comfortable with intimacy and evidencing little anxiety about abandonment) reported that their partners sought more support and that they themselves provided more support to them. This suggests that secure attachment representations allow individuals to perceive their partner's needs, respond to them, and successfully seek and receive support. Davila and Kashy also found that when people experience their partners as a secure base, their own security increases from day to day. This reflects a positive cycle of behaviors where an individual feels more comfortable with intimacy when they seek out more support, when they perceive receiving more support, and when they report greater felt support. Thus, people both create more supportive environments (for themselves and their partners) by virtue of their feelings of relationship security, and respond to these supportive environments with greater relationship security. In contrast, less comfort with intimacy (more avoidance) was associated with less support seeking. Avoidance also increased when people reported less support received and less felt support. It was also found that people who are not anxious about abandonment are able to be sensitive caregivers to their partners. One

might assume that people who are anxious about abandonment are too busy focusing on their own safety to attend to their partner's needs.

Just as security can create a positive cycle, insecurity can create a downward spiral for couples. Having an anxious partner may be stressful and require added support provision, which may not be well received by the anxious partner. This can then increase the support provider's own fears that their caregiving is inadequate. In this way the anxiety of one partner can act as a "contagion" in the relationship- creating anxiety in an otherwise secure partner. In addition, anxious people are perceived by their partners as being needy and this perception has been found to increase the non-anxious partner's own fears of abandonment ("What if I can't provide enough for my partner? They'll be sure to leave me").

Davila and Bradbury (2001) looked at stable but unhappy marriages and found that partners with insecure attachment, specifically those preoccupied with abandonment and love worthiness, are most likely to remain in an unhappy marriage. The researchers controlled for attitudes about divorce, neuroticism, and the presence of a child, and this finding was still strongly supported. Importantly, unhappy but stable relationships as well as unhappy and unstable relationships were detected early in the marriage. Spouses in stable unhappy marriages also showed lower levels of initial marital satisfaction than the other groups. These spouses also showed the highest level of depressive symptoms early in their marriage and over the course of the marriage. This study did not test whether attachment insecurity was present before the marriage, therefore it is unclear whether spouses' anxieties were longstanding personality traits or beliefs and feelings that emerged in the context of an unsatisfying premarital or marital relationship.

Simpson, Rholes and Phillips (1996) studied how individuals with different attachment styles resolve problems with their partners. They found that preoccupied individuals tend to

perceive their partner in relatively less positive terms and display more anger and hostility after discussing a major problem with their partner. As rated by an outside observer, preoccupied women were found to display significantly more stress and anxiety than all other attachment groups, while dismissing men were rated as less warm and supportive.

Simpson et al.'s findings led them to hypothesize that individuals in the two subtypes of insecure attachment (preoccupied and dismissing) have distinct internal working models of themselves and significant others. They proposed that preoccupied people have a negative view of the self and tend to be guarded, uncertain, and apprehensive of their significant other. This negative self-concept contains themes of being emotionally deprived and unable to obtain support or deep intimacy from an attachment figure. Preoccupied individuals not only fear abandonment by attachment figures but they are not confident that they can rely on others for comfort and support during stressful times. Their impulse to seek proximity is easily triggered and is tinged with the anxiety that their needs will not be met. Mikulincer, Floria, Cowan and Cowan (2002) point out that for preoccupied people, security seems to be central to their sense of trust. Preoccupied women tended to initiate, guide, and control the conversations and were more direct and confrontational with their husbands than other women. The preoccupied men typically withdrew, letting their wives take responsibility for the maintenance and well-being of the relationship. The preoccupied individuals in this study had conversations with their partners that were rated lower in quality than the other attachment groups

In contrast, Simpson et al. found that dismissing individuals seem to organize their sense of trust around concerns about control. For their part, dismissing individuals were found to have a negative and cynical view of their partner and tended to feel uncomfortable with emotional closeness and psychological intimacy. They held the belief that their partner could not alleviate their stress and therefore tended to become extremely self-reliant when distress arose. During

discussions with their partners, dismissing individuals tried to minimize their involvement in the interactions. This was accomplished by underestimating the significance of the topic, ignoring the partner's feelings, or downplaying the potential threat the problem posed to the relationship.

In sum, one of the most important significant contributions of the Simpson et al. study is that our internal working models, established in childhood, suppress or dampen our attachment-related thoughts, feelings, and behaviors as adults in situations where the attachment system is activated.

Kobak, Ruckdescel and Hazan (1994) hypothesized that insecurely attached individuals may be more likely to anticipate negative responses from their partners and may have difficulty managing negative emotion in marital interactions because of their early experiences of rejecting, inconsistent, or negative care giving.

Paley, Cox, Burchinal and Payne (1999) looked specifically at how an individual's attachment status affected their ability to regulate affect in the context of their romantic relationship. Interestingly, they found no association between a husband's attachment status and his ability to regulate his affect during marital interactions. In contrast, secure wives were better able to regulate their affect and expressed more positive affect when communicating with their husbands than their preoccupied and dismissing counterparts. These secure wives also showed less withdrawal than dismissing wives. The dismissing and preoccupied wives were not found to differ significantly from one another in regard to their ability to regulate affect within their marriages although preoccupied wives did express more positive emotion than dismissing wives. This supports the hypothesis that preoccupied individuals are primed by early attachment experiences to expect that expressing positive emotion is not an effective way of maintaining closeness with an attachment figure. On the other hand, it is possible that their perceptions of their partner's behavior led to less positive emotions and therefore less emotional expressiveness.

While no association was found between a husband's marital behavior and his wife's attachment stance, there was an association in the opposite direction (a wife's behavior was seen as a function of her husband's attachment stance).

Wives of secure husbands were more positive than wives of dismissing husbands and less negative than wives of dismissing husbands. Paley et al. explain the finding that wives' behavior relates to their partners' attachment stance while husbands' behavior does not by citing Collins and Read's (1990) work that shows some evidence that women may find a partner's discomfort with closeness most distressing, while men are more bothered by a partner's anxiety or fear of abandonment. They also pointed out that their study included only a small number of men with preoccupied wives. Importantly, Paley et al. found that both husbands' and wives' marital perceptions had more to do with their own attachment stance than their partners' stance.

When looking at the results of the above mentioned studies it is important to keep in mind that there are intrapersonal factors (such as a tendency toward depression and/or neuroticism) that affect feelings of security or insecurity in addition to marital interactions. Most studies examine interpersonal interactions such as communication behavior and safe base behavior without taking into account these intrapersonal personality factors. Karney and Bradbury (1997) found that higher levels of neuroticism (one's likelihood to look at the world and other people through a negative lens) were associated with lower initial levels of marital satisfaction. Interestingly, they found no association between neuroticism and the rate of change in marital satisfaction (the rate of general decline in marital satisfaction was not affected by either partner's level of neuroticism). In contrast, a spouse's interaction behaviors during a problem-solving discussion (how well they communicated and how they approached problems) were associated with the rate of change over the course of the relationship. They also found that

it was the rate of change (decline) in a spouse's level of satisfaction that was more predictive of divorce than the level of satisfaction at the start of the marriage.

A 2003 study Davila, Karney and Bradbury found that there is a bi-directional, within-subjects association between marital satisfaction and depressive symptoms. Like Karney and Bradbury's 1997 study, Davila et al. found that marital satisfaction decreases over time. But, depressive symptoms showed no change over time. They found that neuroticism is associated with greater risk for depressive symptoms in response to marital distress. However, neuroticism does not appear to then also increase the risk that depressive symptoms will lead to increases in marital distress. Associations between depressive symptoms and marital satisfaction were bidirectional. Depressive symptoms were as likely to predict changes in marital satisfaction as marital satisfaction was to predict changes in depressive symptoms. These findings suggest that couples become caught in a vicious cycle of depressive symptoms and marital distress from which it may be difficult to exit. Specifically, spouses high in neuroticism evidence greater depressive symptoms in response to lower marital satisfaction. Interestingly, although we might assume that depressed individuals will generalize their negative worldview to their marriage, this was not found to be the case. Instead, husbands high in neuroticism were less likely to allow their depressive symptoms influence their marital satisfaction. This may be explained by prior research that has shown that husbands with depressive symptoms often have wives who try to protect them, thereby increasing the husband's feeling of being cared for and thus increasing his marital satisfaction (Pasch, Bardbury & Davila, 1997). Overall the findings of the Davila et al. study point to the importance of considering emotion regulation factors other than attachment representations in our models of couple functioning.

Couple Communication

Various researchers have tried to examine the way that couples communicate in order to predict both relationship satisfaction and overall relationship longevity. Gottman, Markman and Notarius (1977) taped couples arguing and coded the content of the arguments as well as the non-verbal reception and delivery of the content. They found that positive content codes differentiated non-distressed couples from distressed couples but that positive non-verbal codes did not. Not surprisingly, distressed couples were found to have more negative and neutral codes than non-distressed couples. These distressed couples were also more likely to mind-read (to assume that they knew what their partner was thinking or feeling), and they expressed more negative affect. Partners in these couples were also more likely to summarize their own feelings rather than those of their partner.

Cutrona, Shaffer, Wesner and Gardner (2007) predicted that a partner whose behavior matched the support goals of their significant other would lead them to perceive their partner as sensitive. They found that this sort of matching was only important following a distressed partner's disclosure of emotion, but it was not important when a request for information alone was made by the distressed partner (Cutrona et al., 2007). This points to the importance of the type of communication given (not simply weather it is positive or negative) in addition to partner attunement. What tends to matter to the receiver is whether or not their partner can give them what they are asking for, even when it is not necessarily what the partner deems most important. For example, if a wife complains of a situation at work, she may be looking for empathy while her husband may feel that practical advice is what she needs most. The well-attuned partner is able to set aside their own agenda and give their partner the desired response.

Many researchers have tried to predict divorce based on couples' interactions. Gottman, Coan, Carrer and Swanson (1998) found several patterns of communication to be predictive of

marital dissolution. Contrary to popular clinical practice at the time and to the researchers' own beliefs before conducting their study, active listening alone was not found to be helpful in conflict resolution. In addition, anger in and of itself was not found to be a dangerous emotion to couples. Instead what Gottman termed "the four horseman" (contempt, criticism, stonewalling, and defensiveness) were found to be most destructive to a relationship and the strongest predictors of divorce. This model was found by Gottman et al. to be the strongest empirical discriminator between happy and unhappy couples. The negative affect reciprocity model describes a dynamic where one partner expresses negative affect (anger, for example) and then the other partner either matches this affect in kind or escalates to an even more negative affect. In couples where the husbands were physically violent, it was found that their wives often used a negative start-up and the husbands then escalated this negatively, a cycle that often ended in physical violence. Therefore, a couples' ability to deescalate negativity is crucial to relationship satisfaction and functioning.

Gottman et al. also found that partners who engage in positive affect (agreement, approval, humor, laughter, smiling, and positive physical contact) are more likely to rate themselves as non-distressed. The researchers then conceptualized a "balance model" where couples reach a set-point balance between positive and negative affect. If this balance skews toward negative affect, the couple is most likely to self-rate as distressed, whereas those who skew toward positive affect are more likely to self-rate as non-distressed. Finally, Gottman et al. hypothesized that positive affect and the ability to deescalate were crucial to marital satisfaction because of their link to the couples' ability to physiologically sooth themselves and their partners. Because men have been found to be more reactive to stress than women, it is hypothesized that men tend to withdraw and avoid conflict in order to avoid increased stress. Therefore, couples containing men who are better physiological self-soothers, where partners are

skilled at deescalating, and the balance of positive to negative affect is high, are more likely to experience higher satisfaction and relationship longevity.

Fitzpatrick, Fey, Segrin, and Schiff (1993) found that self-reports of secure attachment style were related to higher reported levels of positive mutual patterns of communication and lower levels of demanding and withdrawal patterns. Guerero (1996) videotaped dating couples while they discussed important problems and found that securely attached individuals scored higher than avoidant individuals in measures of trust-receptivity, gaze, facial pleasantness, vocal pleasantness, general interest in the conversation, and attentiveness to their partner's speech. Tucker and Anders (1998) conducted a similar study and found that securely attached individuals tended to laugh more, touch their partners more, gaze more, and smile more during interactions than insecure partners. Secure individuals were also significantly more non-verbally expressive than insecure individuals. Couples where both partners were securely attached were rated as experiencing more enjoyment during the conversations than couples in which at least one partner was insecurely attached. In addition, Feeney (1994) found that secure spouses were more accurate than insecure spouses in the non-verbal communication of neutral and negative messages.

Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy (EFCT), originally developed by Susan Johnson, is one of the major interventions that aims to combine attachment theory with a couples' pattern of communication in order to promote better relationship functioning. EFCT sees negative interaction cycles between couples as a major source of relationship dissatisfaction (Goldman & Greenberg, 2006). EFCT emphasizes the importance of proximity, availability, and responsiveness as attachment concerns in addition to the development of each partner's autonomy within the partnership. This method views conflict as arising from failures to resolve individual struggles for identity and security.

The primary way in which EFCT practitioners work with couples is to encourage them to reveal "softer" core emotions (such as shame and fear) that underlie "harder" secondary or defensive emotions (such as rage and anger). Couples in distress are seen as stuck using repetitive negative emotions (known as "maladaptive primary emotions") that resist change because they are founded on unresolved past interactions (derived from either their personal history or current the relationship) rather than present circumstances. The goal is often to first "cool down" the "hot" emotions that at least one half of the couple usually presents with, and to create a safe space where partners can access their own vulnerability and fear which can then be expressed to their partner (Williams, 2009). This work is all done within the framework of attachment. Ruptures in the relationship (various emotional betrayals: from disappointing one's partner down to having an affair) are seen as attachment injuries in need of healing. Each partner's behavior is seen in light of his or her attachment status and is therefore presented as reasonable given the person's past experience, but maladaptive for the present circumstances.

Purpose and Rationale

As stated above, the research on attachment in close relationships indicates a strong relationship between intrapersonal (attachment style), and interpersonal (communication) couple variables and relationship satisfaction. Numerous studies have found a strong association between secure attachment and greater marital satisfaction. Given the correlations between (1) adult attachment and relationship satisfaction and (2) adult attachment and relationship communication, the present study aims to replicate and expand upon these findings in a sample of premarital and recently married couples by looking at attachment and relationship satisfaction self-reports as well as audiotaped discussions between partners. Up to this point, few studies clearly demonstrate the interpersonal expression of intrapsychic attachment representations in the context of a romantic partnership. This study will attempt to do so and thereby contribute to the

attachment and couple literature by examining the moderating influence of attachment on the link between communication and relationship satisfaction. The following hypotheses will be examined:

Conceptual Hypotheses

1) Couples in which both partners are securely attached are expected to demonstrate higher relationship satisfaction, rated by both partners, as compared to couples in which one or both partners have an insecure attachment style.
2) Couples in which both partners are securely attached are expected to demonstrate more effective and satisfying communication as compared to couples in which one or both partners have an insecure attachment style.
3) Couples in which both partners demonstrate more effective and satisfying communication are expected to demonstrate higher relationship satisfaction, rated by both partners, as compared to couples in which one or both partners demonstrate less effective and satisfying communication.
4) Securely attached individuals are expected to self-report their relationship communication as effective, satisfying, and low in conflict, as compared to couples in which one or both partners have an insecure attachment style.

CHAPTER 2

Methods

Subjects

This study was conducted as part of a larger investigation at the NYU Medical Center on the impact of the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP) on the relationship between couple communication and other aspects of functioning, and partners' physical health. As it was a prevention study, it recruited only nondistressed engaged and newly married couples. Data were collected between 1995 and 2001. One hundred and seven couples were recruited for the PREP study through advertisements in a free local newspaper. The study was advertised as an investigation of couple communication patterns. The men in the sample ranged from 19 to 51 years, with a mean age of 29.61 years. The women in the sample ranged from 18 to 52 years, with a mean age of 27.72 years. The average income was $25,000 to $30,000 for men and $20,000 to $25,000 for women. The average level of education reached by the subjects was 15.55 years for men and 16.06 years for women. The average length of time that these couple partners had known one another was 3.64 years, with a range from 6 months to 14 years. Thirty-four point two percent of the subjects were married, 35.1% were engaged to be married, and 30.7% were exclusively dating and monogamous. 59.6% of the sample was Caucasian, 17.5% was African-American, 11.4% was Hispanic, 3.5% was Asian, and 7.1% were of other ethnicities.

Procedure

Couples were eligible for this study if they were engaged, planning marriage, or married for less than one and a half years, had no prior history of diagnosed psychiatric illness requiring medication, were not in couple treatment, had no acute or chronic medical conditions, and had completed at least 12 years of formal education (completion of high school). Partners also had to rate their relationship satisfaction level as "happy" (a score of at least 4 on a 7-point scale) and describe their relationship distress as no more than mild on a scale ranging from none to severe (none, mild, moderate, severe). These assessments were made through a telephone-screening interview. Couples in which one or both partners did to meet these screening criteria were not included in the study. The inclusion criteria for this study were quite stringent as PREP was designed as a relationship distress prevention study, focused on teaching specific communication skills in order to enhance relationship satisfaction and prevent relationship discord. As Markman et al. (1988) have indicated, once dysfunctional interaction patterns form, they are difficult to modify; they have found that couples are more likely to benefit from communication skills training before severe relationship conflict develops. Therefore, couples in this study were required to be relatively satisfied with their relationships.

If they passed the phone screening, subjects came to the New York University Child Study Center, filled out a packet of questionnaires that included demographic questionnaires, measures of relationship satisfaction, stress and coping, commitment, and attachment. Prior to completing the questionnaires (except one that identified their most conflictual issues), subjects were asked to have a 20-minute audiotaped discussion with their partner on a topic that both members of the couple rated as a source of conflict in their relationship. If this detailed assessment confirmed that the couple was in the nondistressed range of relationship satisfaction, they were randomly assigned to the PREP or a no-treatment control group. PREP couples

completed a fifteen-hour workshop conducted over two weeks that taught communication, problem-solving, and other conflict management and relationship-enhancement skills (Fraenkel, P. & Markman, H.J., 2002; Markman, H.J., Stanley, S., & Blumberg, S.L., 2001). After this workshop both PREP and Control couples returned for a second assessment of relationship satisfaction, attachment style, stress and coping style, and communication patterns. The data used in the present study were restricted to data collected at Time 1 in order to avoid the contaminating effects of having gone thorough the PREP workshop.

Measures

Locke-Wallace Pre-Marital Adjustment Test (MAT)

Relationship satisfaction was assessed using the Locke-Wallace Pre-Marital Adjustment Test (a adaptation of the MAT that allows it to be used in studies of pre-marital couples; Locke & Wallace, 1959; see Appendix A). For this study of both marital and pre-marital couples, the MAT was rephrased so as to assess relationship satisfaction rather than marital satisfaction. In all cases, the word "marriage" or "marital" was replaced with the word "relationship." The MAT is among the most widely used marital and pre-marital satisfaction assessment instruments (Sabatelli, 1988). The MAT was developed on a sample of 118 men and 118 women to assess spouse's happiness with their partner and marriage in general. It also assesses the degree of agreement on relationship issues, companionship, and conflict resolution. The MAT is a 15-item self-report measure of relationship satisfaction assessing areas of relationship functioning such as disagreement, perceived communication quality, leisure time activities, and satisfaction or regrets about having married one's spouse. The MAT has demonstrated high internal consistency and reliability (alpha coefficient = 0.90) and excellent criterion validity.

The concurrent validity of the MAT is supported by strong correlation with other leading measures of relationship satisfaction, such as the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (.86), ENRICH (.73),

and the Marital Satisfaction Scale (.78) (Fowers, 1990; Sabatelli, 1988). The unavailability of predicative validity data for the MAT is documented in Sabatelli's (1988) review article which states that evidence for the predictive validity of many of the more commonly used relationship measures is relatively rare. This is most likely because these sorts of measures aim to predict certain variables and are not expected to be predicative of themselves. For example, the MAT aims to predict relationship satisfaction but is not trying to measure what variables satisfaction might predict.

Relationship Agendas Protocol (RAP)

The first scale completed by subjects was the Relationship Agendas Protocol (see Appendix B), a measure that asks individuals to consider a list of issues that couples face in their relationships. Each member of the couple is then asked to rate how much of a problem each area is in the relationship, from 0 (not at all a problem) to 100 (a severe problem). The problem areas include: money, sex, in-laws, jealously, schedules, communication, recreation, religion, friends, pace difference between partners, time together versus time apart, alcohol and drugs, children, differences in time perspective, career, managing time, and other. The couple comes together and agrees on the two top areas of conflict in their relationship. The couple then engages in a 20-minute audiotaped conversation on one of these topics and is instructed to attempt to solve this common source of conflict. For the purposes of the intervention study, couples were randomly assigned to discuss either their top-ranked or second-ranked problem area at Time 1 (pre-intervention) and vice versa at Time 2/post-intervention. Previous studies (Gottman, Notarius, Markman, et al., 1976) have demonstrated adequate levels of reliability in regard to the RAP.

Interaction Dimensions Coding System (IDCS)

The IDCS (Julien et al., 1997; see Appendix C) was used to code communication. The codes include positive and negative dimensions. The positive dimensions include: 1)

communication skills, 2) support-validation, 3) problem-solving, and 4) positive affect. The negative dimensions include: 1) conflict, 2) withdrawal, and 3) negative affect.

The IDCS is a "global" coding system, meaning that sections of the audiotapes were coded rather than each communication behavior. The 20-minute interaction was divided into thirds by carefully timing the entire interaction and dividing the total amount by three. The coder then listened to the first third of the interaction and rated each partner's behavior relative to the other on each of the first eight dimensions (communication skills, support-validation, etc.) on a nine-point scale ranging from low (1-3) to moderate (4-6) to high (7-9). The second and third segments were then coded in the same way. After having rated each third of the interaction separately, an overall rating was given for each person on each of the eight dimensions. This global rating represents a "summing over" of the three ratings made for each dimension so as to reach one rating that best describes the overall intensity of each dimension for each person. The factors taken into account in making the ratings included the number of different behaviors observed, the frequency, intensity, and duration of the behaviors, and how the individual compared to other individuals in the study.

The coders were undergraduate and Masters-level psychology students at New York University. These coders were informed that they were part of a research team for a study on couple communication, but were kept blind to the details of the study. The coders received at least 50 hours of training on the use of the IDCS. Training included lectures on the various dimensions of the IDCS and discussions about scoring. For the purposes of establishing inter-rater reliability, 10% of the couple discussions were coded independently by two coders who were randomly assigned to one another. The inter-rater reliability in this study was $r = .729$

Adult Attachment Scale (AAS)

The Adult Attachment Scale (AAS) (Collins & Read, 1990, see Appendix D) was one of two measures of adult attachment style used in this study. This 21-item, 5-point Likert scale self report was developed on 406 undergraduates at the University of Southern California and based on the categorical descriptions of the three attachment styles in Hazan and Shaver's (1987) measure. A series of factor analyses of the 21 items yielded three factors: Factor 1 (Depend) taps the extent to which one can trust and depend on others when needed, Factor 2 (Anxiety) contains items concerning anxiety in relationships, Factor 3 (Close) draws upon feelings of comfort with closeness and intimacy. According to Collins and Read (1990), varying degrees of these three dimensions underlie the differences among the Hazan and Shaver (1987) attachment styles. In general, the Depend and Close subscales were moderately correlated (.41) suggesting that feeling close and being able to depend and trust another are related. Weaker relationships were noted between Anxiety and Close (-.08) and Anxiety and Depend (-.24).

The internal consistency and test-retest reliabilities of the AAS were conducted on a subset of the original sample (N = 101). The internal consistency reliability coefficients for the three subscales were .75 (Depend), .72 (Anxiety), .69 (Close). Test-retest reliability proved fairly stable after 2 months, yielding correlations of .71 (Depend), .52 (Anxiety), and .68 (Close). Discriminant validity was examined in terms of the ability of the AAS to predict attachment styles based on Hazan and Shaver's (1987) measure. Simpson (1990) showed that Close and Depend scores discriminated secure and anxious from avoidant attachment styles (6, N=118)73.74, $p<.001$) and Anxiety scores discriminated the secure and avoidant from anxious attachment styles (2, N=118)= 24.82, $p<.001$). Concurrent validity has been supported by correlations between the AAS and measures of working models of self and were moderate for the most part, e.g. The Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale and Anxiety (-.29); The Texas Social

Behavior Inventory and Close (.29), Depend (.22) and Anxiety (-.30). The predictive validity of the AAS has not been established.

Attachment Style Inventory (ASI)

Attachment was also measured using Sperling & Berman's (1991) Attachment Style Inventory (ASI) (see Appendix E). The ASI consists of four brief self-rated paragraphs describing the "dependent" (secure)[1], "hostile," "avoidant," and "resistant/ambivalent" styles and an item assessing the security-insecurity of the relationship in question. The style descriptions follow:

> Avoidant: *"I tend to avoid closeness with my partner because close involvement can lead to disappointment, conflict, or hurt. I prefer to keep more to myself."*
>
> Dependent: *"I tend to be very closely attached to my partner. I value dependence with others and feel almost compelled to have very strong closeness."*
>
> Hostile: *"I tend to often be angry with my partner. I frequently feel distrustful or hostile toward him or her."*
>
> Resistant/Ambivalent: *"I tend to feel both angry and dependent toward my partner, or alternate between the two. There is always a struggle between my desire to be very close and my discomfort or anger at closeness."*

The subject then rates the degree of agreement with each description on a 9-point Likert scale, and also indicates which of the four styles best characterizes his or her attachment style in that relationship. The subject is then asked to rate on a 1-9 (from insecure to secure) Likert scale which number best describes them. 1 is described as "I do worry about my relationship. I am often anxious about it. I am often unsure how it will work out." Nine is described as "I do not worry about my relationship. I am not very anxious about it. I am confident it will work out."

There is only one item per scale on the ASI and thus no measure of internal consistency (Sperling, Foelsch, & Grace, 1995). Concurrent validity has been shown through associations

[1] As discussed on pp. 6-7 of the literature review, secure attachment requires a sense of healthy dependence.

with other measures of adult attachment styles: ASI Avoidant and AAS Avoid (r (160)= .30, p<.01); ASI Avoidant and Attachment Style Measure, ASM (Simpson, 1990) Avoidant scale (r (16)= .31, p<.01); ASI Dependent and AAS Close (r (160)= .55, p<.01); ASI Dependent and ASM Ambivalent (r (160)= .43, p<.001); ASI Security and AAS Avoid (r (160)= .30<.01) (Sperling, et al., 1995). Studies have not been conducted to determine the ASI's predictive validity.

Given the generally low prevalence of insecure attachment (Ainsworth et al., 1979) and the recent finding that the different insecure groups may not be as well-differentiated from each other as attachment theory suggests (Feeney, Noller & Hanrahan, 1994), endorsements of avoidant, anxious/ambivalent and hostile categories will be pooled together as an insecure attachment style category. An endorsement of the dependent category will serve as an indication of a secure attachment style, consistent with Berman et al. (1994).

Operational Hypotheses

1) Couple attachment will be associated with relationship adjustment such that:
    a. Couples in which both partners are securely attached (as measured by the ASI "best describes me" question) are expected to rate higher on the MAT as compared to couples in which one or both partners have an insecure attachment style.
    b. Couples' ratings of security (as measured by the sum of the male and female's continuous scale ASI secure item) will be negatively associated with the couple's combined RAP ratings.
2) Couple attachment security will be associated with couple communication such that:

    Couples in which both partners are securely attached (as measured above using both categorical (a) and continuous (b) measures of couple security) are expected to have

higher IDCS scores on the each of the positive communication dimensions (communication skills, support-validation, problem-solving, and positive affect) and lower IDCS scores on each of the negative communication dimensions (conflict, withdrawal, and negative affect). In contrast, couples in which one or both partners are rated as insecure on the ASI, are expected to have lower IDCS scores on the negative communication dimensions and higher IDCS scores on the positive communication dimensions.

3) Couple communication will be associated with relationship adjustment such that MAT combined scores will be positively associated with positive IDCS communication dimensions and negatively associated with negative IDCS dimensions.
4) Couple communication will be associated with ratings of relationship problems such that positive IDCS communication dimensions will be negatively associated with the couple's combined RAP ratings and negative IDCS dimensions will be positively associated with RAP ratings.

CHAPTER 3

Results

Summary Statistics

Relationship Adjustment Measures

Table 1 reports RAP problem frequency scores, RAP problem intensity and MAT scores. For the RAP, there are three scores of interest: the number of problems endorsed (ranging from 0 to 15), and the intensity of problems for men and women (with scores ranging from 0 to 57), and the combined couple problem intensity score. Men and women reported a similar mean number of problems, (an average of 6.90 problems for men and 6.74 problems for women). Men reported a mean problem intensity of 18.25 on the RAP while women reported a mean problem intensity of 17.96. A t-test indicated that this was not a statistically significant difference. Couple combined RAP intensity scores were obtained by averaging the scores of both partners in the couple. The mean problem intensity of couples was 17.99.

MAT couple scores were obtained by adding both partners' individual MAT scores. Mean male and female mean scores were almost identical (114.15 for men and 114.52 for women). These scores fall within the non-distressed range, which indicates that the screening procedures used to select a non-clinical sample were accurate.

Attachment Measures

Two scales were used to measure couple attachment: the Attachment Style Inventory (ASI) and the Adult Attachment Scale (AAS). Table 2 shows the summary statistics for men and women on the Attachment Style Inventory (ASI), which includes levels on each of four styles: Avoidance, Security, Ambivalence, and Hostility. As would be expected in a non-clinical sample, the majority of men and women rated themselves mostly as Secure. Men's lowest mean ratings were on Ambivalence while Women's lowest mean ratings were on Avoidance.

Table 1

Relationship Agendas Protocol Problem Frequency (n = 90), Relationship Agendas Protocol Problem Intensity (*n = 103), Locke Wallace Relationship Measure (n = 103)*

		Range	*M*	*SD*	Skewness	Kurtosis
RAP Problem Frequency	Male	0.00 – 15.00	6.90	2.97	0.38	-.014
	Female	0.00 – 15.00	6.74	2.98	0.48	0.79
	Couple	2.00 – 30.00	13.64	5.37	0.45	0.73
RAP Problem Intensity	Male	0.00 – 57.00	18.25	11.75	1.08	1.17
	Female	0.00 – 48.00	17.96	10.70	0.57	-0.07
	Couple	0.68 – 46.00	17.99	9.70	0.62	0.18
MAT	Male	38.00 – 154.00	114.15	23.50	-0.81	0.83
	Female	65.00 – 156.00	114.52	20.50	-0.21	-0.27
	Couple	123.00 – 303.00	228.67	40.46	-0.36	-0.22

Table 2

Attachment Style Inventory Frequencies (male $n = 106$, female $n = 103$)

		Range	*M*	*SD*	Skewness	Kurtosis
Avoidance	Male	1.00 - 9.00	2.25	1.88	1.68	1.20
	Female	1.00 - 9.00	2.08	1.80	1.91	2.94
Security	Male	1.00 - 9.00	5.31	2.52	-0.28	-1.23
	Female	1.00 - 9.00	5.09	2.37	-0.01	-1.13
Ambivalence	Male	1.00 - 8.00	2.07	1.51	1.77	3.02
	Female	1.00 - 9.00	2.39	1.93	1.72	2.53
Hostility	Male	1.00 - 9.00	2.39	2.18	1.54	1.10
	Female	1.00 - 9.00	2.32	1.65	1.65	1.79

Each participant was also required by the ASI to choose the attachment style that best describes him or her (Avoidant, Secure, Ambivalent, or Hostile). These results can be found in Table 3. Once again, the majority of both men and women felt that they were best described by the Secure descriptor. Forty-nine (45.80%) couples contained partners who both identified themselves Secure ("secure couples"). Fifty-eight (54.21%) couples contained at least one partner who rated themselves as primarily one of the Insecure styles ("insecure couples"). Only 9 couples contained partners were both the man and woman rated themselves as insecure (the remaining 40 "insecure couples" were mixed with one secure and one insecure partner). Of the men, 31 (29%) were in insecure couples and 69 (65.5%) were in secure couples. Of the women, 29 (27.1%) were in insecure couples and 71 (66.4%) were in secure couples. Table 4 shows the partner matching for men and women on the ASI (the numbers of secure men and women partnered with insecure women and men, etc.).

The Adult Attachment Scale (AAS) provides ratings of Dependence, Anxiety, and Closeness. Male and female scores are shown in Table 5. Both men and women had the highest mean ratings on Closeness and second highest mean ratings on Dependence. Both men and women were least likely to rate themselves as Anxious.

Communication Measures

The summary scores reached by the coders using the IDCS were used to code couple communication of the audiotaped discussions each couple had about an agreed-upon problem. These scores are reported in Table 6. There were so few incidents of Withdrawal coded that this code was dichotomized as present or not present. All other IDCS dimensions were reported according to frequency. All of the highest mean ratings reached on the IDCS were on positive dimensions. Both men and women earned the highest mean ratings on the Communication dimension (male $M = 5.05$, female $M = 5.53$). The second highest mean rating for men was on

Table 3

Attachment Style Inventory Best Description of Attachment Style (*n* = 100)

		N
Avoidance	Male	13
	Female	8
Secure	Male	69
	Female	71
Ambivalence	Male	3
	Female	6
Hostility	Male	15
	Female	15

Table 4

Attachment Style Inventory Partner Matching

		Female Attachment Style	
		Secure	Insecure
Male Attachment Style	Secure	49	16
	Insecure	19	9

Table 5

Adult Attachment Style Scores (male, *n* = 107, female *n* = 103)

		Range	*M*	*SD*	Skewness	Kurtosis
Depend	Male	9.00 – 42.00	24.85	6.88	.46	-.18
	Female	9.00 – 40.00	25.20	7.29	-.01	-.40
Anxiety	Male	6.00 – 34.00	15.41	5.84	.49	-.03
	Female	6.00 – 38.00	16.16	6.67	.94	.91
Close	Male	14.00 – 42.00	28.44	5.89	.06	-.51
	Female	15.00 – 42.00	30.34	5.87	-.09	-.73

Table 6

Interaction Dimension Coding Scale Summary Scores Male and Female (n = 106)

		Range	*M*	*SD*	Skewness	Kurtosis
Conflict	Male	1.00 – 9.00	3.66	2.52	0.57	-0.98
	Female	1.00 – 9.00	4.16	2.60	0.29	-1.22
Withdrawal	Male	1.00 – 9.00	1.75	1.51	2.47	6.43
	Female	1.00 – 8.00	1.43	1.15	3.28	11.98
Negative affect	Male	1.00 – 9.00	3.27	2.30	0.99	-0.05
	Female	1.00 – 9.00	3.65	2.46	0.62	-0.93
Communication Skills	Male	1.00 – 9.00	5.05	2.17	-0.14	-0.96
	Female	1.00 – 9.00	5.53	2.11	0.07	-1.06
Support validation	Male	1.00 – 9.00	4.26	2.34	0.23	-1.12
	Female	1.00 – 9.00	4.14	2.60	0.37	-1.14
Problem solving	Male	1.00 – 9.00	4.09	2.40	0.40	-0.96
	Female	1.00 – 9.00	4.30	2.49	0.53	-0.81

the Support Validation dimension (*M* = 4.26*)*. The second highest mean rating for women was on the Problem Solving dimension (*M* = 4.30*)*. Both men and women used Withdrawal least as rated by the IDCS coding system (male *M* = 1.75, female *M* = 1.43*)*.

Intercorrelations

Correlations were used to examine the intra-scale reliability of the IDCS. Results can be found in Tables 7 (male), 8 (female) and 9 (male and female). All correlations between IDCS dimensions, other than Withdrawal, were found to be statistically significant and in the expected directions (positive and negative dimensions were found to be negatively correlated whereas positive dimensions were positively correlated to other positive dimensions and negative dimensions were positively correlated to other negative dimensions). Men's use of Withdrawal was found to be significantly negatively associated with male Communication and positively associated with Support Validation and Positive Affect. Women's use of Withdrawal was significantly negatively associated with male Conflict and Negative affect and there was a significant positive association between women's Withdrawal and women's Communication and Problem Solving.

The relationship between men and women's scores on the MAT was examined. As expected, relationship satisfaction between men and women was strongly and significantly correlated, (r [107] = -.69, p <.001). Men's and women's RAP number of problem scores were also strongly correlated (r [90] = .63, p <.001).

Intercorrelations of the two RAP problem scores (number of problems and intensity of problems) were computed for men and women separately and for couples. Results can be found in Table 10. All of these relationships were significant. This indicates that number of problems and problem intensity are positively related: the more problems reported, the higher the overall intensity of problems experienced.

Table 7

Male Intercorrelation between Interaction Dimension Coding Scale dimensions (n = 106)

	Conflict		Negative Affect		Withdrawal†		Communication Skills		Support Validation		Problem Solving		Positive Affect	
	r	*P*	*r*	*P*	*r*	*P*	*r*	*p*	*r*	*p*	*r*	*p*	*r*	*p*
Conflict	__	__	__	__	__	__	__	__	__	__	__	__	__	__
Negative Affect	.81**	(<.001)	__	__	__	__	__	__	__	__	__	__	__	__
Withdrawal †	.06	(.541)	.16	(.095)	__	__	__	__	__	__	__	__	__	__
Communication Skills	.52**	(.<001)	.52**	(<.001)	-.29*	(.003)	__	__	__	__	__	__	__	__
Support Validation	-.66**	(.<001)	-.60**	(<.001)	.22*	(.027)	.82**	(<.001)	__	__	__	__	__	__
Problem Solving	-.57**	(.<001)	-.50**	(<.001)	-.13	(.191)	.67**	(<.001)	.68**	(<.001)	__	__	__	__
Positive Affect	-.50**	(.<001)	-.54**	(<.001)	-.26*	(.008)	.65**	(<.001)	.73**	(<.001)	.50**	(<.001)	__	__

* = $p < .05$

**= $p < .001$

† a point biserial correlation was used

Table 8

Female Intercorrelation between Interaction Dimension Coding Scale Dimensions (n = 106)

	Conflict		Negative Affect		Withdrawal†		Communication Skills		Support Validation		Problem Solving		Positive Affect	
	r	*P*	*r*	*P*	*r*	*p*	*r*	*p*	*r*	*p*	*r*	*p*	*r*	*p*
Conflict	__	__	__	__	__	__	__	__	__	__	__	__	__	__
Negative Affect	.87**	(<.001)	__	__	__	__	__	__	__	__	__	__	__	__
Withdrawal †	.10	(.334)	.12	(.233)	__	__	__	__	__	__	__	__	__	__
Communication Skills	.59**	(.<001)	-.61**	(<.001)	.25*	(.011)	__	__	__	__	__	__	__	__
Support Validation	.72**	(.<001)	-.70**	(<.001)	.07	(.456)	.83**	(<.001)	__	__	__	__	__	__
Problem Solving	.53**	(.<001)	-.53**	(<.001)	.26*	(.009)	.73**	(<.001)	.65**	(<.001)	__	__	__	__
Positive Affect	.65**	(.<001)	.72**	(<.001)	-.19	(.056)	.71**	(<.001)	.76**	(<.001)	.55**	(<.001)	__	__

* = $p < .05$

**=$p < .001$

† a point biserial correlation was used

Table 9

Intercorrelation between Male and Female Interaction Dimension Coding Scale Dimensions (n=106)

	Conflict Female		Negative Affect Female		Withdrawal Female		Communication Skills Female		Support Validation Female		Problem Solving Female		Positive Affect Female	
	r	*p*	*r*	*p*	*r*	*p*	*r*	*p*	*r*	*p*	*r*	*p*	*r*	*p*
Conflict Male	.65**	(<.001)	.51**	(<.001)	.23*	(.018)	-.40**	(<.001)	-.43**	(<.001)	-.43**	(<.001)	-.41**	(<.001)
Negative Affect Male	.40**	(<.001)	.39**	(<.001)	.19*	(.049)	-.23*	(.019)	-.25*	(.010)	-.28*	(.004)	-.30*	(.002)
Withdrawal Male	.091	(.355)	.18	(.073)	__	__	-.17	(.085)	-.12	(.238)	-.15	(.122)	-.17	(.076)
Communication Skills Male	.33**	(<.001)	-.32*	(.001)	-.10	(.301)	.60**	(<.001)	.58**	(<.001)	.39**	(<.001)	.46**	(<.001)
Support Validation Male	-.37**	(<.001)	-.30*	(.002)	-.03	(.746)	.54**	(<.001)	.55**	(<.001)	.40**	(<.001)	.47**	(<.001)
Problem Solving Male	-.39**	(<.001)	-.30*	(.002)	-.09	(.365)	.46**	(<.001)	.47**	(<.001)	.65**	(<.001)	.40**	(<.001)
Positive Affect Male	-.27*	(.005)	-.24*	(.014)	-.12	(.222)	.40**	(<.001)	.40**	(<.001)	.26*	(.007)	.57**	(<.001)

* = $p < .05$

** = $p < .001$

Table 10

Intercorrelation between Relationship Agendas Protocol Number of Problems and Relationship Agendas Protocol Problem Intensity (n = 89)

		Number of Problems Male	Number of Problems Female	Problem Intensity Male	Problem Intensity Female	Problem Intensity Couple
		R	*r*	*r*	*r*	r
Number of Problems	Male	—	—	—	—	—
	Female	.63*	—	—	—	—
Problem Intensity	Male	.65*	.33*	—	—	—
	Female	.41*	.60*	.51*	—	—
	Couple	.63*	.53*	.88*	.86*	—

* = $p < .001$

Comparison of Attachment Measures

In order to examine the internal validity of the AAS, correlations were used to examine the AAS Depend and Close variables. For both men and women the AAS Depend and Close variables were significantly correlated, indicating that they likely measure a similar construct. In order to examine the internal validity of the ASI, correlations were used to examine the ASI Level of Security and the ASI Secure variables. For men the ASI Secure variable and the ASI Level of Security (based on the question noted above) were found to be significantly correlated. Women's ASI Secure scores and ASI Level of Security were not correlated, which indicates that they are likely not measuring the same construct.

In order to determine inter-scale reliability between the attachment measures used, the relationship between the Depend and Close variables on the AAS, the Secure rating on the ASI, and the Level of Security on the ASI were examined using correlations. The Level of Security on the ASI was measured by a nine-point Likert scale where one is described as, "I do worry about my relationship. I am often anxious about it. I am often unsure how it will work out," and nine is described as, "I do not worry about my relationship. I am not very anxious about it. I am confident it will work out". Results can be found in Tables 11 (men) and 12 (women). Because the AAS Depend and Close variables have been traditionally correlated with security, they were expected to be highly correlated with ASI ratings of security. With the exception of women's ASI Secure and women's AAS Close scores, none of the men or women's ASI and AAS scores were significantly related. These correlations indicate that there is not sufficient inter-scale reliability between the AAS and ASI measures of security.

To further examine intra-scale reliability between the ASI and AAS, correlations were conducted between ASI Security and AAS Close/Depend measures. The only significant relationship was between female ASI Security and the mean of the female AAS Depend and

Table 11

Male Intercorrelation between Adult Attachment Scale Depend (N =107), Adult Attachment Scale Close (N = 107) Attachment Style Inventory Level of Security (N = 105) and Attachment Style Inventory Secure (N = 105)

	AAS Depend		AAS Close		ASI Secure		ASI Level of Security	
	r	*P*	*r*	*p*	*r*	*p*	*r*	*p*
AAS Depend	__	__	__	__	__	__	__	__
AAS Close	.45**	(<.001)	__	__	__	__	__	__
ASI Secure	.01	(.92)	.12	(.24)	__	__	__	__
ASI Level of Security	.17	(.09)	.08	(.40)	.22*	(.02)	__	__

* = $p < .05$

** = $p < .001$

Table 12

Female Intercorrelation between Adult Attachment Scale Depend (N =107), Adult Attachment Scale Close (N= 107) Attachment Security Inventory Level of Security (N = 105) and ASI Secure (N = 105)

	AAS Depend		AAS Close		ASI Secure		ASI Level of Security	
	R	*p*	*R*	*p*	*r*	*P*	*r*	*p*
AAS Depend	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
AAS Close	.41**	(<.001)	—	—	—	—	—	—
ASI Secure	.17	(.09)	.22*	(.03)	—	—	—	—
ASI Level of Security	-.02	(.85)	-.01	(.95)	.02	(.81)	—	—

* = *p <.05*

**= *p <.001*

Close measures, although the effect size was small to medium (r = [105] .23, p = .02). Couple ASI Security and couple AAS Close/Depend measures were not significantly related (r [105] .06, p = .55), nor were male ASI Security and AAS Close/Depend measures (r [105] .07, p = .48). Although there were one or two subscales on the ASI and AAS (those noted above) that were significantly related, overall these findings provide further evidence that the AAS and ASI are not measuring the same thing.

The lack of correlation regarding attachment security between the ASI and AAS prompted further analysis of all attachment variables. Analyses of variance were run with the ASI "best description" category (Avoidant, Secure, Ambivalent, and Hostile) as the independent variable and the AAS Depend score (see Tables 13 [male] and 14 [female]) and the AAS Close score (see Tables 15 [male] and 16 [female]) as the dependent variable.

Overall these variables were not found to be significantly related, which indicates that the AAS may have been measuring a construct related but not equivalent to attachment security.

In order to further investigate the lack of correspondence between these two measures of attachment, a series of correlations were computed between AAS and ASI variables. Results can be found in Tables 17 (male) and 18 (female). For men, the ASI insecure categories (Avoidance, Ambivalence, and Hostility) were all significantly correlated in the expected directions with all AAS scales. However, the ASI Security scale was not associated with any of the AAS scales. The ASI Level of Security (a distinct measure from ASI Security, as explained above) was associated with only one of the three AAS scales, Anxiety.

For women the relationships found were often not in the expected directions. The women's ASI Avoidance scale was associated with the AAS Depend and Close scales. ASI Security was associated with AAS Anxiety and Closeness. ASI Ambivalence was associated with AAS Anxiety and Closeness. ASI Hostility was correlated with all three AAS scales

Table 13

Summary of ANOVA for Attachment Style Inventory "Best Description" and Adult Attachment Scale Depend- Male (N = 100)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	*F*	*p*
Between Groups	269.70	3	88.90	2.10	.105
Within Groups	4110.31	96	42.82		
Total	4380.00	99			

Table 14

Summary of ANOVA for Attachment Style Inventory "Best Description" and Adult Attachment Scale Close- Female (N= 100)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	*F*	*p*
Between Groups	292.00	3.00	97.33	2.97*	.036
Within Groups	3151.57	96.00	32.83		
Total	3443.56	99			

*$p < 0.05$

Table 15

Summary of ANOVA for Attachment Style Inventory "Best Description" and Adult Attachment Scale Close- Male (N=100)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	*p*
Between Groups	581.01	3.00	193.67	6.70*	<.001
Within Groups	2774.38	96.00	28.90		
Total	3355.39	99.00			

* $p < .001$

Table 16

Summary of ANOVA for Attachment Style Inventory "Best Description" and Adult Attachment Scale Close- Female (N= 100)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	*p*
Between Groups	292.00	3.00	97.33	2.97*	.036
Within Groups	3151.57	96.00	32.83		
Total	3443.56	99			

* $p < 0.05$

Table 17

Intercorrelation between Adult Attachment Scale and Attachment Style Inventory Male

	AAS variable					
	Depend		Anxiety		Close	
ASI variable	*R*	*p*	*r*	*p*	*r*	*p*
Avoidance	-.23*	(.02)	.27*	(.01)	-.31*	(.01)
Ambivalence	-.22*	(.03)	.28*	(.01)	-.21*	(.04)
Hostility	-.23*	(.02)	.26*	(.01)	-.27*	(.01)
Security	.01	(.92)	.04	(.69)	.12	(.24)
Level of Security	.17	(.09)	-.31*	(.01)	.08	(.40)

* = $p < .05$

Table 18

Intercorrelation between Adult Attachment Scale and Attachment Style Inventory Female

	AAS variable					
	Depend		Anxiety		Close	
ASI variable	*R*	*p*	*R*	*p*	*R*	*p*
Avoidance	-.23*	(.02)	.12	(.22)	-.36**	(<.001)
Security	.17	(.09)	.21*	(.03)	.22*	(.03)
Ambivalence	-.18	(.06)	.43**	(<.001)	-.21*	(.03)
Hostility	-.25*	(.01)	.44**	(<.001)	-.22*	(.02)
Amount of Worry	-.02	(.85)	-.50**	(<.001)	-.01	(.95)

* = $p < .05$

** = $p < .001$

(Dependence, Anxiety, and Closeness) and ASI Level of Security was only associated with AAS Anxiety.

Therefore, in moving forward with the hypothesis tests, the ASI alone was used to measure attachment as the above findings indicate that the AAS appears more to measure a related but not equivalent to attachment security.

Hypothesis Tests

The first hypothesis examined the relationship between couple attachment and relationship adjustment in two ways.

Hypothesis 1: Relationship Functioning and Attachment

The ASI allowed for examination of the relationship between relationship functioning and attachment both with attachment measured as a continuous variable and as a categorical variable. An independent samples t-test was used to compare the combined MAT scores of couples in which both partners rated themselves secure to couples in which at least one partner rated him or herself as insecure. In this analysis, the ASI "best describes me" measure was used in order to evaluate attachment as a categorical variable. There was a significant difference in combined MAT scores between couples where both partners were secure and those with at least one insecure partner (t [105] = 6.43, p <.001). Couples in which both partners were secure scored higher on the MAT (M = 251.97, SD = 30.49) than those with at least one insecure partner (M = 208.98, SD = 37.45). These findings support the hypothesis that secure attachment is positively associated with relationship adjustment.

An independent samples t-test was also used to compare the RAP problem frequency of couples in which both partners rated themselves secure to couples in which at least one partner rated him or herself as insecure. There was a significant difference in RAP problem frequency scores between couples where both partners were secure and those with at least one insecure

partner (t [88] = -2.16, p = .03). Couples in which both partners were secure listed fewer problems on the RAP (M = 12.44, SD = 5.54) than those with at least one insecure partner (M = 14.84, SD = 4.97). These findings further support the hypothesis that secure attachment is positively associated with relationship adjustment.

In addition, an independent samples t-test was also used to compare RAP problem intensity of couples in which both partners rated themselves secure to couples in which at least one partner rated him or herself as insecure. There was a significant difference in RAP problem intensity scores between couples where both partners were secure and those with at least one insecure partner (t [101] = -3.72, p <.001). Couples in which both partners were secure rated their problems as less severe on the RAP (M = 14.48, SD = 7.86) than those with at least one insecure partner (M = 21.18, SD = 10.16). These findings also further support the hypothesis that secure attachment is negatively associated with intensity of couple problems. Couples in which both partners were secure reported less intense couple problems, whereas those in which at least one partner is insecure reported experiencing greater intensity of problems.

The ASI Secure item rating was used to measure attachment as a continuous variable. Male and female scores were summed to reach an ASI couple security rating. The relationship between couples' ratings of security and the couple's combined number of problems on the RAP was examined using correlations. No significant association was found (r [86] = -.16, p = .29).

Correlations were also used to examine the relationship between couples' ratings of security and RAP problem intensity. A significant negative relationship was found between these variables with a small to medium effect size (r [100] = -.20, p = .05).

The relationship between couples' ratings of security and couples' MAT scores was also examined using correlations. A significant relationship was found between these two variables (r [101] .41, p = <.001).

Thus, hypothesis 1 is partially supported by the data. RAP problem intensity is significantly related to attachment as measured by the ASI, but number of reported problems on the RAP are not.

Hypothesis 2: Couple Communication and Attachment Security

T-tests were used to compare the negative and positive communication ratings on the IDCS with couples' attachment measured as a categorical variable using the ASI "best describes me" question. Results can be found in Table 19. Results show a significant difference between secure couples and insecure couples on the female Communication Skills and male Positive Affect dimensions, meaning that couples where both partners are secure contain women who are significantly more likely to use the IDCS Communication Skills dimension and men who are significantly more likely to use the Positive Affect dimension. None of the negative dimensions of the IDCS were found to be used significantly more or less by secure and non-secure couples but there was a trend toward women in non-secure couples to score higher on the Conflict dimension than women in secure couples. A trend was also found for men in secure couples to score higher on the Communication Skills dimension than men in non-secure couples. In addition, both men and women in secure couples trended toward using Support Validation more than men and women in non-secure couples.

A chi-square test was used to examine the relationship between the Withdrawal dimension of the IDCS and couple security measured categorically. No significant relationship was found for female Withdrawal, χ^2 (2, n = 106) = 3.17, p = .21 or male Withdrawal, χ^2 (2, n = 106) = .01, p = .99.

T-tests were also used to compare the communication patterns of secure versus insecure men and women. Results can be found in Tables 20 (men) and 21 (women). For men, no significant differences were found in the IDCS dimensions used by secure versus insecure men

Table 19

Interaction Dimension Coding Scale codes and Secure versus Non-Secure couples

		Both partners secure (n = 49)		At least one insecure partner (n = 58)				
ICDS Code		*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*df*	*p*
Conflict	Male	3.27	2.49	4.00	2.52	-1.50	104	.14
	Female	3.70	2.49	4.56	2.64	-1.73	104	.09
Negative affect	Male	3.02	2.29	3.49	2.31	-1.05	104	.30
	Female	3.41	2.35	3.86	2.55	-0.94	104	.35
Communication Skills	Male	5.43	2.14	4.72	2.15	1.70	104	.09
	Female	6.02	2.14	5.11	2.01	2.27*	104	.03
Support validation	Male	4.71	2.45	3.88	2.19	1.86	104	.07
	Female	4.65	2.61	3.70	2.52	1.91	104	.06
Problem solving	Male	4.46	2.48	3.77	2.31	1.47	103	.15
	Female	4.65	2.48	4.00	2.49	1.33	103	.19
Positive affect	Male	3.94	2.25	3.09	1.88	2.12*	104	.04
	Female	4.41	2.47	3.75	2.31	1.41	104	.16

* = $p < .05$

Table 20

Interaction Dimension Coding Scale codes in Attachment Style Inventory Secure versus Non-Secure Men (n = 99)

	Secure		Insecure				
ICDS Code	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*T*	*Df*	*P*
Conflict	3.52	2.60	3.97	2.41	-.80	97	.43
Negative Affect	3.30	2.36	3.30	2.18	.01	97	.99
Communication Skills	5.16	2.25	4.77	1.96	.83	97	.41
Support Validation	4.56	2.42	3.67	2.04	1.75	97	.08
Problem Solving	4.19	2.47	3.63	2.17	1.07	96	.29
Positive Affect	3.64	2.14	2.93	1.93	1.55	97	.13

Table 21

Interaction Dimension Coding Scale codes in Attachment Style Inventory Secure versus Non-Secure Women (n = 99)

	Secure		Insecure				
ICDS Code	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*df*	*p*
Conflict	3.65	2.39	5.43	2.74	-3.20*	97	.002
Negative Affect	3.32	2.27	4.46	2.77	-1.94	42.11	.059
Communication Skills	5.96	2.00	4.54	2.25	3.08*	97	.003
Support Validation	4.61	2.53	3.25	2.70	2.36*	97	.020
Problem Solving	4.67	2.44	3.54	2.59	2.05*	96	.044
Positive Affect	4.35	2.40	3.36	2.31	1.88	97	.064

* = $p < .05$

although secure men showed a trend toward using more support validation than their insecure counterparts. Women's results were quite different. Secure women used significantly more Communication Skills, Support Validation, and Problem Solving and used significantly less Conflict. A trend was found for secure women to use more Positive Affect. A trend was also found for secure women to use less Negative Affect. A chi-square test was used to examine the relationship between secure versus insecure men and women's use of Withdrawal as this dimension was not evenly distributed. No significant relationship was found for female Withdrawal, χ 2 (1, n =107) = .85, p = .36 or male Withdrawal, χ 2 (1, n = 107) = .74, p = .40.

The IDCS dimensions found to be used significantly more by secure individuals were then divided into high and low use by splitting the scores at the mean (scores above the mean were considered "high" and scores below the mean were considered "low"). Analyses were conducted in order to examine the attachment style (determined by the ASI "best description" category) of the partners of the individuals who engaged in high and low use of these IDCS dimensions. Results can be found in Tables 22 through 28. There was a significant association between men's use of Support Validation and the attachment style of their partners ($\chi^2(3, N = 99) = 8.83, p = .032$). The association was such that men who were high users of Support Validation were less likely to be partnered with hostilely attached women. Of those men paired with hostile women, 13.3% were high users of Support Validation while 86.7% were low users of Support Validation. There were no other differences in regard to other attachment styles. For women, no significant associations were found between high and low use of the IDCS dimensions and partner attachment.

Correlations were then used to compare negative and positive IDCS with couple security measured as a continuous variable. Results can be found in Table 29. Men's use of Support

Table 22

Male Support Validation Frequency of Use and Partner Attachment Style

		Low Use	High Use
Secure	Frequency	36	35
	Percent within Attachment Style Female	50.7%	49.3%
	Adjusted Residual	-1.9	1.9
Avoidant	Frequency	3	5
	Percent within Attachment Style Female	37.5%	62.5%
	Adjusted Residual	-1.1	1.1
Ambivalent	Frequency	4	1
	Percent Within Attachment Style Female	80.0%	20.0%
	Adjusted Residual	1.1	-1.1
Hostile	Frequency	13	2
	Percent Within Attachment Style Female	86.7%	13.3%
	Adjusted Residual	2.6*	-2.6*

* = Adjusted residual > | 1.96 | (significant)

$\chi^2(3, N = 99) = 8.83, p = .032$

Table 23

Female Conflict Frequency of Use and Partner Attachment Style

		Low Use	High Use
Secure	Frequency	38	31
	Percent within Attachment Style Female	55.1%	44.9%
	Adjusted Residual	.2	-.2
Avoidant	Frequency	9	4
	Percent within Attachment Style Female	69.2%	30.8%
	Adjusted Residual	1.1	-1.1
Ambivalent	Frequency	0	2
	Percent Within Attachment Style Female	0.0%	100.0%
	Adjusted Residual	-1.6	1.6
Hostile	Frequency	7	8
	Percent Within Attachment Style Female	46.7%	53.3%
	Adjusted Residual	-.7	.7

$\chi^2(3, N = 99) = 3.91, p = .27$

Table 24

Female Negative Affect Frequency of Use and Partner Attachment Style

		Low Use	High Use
Secure	Frequency	38	31
	Percent within Attachment Style Female	55.1%	44.9%
	Adjusted Residual	-.5	.5
Avoidant	Frequency	8	5
	Percent within Attachment Style Female	61.5%	38.5%
	Adjusted Residual	.4	-.4
Ambivalent	Frequency	1	1
	Percent Within Attachment Style Female	50.0%	50.0%
	Adjusted Residual	-.2	.2
Hostile	Frequency	9	6
	Percent Within Attachment Style Female	60.0%	40.0%
	Adjusted Residual	.3	-.3

$\chi^2(3, N = 99) = .30, p = .96$

Table 25

Female Communication Frequency of Use and Partner Attachment Style

		Low Use	High Use
Secure	Frequency	35	34
	Percent within Attachment Style Female	50.7%	39.4%
	Adjusted Residual	-.9	.9
Avoidant	Frequency	8	5
	Percent within Attachment Style Female	61.5%	38.5%
	Adjusted Residual	.6	-.6
Ambivalent	Frequency	1	1
	Percent Within Attachment Style Female	50.0%	50.0%
	Adjusted Residual	-.1	.1
Hostile	Frequency	9	6
	Percent Within Attachment Style Female	60.0%	40.0%
	Adjusted Residual	.5	-.5

$\chi^2(3, N = 99) = .09, p = .85$

Table 26

Female Support Validation Frequency of Use and Partner Attachment Style

		Low Use	High Use
Secure	Frequency	37	32
	Percent within Attachment Style Female	53.6%	46.4%
	Adjusted Residual	-1.2	1.2
Avoidant	Frequency	8	5
	Percent within Attachment Style Female	61.5%	38.5%
	Adjusted Residual	.3	-.3
Ambivalent	Frequency	2	0
	Percent Within Attachment Style Female	100.0%	0.0%
	Adjusted Residual	1.2	-1.2
Hostile	Frequency	10	5
	Percent Within Attachment Style Female	66.7%	33.3%
	Adjusted Residual	.8	-.8

$\chi^2(3, N = 99) = 2.51, p = .47$

Table 27

Female Problem Solving Frequency of Use and Partner Attachment Style

		Low Use	High Use
Secure	Frequency	41	27
	Percent within Attachment Style Female	60.3%	39.7%
	Adjusted Residual	.0	.0
Avoidant	Frequency	7	6
	Percent within Attachment Style Female	53.8%	46.2%
	Adjusted Residual	-.5	.5
Ambivalent	Frequency	2	0
	Percent Within Attachment Style Female	100.0%	0.0%
	Adjusted Residual	1.2	-1.2
Hostile	Frequency	9	6
	Percent Within Attachment Style Female	60.0%	40.0%
	Adjusted Residual	.0	.0

$\chi^2(3, N = 99) = 1.54, p = .67$

Table 28

Female Positive Affect Frequency of Use and Partner Attachment Style

		Low Use	High Use
Secure	Frequency	41	28
	Percent within Attachment Style Female	59.4%	40.6%
	Adjusted Residual	-.1	.1
Avoidant	Frequency	9	4
	Percent within Attachment Style Female	69.2%	30.8%
	Adjusted Residual	.8	-.8
Ambivalent	Frequency	1	1
	Percent Within Attachment Style Female	50.0%	50.0%
	Adjusted Residual	-.1	.1
Hostile	Frequency	8	7
	Percent Within Attachment Style Female	53.3%	46.7%
	Adjusted Residual	-.5	.5

$\chi^2(3, N = 99) = .82, p = .84$

Table 29

Intercorrelations Between Couple Security and Interaction Dimension Coding Scale dimensions

IDCS dimension		*r*	*p*	*n*
Conflict	Male	-.13	(.23)	100
	Female	-.13	(.20)	100
Negative affect	Male	-.02	(.82)	100
	Female	-.02	(.87)	100
Communication Skills	Male	.13	(.21)	100
	Female	.17	(.08)	100
Support validation	Male	.20	(.05)	100
	Female	.11	(.29)	100
Problem solving	Male	.11	(.26)	99
	Female	.09	(.36)	99
Positive affect	Male	.11	(.26)	100
	Female	.08	(.41)	100

Validation was significantly correlated with couple security. The women's Communication Skills dimension showed a trend toward a correlation with security. No other significant results were found.

Couples' security as measured by the ASI (both continuously and categorically) was found to be somewhat associated with couple communication as coded by the IDCS and thus hypothesis two is partially supported by the data.

Hypothesis 3: Couple Communication and Relationship Adjustment

Individual Pearson product moment correlations were used to examine the relationships between IDCS dimensions and the MAT (female scores, male scores, and combined couple scores). Results can be found in Table 30. Every IDCS dimension except Withdrawal was found to be significantly associated with female MAT scores, male MAT scores, and couples' combined MAT scores except for men's Negative Affect which was significantly associated with MAT combined scores and male MAT scores but not female MAT scores. Overall, these findings support hypothesis 3, that communication is associated with adjustment.

A multiple regression was performed to determine the amount of variability in relationship adjustment (MAT scores) accounted for by couple communication (IDCS scores) (see Table 31). As a group, the fourteen IDCS dimensions were associated at a trend level with MAT scores, $R = .46$, $F(14,90) = 1.76$, $p = .06$. IDCS dimensions as a group account for 26% of MAT variance, $R^2 = .26$, a medium to large effect size. In addition, a stepwise regression was performed to determine specifically which IDCS dimensions accounted for the greatest percentage of variability in relationship adjustment (see Table 32). It was found that women's IDCS Conflict scores were significantly associated with couples' MAT scores in step 1, $R^2 = .13$, $p < .05$. Then, the addition of men's IDCS Positive Affect scores added an additional 5.2% of explained variance, $R^2 change = .052$, $p < .05$, a medium effect size. Together, both variables

Table 30

Intercorrelation between Locke Wallace Relationship Measure (MAT) and Interaction Dimension Coding Scale codes

		MAT Score					
		Male		Female		Couple	
IDCS Dimension		*r*	*p*	*r*	*p*	*r*	*p*
Conflict	Male	-.33**	(.001)	-.30**	(.002)	-.35**	(<.001)
	Female	-.31**	(.001)	-.36**	(<.001)	-.36**	(<.001)
Negative Affect	Male	-.25**	(.009)	-.19	(.060)	.24*	(.013)
	Female	-.21*	(.034)	-.31**	(.001)	-.28**	(.004)
Communication Skills	Male	.24*	(.014)	.22*	(.021)	.25**	(.009)
	Female	.22*	(.022)	.22*	(.025)	.24*	(.013)
Support validation	Male	.34**	(<.001)	.24*	(.015)	.32**	(.001)
	Female	.30**	(.002)	.30**	(.002)	.32**	(.001)
Problem solving	Male	.25*	(.011)	.24*	(.016)	.26**	(.007)
	Female	.21*	(.036)	.26**	(.008)	.25*	(.010)
Positive affect	Male	.33**	(.001)	.25*	(.011)	.32**	(.001)
	Female	.28**	(.004)	.22*	(.024)	.27**	(.005)

* = $p < .05$

** = $p < .001$

Table 31

Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Locke Wallace Relationship Measure (MAT) Scores

		Coefficients				
Variable		*B*	*SEB*	β	*t*	*p*
Conflict	Male	-2.48	3.79	-.16	-.66	.51
	Female	-4.44	4.13	-.29	-1.08	.29
Withdrawal	Male	-0.95	2.68	-.04	-.36	.72
	Female	1.60	3.78	.05	.42	.67
Negative affect	Male	2.13	3.35	.12	.64	.53
	Female	1.12	4.10	.07	.27	.79
Communication Skills	Male	0.07	4.08	.01	.02	.99
	Female	-3.65	4.31	-.19	-.85	.40
Support Validation	Male	.45	3.76	.03	.12	.91
	Female	2.67	3.57	.18	.75	.46
Problem Solving	Male	-1.17	3.18	-.07	-.37	.71
	Female	2.75	3.31	.17	.83	.41
Positive Affect	Male	5.51	3.31	.29	1.66	.10
	Female	-2.27	3.40	-.14	-.67	.51

R = .46, F (14,90) = 1.76, p = .06
R^2 = .26

Table 32

Stepwise Regression for Significant Interaction Dimension Coding Scale Dimensions and Locke Wallace Relationship Measure (MAT) Scores

	Coefficients				
Variable	*B*	*SEB*	β	*t*	*p*
Conflict female	-5.53	1.41	-.36	-3.93*	<.001
Positive affect male	-4.29	1.42	-.30	-3.19*	<.001

R^2 *change* = .056, $p < .05$
* = $p < .001$

explained 18.2% of the variability in MAT scores. Examination of the coefficients reveals that women's Conflict scores are negatively associated with MAT scores (B = -4.54, p = .002).

Specific aspects of communication were found to support hypothesis three. Women's use of Conflict and men's use of Positive Affect are significantly associated with relationship adjustment. But, when we examine all of the IDCS dimensions as a group, there is no significant association with relationship adjustment and therefore the hypothesis is not fully supported.

Hypothesis 4: Couple Communication and Problem Frequency and Intensity

Individual Pearson product moment correlations were used to examine the relationship between individual IDCS dimensions and frequency of relationship problems as measured by the RAP (female scores, male scores, and combined couple scores). Results can be found in Table 33. Women's RAP scores were found to be associated at a trend level with women's IDCS Conflict and with men's use of Support Validation. There were no other significant associations found.

A multiple regression was then performed to test the association between the fourteen IDCS dimensions as a whole and RAP problem frequency (see Table 34). As a group, IDCS dimensions were not associated with RAP problem frequency scores, R = .39, F (14,74) = .94, p = .52. These findings do not support hypothesis 4, that couples' number of reported problems and communication are associated.

Individual Pearson product moment correlations also examined the relationship between RAP intensity and individual IDCS dimensions. Results can be found in Table 35. Table 36 provides a diagram showing which IDCS dimensions (male and female) were significantly associated with male and female RAP intensity.

For both men and women the Communication Skills and Support Validation IDCS dimensions were significantly negatively correlated with male and couple RAP problem

Table 33

Intercorrelation between Relationship Agendas Problem Frequency and Interaction Dimension Coding Scale codes

		RAP Frequency Score					
		Male		Female		Couple	
IDCS Dimension		*r*	*p*	*r*	*p*	*r*	*p*
Conflict	Male	.08	(.13)	.02	(.87)	.08	(.44)
	Female	.14	(.21)	.20	(.06)	.18	(.08)
Negative Affect	Male	.04	(.68)	.05	(.66)	.05	(.64)
	Female	.15	(.17)	.13	(.24)	.15	(.16)
Communication Skills	Male	-.13	(.23)	-.06	(.59)	-.10	(.34)
	Female	-.08	(.44)	-.02	(.88)	-.06	(.61)
Support validation	Male	-.12	(.27)	-.19	(.07)	-.17	(.11)
	Female	-.13	(.22)	-.17	(.12)	-.16	(.12)
Problem solving	Male	-.05	(.64)	-.04	(.72)	-.05	(.65)
	Female	-.05	(.68)	.01	(.97)	-.02	(.83)
Positive affect	Male	-.12	(.25)	-.03	(.77)	-.09	(.42)
	Female	-.10	(.37)	.01	(.93)	-.05	(.65)

Table 34

Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Relationship Agendas Protocol Frequency scores

		Coefficients				
Variable		*B*	*SEB*	β	*t*	*p*
Conflict	Male	-.75	.59	-.35	-1.3	.21
	Female	.39	.62	.19	.63	.53
Withdrawal	Male	-.07	.34	-.02	-.18	.86
	Female	.45	.55	.11	.82	.41
Negative affect	Male	-.11	.55	-.05	-.21	.84
	Female	.65	.63	.29	1.03	.31
Communication Skills	Male	.23	.66	.09	.35	.73
	Female	.61	.71	.24	.87	.39
Support Validation	Male	-1.17	.59	-.51	-2.00*	.05
	Female	-.65	.56	-.32	-1.16	.25
Problem Solving	Male	.10	.49	.05	.21	.84
	Female	.23	.51	.11	.45	.67
Positive Affect	Male	-.23	.51	-.09	-.44	.66
	Female	.80	.55	.36	1.46	.15

* $p = .05$
$R = .39$, F (14, 74) = .94, $p = .52$

Table 35

Intercorrelation between Relationship Agendas Protocol Problem Intensity and Interaction Dimension Coding Scale codes

		RAP Intensity Score					
		Male		Female		Couple	
IDCS Dimension		*r*	*p*	*r*	*p*	*r*	*p*
Conflict	Male	.18	(.062)	.11	(.274)	.19	(.060)
	Female	.31*	(.001)	.27*	(.006)	.36**	(<.001)
Negative Affect	Male	.20*	(.042)	.05	(.616)	.17	(.119)
	Female	.32**	(<.001)	.22*	(.024)	.39*	(<.001)
Withdrawal†	Male	.03	(.751)	-.07	(.485)	-.01	(.991)
	Female	-.10	(.292)	-.17	(.095)	-.14	(.164)
Communication Skills	Male	-.26*	(.007)	-.14	(.166)	-.25*	(.012)
	Female	.33**	(<.001)	-.05	(.636)	-.24*	(.016)
Support validation	Male	-.24*	(.013)	-.14	(.161)	-.23*	(.029)
	Female	-.42**	(<.001)	-.29*	(.003)	-.42**	(<.001)
Problem solving	Male	-.19	(.056)	-.12	(.221)	-.17	(.088)
	Female	-.21*	(.031)	-.07	(.463)	-.17	(.095)
Positive affect	Male	-.24*	(.015)	-.05	(.652)	-.17	(.087)
	Female	-.34**	(<.001)	-.10	(.341)	-.28*	(.004)

* $p < .01$

** $p < .001$

†point biserial correlations were used

Table 36

Interaction Dimension Coding Scale Dimensions and Relationship Agendas Protocol Problem Intensity

IDCS Dimension		Problem Intensity		
		Male	Female	Couple
Conflict	Female	√	√	√
	Male			
Problem Solving	Female	√		
	Male			
Negative Affect	Female	√	√	√
	Male	√		
Positive Affect	Female		√	
	Male	√		
Communication Skills	Female	√		√
	Male	√		√
Support Validation	Female	√		√
	Male	√		√

intensity. This indicates that the greater the overall intensity of relationship problems experienced, the less both men and women engaged the positive skills of Communication Skills and Support Validation. For women, Conflict and Negative Affect were significantly positively correlated with male, female, and couple RAP intensity, meaning that the more severe a woman's RAP problem intensity is, the more likely she is to use Conflict and Negative Affect when communicating with her partner. Women's use of Positive Affect was significantly negatively correlated with female and couple RAP problem intensity, meaning that women who report less intense problems on the RAP are more likely to communicate using Positive Affect. In addition, men's Positive Affect and women's Problem Solving were significantly negatively correlated with male RAP problem intensity. This means that men who use Positive Affect are less likely to report severe problems on the RAP and men paired with women who engage in Problem Solving are also less likely to report severe problems on the RAP. Men's Negative Affect was significantly positively associated with men's RAP problem intensity, meaning that men who report more intense problems are more likely to use Negative Affect when communicating with their partners. These findings partially support hypothesis 4.

A multiple regression was then performed to determine the amount of variability in RAP problem intensity accounted for by all the IDCS dimensions as a group. Results can be found in Table 37. This relationship was found to be significant and had a large effect size, $R = .53$, $F(14,86) = 2.44$, $p = .01$. IDCS dimensions as a group explained 29% of the variance in RAP intensity, $R^2 = .29$.

A stepwise regression then explored to determine which individual IDCS dimensions accounted for the greatest percentage of variability in RAP problem intensity. Results can be found in Table 38. In the first step, women's IDCS Support Validation was significantly

Table 37

Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting RPI Intensity

		Coefficients				
Variable		*B*	*SEB*	β	*t*	*p*
Conflict	Male	-.36	.92	-.09	-.39	.70
	Female	-.21	.98	-.06	-.22	.83
Withdrawal	Male	-.54	.63	-.09	-.85	.40
	Female	-.73	.89	-.09	-.82	.41
Negative affect	Male	.16	.84	.04	.19	.85
	Female	1.67	1.01	.41	1.65	.10
Communication Skills	Male	-.68	1.02	-.15	-.67	.50
	Female	1.43	1.03	.31	1.39	.17
Support Validation	Male	.21	.91	.05	.23	.82
	Female	-2.12	.86	-.57	-2.47	.02
Problem Solving	Male	-.22	.76	-.05	-.29	.77
	Female	.54	.81	.14	.67	.50
Positive Affect	Male	-.44	.79	-.09	-.56	.58
	Female	.62	.82	.15	.75	.45

$R = .53$, F (14, 86) = 2.44, $p = .01$
$R^2 = .29$

Table 38

Regression Analysis between Female Support Validation, Female Communication Skills and RPI Intensity

		Coefficients				
DCS Dimension		*B*	*SEB*	β	*t*	*p*
*Support Validation	Female	-1.57	.34	-.42	-4.59	<.001
**Support Validation	Female	-2.80	.62	-.75	-4.53	<.001
Communication Skills	Female	1.82	.77	.39	2.37	<.001

$R = .42$, F (1,99) = 21.07, $p < .001$

* R^2 Support validation female =.18

**R^2 Support validation female and communication skills female =.22

associated with RAP intensity, R = .42, F (1,99) = 21.07, p < .001 and accounted for 18% of the variance in RAP intensity, R^2 = .18 (a medium effect size). Then, women's IDCS Communication scores were entered in the second step adding an additional 22% of explained variance, R^2 *change* = .22. Together, both variables explained 40% of the variability in RAP intensity scores. Examination of the coefficients in the final step reveals that women's Support Validation scores are negatively associated with RAP intensity (B = -2.80, p < .001) and women's Communication scores are positively associated with RAP intensity (B = 1.82, p = .02).

This further strengthens the finding that IDCS dimensions explain a significant amount of variance in RAP intensity, which supports hypothesis 4. Overall, hypothesis 4 was partially supported. Although RAP problem intensity was significantly associated with IDCS dimensions, RAP problem frequency was not.

Summary of Findings

There were several significant findings for each proposed hypothesis. These include:

Hypothesis 1:

- Relationship functioning was found to be significantly associated with couple attachment measured categorically. Couples with two secure partners scored significantly higher on the MAT than couples with at least one insecure partner. In addition, a significant difference in problem frequency and intensity was found between secure and insecure couples (such that secure couples reported fewer and less severe problems on the RAP than couples with at least one insecure partner).
- Problem intensity was found to be negatively associated with couple security when attachment was measured continuously. Additionally, couples' MAT scores were significantly related to couples' continuous attachment ratings.

Hypothesis 2:

- IDCS dimensions examined for couples as a whole found women's use of Communication Skills and men's use of Positive Affect to be significantly related to attachment measured categorically (both in the expected directions).
- IDCS dimensions examined for men and women individually found a significant relationship between women's attachment measured categorically and their use of Communication Skills, Support Validation, Problem Solving and Conflict (all in the expected directions).
- When attachment was measured continuously, men's use of Support Validation was found to be significantly associated with couple security. Additionally, men who used Support Validation were found to be significantly less likely to be paired with hostilely attached women.

Hypothesis 3:

- All IDCS dimensions except for Withdrawal were significantly associated with male, female, and couples' MAT scores except for men's use of Negative Affect which was associated with male and couple MAT scores but not with women's MAT scores.

Hypothesis 4:

- IDCS dimensions were found to account for a significant amount of variance in problem intensity.
- All significant associations between IDCS dimensions and problem intensity were in the expected directions.
- Male, female, and couple problem intensity were significantly associated with the following IDCS dimensions:
    - female Conflict

  - female Negative Affect

- Male and couple problem intensity were significantly associated with:
  - female Communication Skills
  - male Communication Skills
- Couple problem intensity was significantly associated with:
  - female Support Validation
  - male Support Validation
- Male problem intensity was significantly associated with:
  - female Problem Solving
  - male Positive Affect

CHAPTER 4

Discussion

This study looked at the little explored relationship between adult attachment and couple communication while hoping to replicate findings regarding attachment and relationship satisfaction. Most studies have relied on individuals' self reports of communication styles. The current study examined audiotaped recordings of couples' conversations in the hope of furthering the field's understanding of relationship functioning. While self reports capture individuals' conscious beliefs and observations about their relationships, structured observational measures (such as those used in the current study) allow researchers to capture participants' behaviors exactly, thus increasing the scope and validity of the findings. This study makes a unique contribution to the literature by examining the internal working models of attachment in couples and how these internal representations affect interpersonal behavior.

There were a number of significant findings that indicate a relationship between couple communication, relationship satisfaction, and attachment status. In addition, there were replications of previous findings on couple communication, couple attachment, and relationship satisfaction.

It was hypothesized that couples with two secure partners would report higher levels of relationship satisfaction, fewer and less severe problems, and would employ more positive types of communication (Problem Solving, Support Validation, Communication Skills, and Positive Affect) than couples with at least one insecure partner. In contrast, the study expected to find couples with at least one insecure partner to be less satisfied with their relationships, report more frequent and more severe problems, and use more negative types of communication (Withdrawal, Conflict, and Negative Affect).

Relationship Satisfaction and Attachment Status

The relationship between attachment (measured both categorically and continuously) and relationship satisfaction was examined in Hypothesis One. Relationship satisfaction was operationalized as relationship adjustment measured by the MAT, and problem frequency and intensity measured by the RAP. In examining couples' relationship adjustment scores and attachment, it was found that couples in which both partners described themselves as secure were significantly more satisfied with their relationships than those couples with at least one insecure partner. Significant relationships were also found between problem intensity and couple attachment when attachment was measured both categorically and continuously. These findings support Hypothesis One and are consistent with previous research connecting relationship adjustment and secure attachment (Crowell et al., 2002; Kobak & Hazan, 1991; Paley et al., 1999).

When attachment was measured categorically, it was found that couples in which both partners were secure identified fewer problems than those with at least one insecure partner. These findings further support the hypothesis that secure attachment is positively associated with relationship adjustment.

In contrast to the findings regarding attachment measured categorically, when attachment was measured continuously, no relationship was found between degree of couple security and the number of problems reported. These contrasting findings are most likely explained by the difference in the range of the scores on each subscale. Problem frequency scores had a much smaller range (0-15) than problem intensity scores (0-57). Problem intensity is also a more subjective measure than problem frequency, which might also help to explain this measure's greater range. This greater range makes problem intensity a more sensitive measure which is therefore more likely to yield significant results. The decreased sensitivity of the categorical attachment measure coupled with the restricted range of problem frequency likely explains the

lack of significant findings between attachment measured categorically and problem frequency versus intensity.

It is also possible that problem intensity may be more strongly associated with attachment security and that the difference in significance of the findings may not be entirely due to the restricted range of the scores. All couples have relationship problems, but the intensity of these problems may be affected by the attachment status of both partners. It is possible that insecure attachment leads to more severe relationship problems irrespective of problem frequency. Additionally, more severe problems may lead to a sense of insecurity in the context of the relationship.

Couple Communication and Attachment Status

Hypothesis Two predicted that communication would be significantly related to attachment in that couples with two secure partners would be more likely to use positive forms of communication and would use fewer negative forms of communication than those couples with at least one insecure partner. Hypothesis 2 was partially supported with some associations found between communication and attachment status. These findings evidence an important link between the intrapsychic sphere of attachment representations and the interpersonal sphere of communication behavior between partners.

When the IDCS dimensions were examined as a group, it was found that women in secure partnerships (where both partners are secure) used effective and constructive communication skills (as measured by the "Communication Skills" dimension) more than women in non-secure (at least one partner was insecure) relationships. In addition, men in secure partnerships used more Positive Affect than men in insecure partnerships.

The positive and negative IDCS dimensions were also examined separately. The positive IDCS dimensions yielded significant results for women but not men. Specifically, securely

attached women were found to be significantly more likely to use Communication, Support Validation, and Problem Solving than their insecure counterparts. They were also significantly less likely to use Conflict. In contrast, no significant differences in communication dimensions were found for secure versus insecure men. Irrespective of attachment style, most men used primarily the positive communication dimension of Communication Skills (meaning that they effectively expressed their thoughts and feelings to their partners in a constructive manner).

These gender differences represent replications of previous research that found female attachment to be a consistently stronger predictor of communication than male attachment (Feeney, 1994; Kobak & Hazan, 1991; Paley, 1999). In addition, it is not uncommon for research on couple functioning to show more findings for women than men (Markman, Stanley, & Blumberg, 2001). Researchers hypothesize that this is because women are socialized to speak more in the context of romantic relationships and therefore more data points exist for women than men. Women often lead couple conversations and feel the need to take care of their partners. Insecure women may look to their male partners to provide reassurance through positive forms of communication. These insecure women may then become combative (using IDCS dimensions like Conflict) as a means of protecting themselves or lashing out in disappointment. Alternatively, this behavior might be seen as an effort on the insecure women's part to engage their partners when a more positive bid for attention has gone unanswered or when they have experienced their partners as distant.

In addition, it has been hypothesized that women are more likely to carry the remnants of earlier attachment relationships into their current partnerships (Paley et al., 1999). Thus, the women in the sample may be treating and reacting to their partners based on their internal representations, whereas men may be more likely to deal with the here and now, regardless of their previous attachment experiences. This might help to explain why the study found women's

attachment status to be linked to communication behavior while men's was not. This highlights the issue of whether the attachment representations being measured in the study were globalized representations carried over from childhood or relationship-specific representations. This idea and its implications on the study will be discussed further in the "Limitations" section below. Alternatively, men may not be able to access their internal attachment representations as readily as women. This would cause the men to unintentionally underreport attachment insecurity leading to the study's lack of findings in regard to men's attachment and communication style.

Another possible explanation for the lack of significant findings regarding men's communication and attachment is that some of the men in the sample may have became flooded while arguing with their partner. Gottman and Levenson (1998) have documented the physiological difference between men and women when arguing. Men have been found to be more physiologically reactive to stress and have greater stress-related endocrine responses than women. Therefore, men may tend to avoid negative affect more than women as it extracts a greater physiological toll on them. This avoidance may take the form of Withdrawal. Unfortunately, due to the use of audio rather than videotapes to record the couples' conversations, much of the Withdrawal that may have been employed was unable to be coded.

Although no significant relationship was found between male attachment security and general communication behaviors, a significant association was found between men's use of Support Validation and the attachment style of the women they were partnered with. Men who were frequent users of Support Validation were less likely to be partnered with hostilely attached women. Men who use Support Validation likely foster security and openness in their female partners while men who use little Support Validation may have partners who react to this lack of support by feeling both hostile and insecure. Alternatively, men who receive less Communication, Support Validation, and Problem Solving and more Conflict from their

insecurely-attached female partners may use less Support Validation. Over time, they may feel that providing Support Validation does not serve to reassure their insecure partners. Or, they may be less inclined to provide Support Validation because they are receiving more Conflict behavior and less Support Validation from their partners.

In contrast to the men, there were no significant associations found between women's style of communication and the attachment status of their partners. It is possible that women learn to provide certain behaviors in their relationships irrespective of the security status of their partners (Gottman, 1993). Or, perhaps we are again seeing women behave more in accordance with their internal working models of attachment representations and less in reaction to what their partner is actually doing or saying (Paley et al., 1999). Although it is possible that because men's communication behaviors do not vary according to their attachment styles, women do not base their behaviors on men's attachment styles.

None of the negative IDCS dimensions (Conflict, Withdrawal, and Negative Affect) were found to be significantly associated with attachment security. This is likely explained by the fact that a non-distressed sample relatively early in their relationships was used in the study. Non-distressed partners tend to use few negative communication dimensions and these dimensions therefore had a small range and little variability. Thus, the data yielded no significant findings. In addition, very little Withdrawal was coded overall for this sample. The IDCS was developed to be used with videotaped data. Audiotapes were used in this study and therefore the scarcity of Withdrawal coded is most likely due to the fact that the coders were unable to observe the many non-verbal attributes of Withdrawal. Some of the behavioral cues associated with Withdrawal are: avoiding eye contact while speaking or listening, looking down or away, turning one's body away from one's partner, increasing and maintaining physical distance from one's partner, putting a physical barrier between oneself and one's partner (e.g. arms akimbo, hands covering

part of the face, etc.), and fidgeting with hair, glasses, or clothing. None of these cues can be effectively observed using audiotape. The cues relied upon in this study to code Withdrawal were: a partner gives up the discussion, clams up, displays a low level of communicative assertiveness, is unresponsive to his or her partner, rarely adds new information to the discussion, and/or displays a low level of self-disclosure. Relying on these cues alone may have been insufficient to detect Withdrawal in many cases. In sum, many of these couples may have been engaged in Withdrawal behaviors but the design of the study did not allow for this to be coded in many instances.

It is important to point out that a greater number of significant results were found in this study when using self-report measures (the RAP and MAT) than observational measures (the IDCS). Although it is possible that there is a stronger association between attachment and relationship adjustment than attachment and communication, it is also possible that insecurely attached individuals are more likely to report greater levels of relationship maladjustment than would be observable to an outsider. This would imply that attachment is generalized and will color all of an individual's experiences, perhaps even in spite of their partner's positive communication behavior. This sort of dissatisfaction would likely be reported on self-report measures like the MAT and RAP but may not be apparent to a neutral observer on the IDCS. Perhaps insecure individuals are experiencing their relationships as problem ridden and dissatisfying, while their observable relationship communication is not significantly more negative than that of a secure individual. The meaning received by an individual is likely colored, at least in part, by their internal working model of attachment and previous relationship experiences. This received meaning may very well be distinct from their partner's intended meaning. Thus, the IDCS scores of insecure individuals may not reflect their subjective experience. If this were the case it would imply that attachment maybe a less malleable

construct that thought by some researchers and practitioners. If individuals' process information based on their attachment status, regardless of the actual intention of the communication, this would make a person's attachment status even more difficult to change based on new experiences.

Additionally, this study sampled a majority of couples who were at the relative start of their relationships. It is possible that over time the relationship problems associated with insecure attachment may begin to erode couple communication. Were this sample examined ten years after the initial data collection, a significant difference might be found between attachment style and communication.

Couple Communication and Relationship Satisfaction

Hypothesis Three examined the relationship between couple communication and relationship adjustment. All aspects of couple communication except Withdrawal were found to be significantly associated with relationship adjustment. The finding that relationship adjustment and communication are significantly related represents a replication of previous research findings indicating that communication was one of the most important predictors of relationship adjustment (Storaasli & Markman, 1990). The two major tasks of marriage have been thought to be managing conflicts and promoting intimacy (Storaasli & Markman, 1990), and as the present results indicate, negative communication can have a detrimental effect on the entire health of the relationship. A lack of adequate communication skills can hamper the resolution of other relationship problems such as disagreements about money or how to spend leisure time. In addition, leftover negative emotions associated with unresolved problems can spill over into efforts to communicate effectively. This spill-over of negative emotions can create a downward spiral where disagreements can negatively affect one's ability to communicate. This inability to communicate and feel heard by one's partner can in turn increase negative affect. Negative

communication patterns are also likely to stand in the way of couples participating in joint activities that might help repair some of the damage done during arguments. For example, most couples are unlikely to engage in a fun activity or be physically intimate after a major relationship battle (Markman & Kraft, 1989).

In the present study, when all communication variables were examined together, female Conflict and male Positive Affect predicted relationship adjustment. Women who were likely to use Conflict communication scored lower on relationship adjustment than women who used it infrequently. Men who were likely to use Support Validation scored higher on relationship adjustment than men who did not. It is possible that men who are likely to engage in the use of Positive Affect are unlikely to elicit Conflict communication from their partners. Perhaps women are looking to their male partners for reassurance in the form of Positive Affect but when their partners are ill-equipped to provide this form of reassurance, these women move into Conflict mode.

The replication of this finding is particularly noteworthy, given that the sample was non-distressed couples early in their relationships. This suggests that communication behavior is a highly sensitive discriminator of relationship adjustment. This finding is in line with those of several independent prospective studies of happy, committed couples, which have demonstrated that even the beginning instances of problematic forms of communication (and the absence of positive forms) predict which couples will be satisfied and stable over time (Gottman, Coan, Carrere & Swanson, 1998; Markman, Renick, Floyd, Stanley & Clements, 1993).

Couple Communication and Self-reports of Relationship Problems

Hypothesis Four looked at the relationship between couple communication and both the number and intensity of problems reported by couples. Consistent with previous findings, the present study found only problem intensity, and not problem frequency, to be significantly

associated with communication. In addition, as previously noted, problem frequency scores had a more restricted range than problem intensity scores, which may additionally explain the lack of significant findings for problem frequency. The relationship between communication and problem intensity is most likely bidirectional as inadequate communication skills can lead to more severe problems and severe problems can in turn impact the couple's ability to communicate.

In contrast to problem frequency, there were several significant relationships found between problem intensity and communication. All correlations were in the expected directions, meaning that problem intensity was negatively associated with positive communication. All female IDCS dimensions except Positive Affect were significantly associated with male problem intensity. Only female Conflict, Negative Affect, and Positive Affect were significantly associated with female problem intensity. For men, all three positive communication dimensions (Positive Affect, Communication, and Support Validation) were significantly associated with male problem intensity but not female problem intensity. Of the negative communication dimensions, only male Negative Affect was significantly associated with male problem intensity. Male Problem Solving and Conflict were not significantly associated with male or female problem intensity. Overall, male problem intensity was much more significantly associated with male and female communication than female problem intensity.

A stepwise regression found that the most variability in problem intensity was accounted for by female Support Validation (18%) and female Communication (22%). It is notable that women's positive communication codes account for most of the variability in couple reported intensity of problems. As reviewed above Markman, Stanley, and Blumberg (2001) point out that women engage in much of the talking during problem solving conversations. Thus, it might be reasoned that female partners set the overall tone of arguments. Women who experience their

relationship problems as relatively minor are likely to feel freer to use communication dimensions such as Support Validation and Communication with their partners. In contrast to women who rate their problems are severe, these women do not feel the need to defensively protect themselves or withdraw from what they experience as severe problems. In addition, their partners may perceive more support from them (due to their use of Support Validation and Communication) and will therefore also rate their problems as less severe.

Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations that should be taken into account when interpreting the findings. To begin, caution should be used in generalizing these results to the general population as the sample consisted of primarily young (the average participant was close to 29 years old), Caucasian (59.6% of the sample), educated (participants had an average of almost 16 years of education), urban individuals at the relative start of long-term romantic relationships (the median amount of time most couples in the sample had dated was 2.4 years and couples in the sample had lived together for a median of 9 months). This restricted age range and short length of most of the couple relationships could have had a profound affect on the results. Attachment security is likely affected by the amount of time a couple has been together as well as each individual partner's developmental phase of life. Follow-up studies looking at couples who have been together longer would help to illuminate how time might affect attachment security. Couples in long-term relationships might evidence enhanced mutuality, or, conversely, each half of the couple may have figuratively retreated to their own separate emotional corner.

As in all attachment studies in which a non-clinical sample is used, the frequency of insecure attachment was lower than that of secure attachment and thus presents a small group of insecurely attached individuals. In the future, a study with a similar design might use a non-prevention sample in order to increase the number of insecurely attached individuals. In fact, the

percentage of self-reported secure individuals in this study (approximately 70% of the sample for both men and women) is higher than the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) norms for the general population (approximately 60%) (van IJzendoorn, M. H. & Bakermans-Kranenburg, M. J.,1996). It is possible that self-reports tend to inflate security as individuals' (primarily unconscious) defenses cause them to underreport insecurity and inflate security. Thus, despite their ease of administration as compared to narrative measures like the AAI, self-report measures may not be the most accurate means of measuring attachment.

It is important to note that only self-report measures of attachment were used in this study and it would be interesting to look for differences were the study repeated using both self-report measures of attachment and attachment narratives such as the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI). Self-report measures are commonly believed to measure conscious beliefs about the self and other. Measures such as the AAI, which look at the coherence of a narrative rather than its content, are thought to more effectively tap into unconscious attachment representations (Main et al., 2008). In addition, previous research has shown that different types of insecurely attached individuals use different cognitive styles, some of which are better measured through the AAI (Bouthillier et al., 2002). Although both self-report and narrative measures have been found to accurately measure secure attachment, both avoidant and anxiously attached individuals use different mental processes to organize their experiences, each of which is best measured differently. Avoidant individuals are thought to use cognition to organize themselves while anxiously attached individuals are more likely to use emotion. Thus, while self-reports are good measures of avoidant attachment, they may miss anxious attachment characteristics, because questionnaire responses are based more on cognition (especially self-perception) than on the spontaneously-expressed emotion elicited in narrative interviews. In contrast, the emotions used

by anxiously attached individuals are likely best measured by narratives like the AAI (Bouthillier et al., 2002).

As has been discussed in detail above, the present study used audiotapes to record couple communication and therefore various non-verbal cues were not able to be coded. This may have resulted in a scarcity of Withdrawal being coded and it is possible that other physical cues were missed which may have been either positively (hand holding, direct eye contact, etc.) or negatively (averting gaze, arms folded over chest, turning away, etc.) coded. Future studies should, whenever possible, use videotapes to record couple communication to avoid this problem.

Alternative Explanations/Suggestions for Future Research

The directionality of the relationships examined in this study is not entirely clear. Correlations between variables should not be confused with causation, and caution should be used when interpreting the above mentioned results.

One of the most intriguing questions raised by this and other studies is the degree to which attachment is a continuous, unchanging construct, or one open to modification through different relationships across the life cycle. There has been much debate in the literature as to whether adult attachment is a globalized set of representations laid down during infancy that then colors all adult relationships or, if current relationships can continue to shape one's attachment representations. In other words, is attachment a characteristic of the individual or of the relationship? Attachment theory proposes that there is continuity from infancy experience to adult attachment classification and this has been empirically supported (Beckwith et al., 1999; Bowlby 1969, 1973, 1988; Main et al., 1985). But, this theory also provides for an openness in attachment representations whereby attachment can be affected by experiences past infancy. Hazan and Shaver (1997, p. 521) stated that, "romantic relationships have causal effects beyond

those predictable from personality alone," highlighting that relationships are complex, powerful phenomena that may be capable of creating attachment representations distinct from those of one's childhood. Cooke (2000) and Feeney (2003) separately conducted studies showing that the characteristics of one's partner can either maintain or promote change in an individual's attachment representations for better or for worse. Bretherton (1985) also took issue with the idea of attachment as a solely generalized representation. He asserted that an individual's internal working model is capable of accommodating new information based on experiences with romantic partners.

The most likely scenario involves a bidirectional linkage like that proposed by Mikulincer, et al. (2002). In this case attachment and relationship interactions create a circular pattern of influence. Mikulincer, et al. (2002) found that a sense of attachment security in a relationship is associated with positive beliefs about couple relationships, the formation of more stable couple relationships, satisfaction with dating relationships and marriage, high levels of intimacy, commitment and emotional involvement within the relationship, and positive patterns of communication. These researchers propose a systemic model whereby the changes in any aspect of the system will affect all other parts of the system. This bidirectional influence can work toward greater attachment security or insecurity. For example, a secure partner may facilitate the autonomy needs and capacities of the other partner, which may in turn foster that partner's sense of attachment security. Conversely, attachment insecurity in one partner can have ripple effects throughout the partnership system. But, it is unclear if this proposed 'ripple' moves in any sort of predictable way. In the present study it was found that men who frequently used Support Validation were less likely to be partnered with hostile women while there was no association found between the attachment status of a woman's partner and her likelihood to use various types of communication. Perhaps the men's attachment representations were open to

influence by their current relationships, whereas the women in the current study communicated based on their past attachment representations, regardless of the security of their current partner. As previously stated, Paley et al. (1999) found women to be more likely to carry the remnants of earlier attachment relationships into their current relationships. Thus, perhaps women will communicate irrespective of their partner's attachment status and behavior whereas men are more likely to be affected and alter their communication based on their partner's attachment status. For this reason, a sequential process analysis would shed light on the interactions between partners in secure/insecure couple pairs. Although such an analysis is beyond the scope of this study, it would highlight the possible patterns of these couples' conversations. The data might indicate which partner leads the conversations and how this affects overall communication and functioning. It might also reveal whether or not one partner's insecurity can color the entire couple interaction or if the secure partner's stance be powerful enough to counteract the affects of the insecure partner's outlook. Such insights would have significant clinical relevance for the treatment of such secure/insecurely paired couples.

It is also possible that the insecurity being reported on the self-report measures used did not match the individual's overall attachment representation. Although the ASI attempts to measure underlying working models of attachment, the couples in the study were aware that they were taking part in a study of romantic relationships. Therefore, participants may have been primed to respond to the self-report measures in the context of their current romantic relationship alone. Although the attachment status captured by these reports may have likely corresponded with the individual's overall attachment representation, the addition of a narrative measure might better clarify this issue. Assuming that the current relationship alone was being measured, it is possible that couple communication is acting as a causal factor in reported attachment.

Clinical Implications

The present study has several important clinical implications. The results underscore the importance of effective positive forms of communication in regard to couple satisfaction. It also adds texture to the field in pinpointing the types of communication most likely used by individuals with insecure partners (specifically that men who use Support Validation are less likely to be partnered with insecure women), and indicates that couples with two secure partners are significantly more likely to include women who use Communication and men who use Support Validation than couples with at least one insecure partner. This study emphasizes that it is not communication alone that determines couple functioning but attachment as well. It is clear that attachment provides an important context in couple communication, and communication is consistently rated by couples as one of the most important issues in a relationship (Storaasli & Markman, 1990).

This study indicates that there is a link between the intrapsychic sphere of attachment representations and the interpersonal sphere of communication with one's partner and therefore supports the need for couple interventions that do more than simply change couple communication patterns. The results make clear that communication should be viewed as a symptom of relationship dysfunction rather than an underlying cause. This study indicates that dysfunctional communication is the interpersonal result of one or both partners' intraspsychic attachment needs not being met. Many couples seeking treatment suffer from problems related to unmet attachment needs. As this study's results make clear, an individual's attachment representations and their sense of whether or not their attachment needs are being sufficiently met, have a significant impact on their communication with their partner.

Interventions such as Susan Johnson's Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy (EFCT) focus not only on communication but look at relationship functioning through the lens of

attachment. The current results suggest that when dealing with insecurely attached individuals, changing communication patterns alone may be insufficient to change couple functioning and overall relationship satisfaction. EFCT, for example, views relationship distress and dissatisfaction as resulting from negative interaction cycles created and maintained by partners' unmet attachment needs (Greenberg & Johnson, 1988; Johnson, 2004). An EFCT therapist requires each partner to explore and give voice to their unmet needs and then encourages the other partner to respond to these needs in a supportive manner. The EFCT literature has shown this intervention to help shift couples' negative interaction cycles to more positive, supportive styles (Johnson, Hunsley, Greenberg, & Schindler, 1999). Such an intervention addresses both the attachment needs of each individual while the partner's response works to increase relationship satisfaction.

In addition, if we conceptualize attachment as relationship-specific, the current results support clinical interventions that increase the number of moments when one partner can meet the attachment needs of the other. It is possible that this sort of shared experience of meeting one's partner's needs and having one's own needs met might help lead to the development of secure attachment within the relationship. This would be particularly relevant if the attachment being measured in studies such as this are relationship specific, or causal, and not generalized.

In addition, therapists might encourage the development of coping mechanisms that mimic those used by securely attached individuals by teaching partners to self -soothe and regulate their own emotions, and to avoid consistently relying on their partner to do this for them. While romantic partnerships are attachment relationships, they are adult relationships that are distinct from a child's attachment to his or her caregiver. Infants and children have no choice but to look to their caregivers to regulate their emotions. Adults, under optimal circumstances, have developed this ability within themselves. While one goal of couple therapy

should be to establish that the partner can indeed be thought of as a secure base from which to explore the world and a safe haven in times of need, another goal should be a balance whereby each partner works to take care of their own emotion regulation and develop an internal sense of psychological safety to the greatest extent possible. This encourages a healthy interdependence, distinct from complete independence or enmeshment.

Conclusion

This study further links attachment to relationship satisfaction and communication as well as replicating past findings related to couple communication and relationship satisfaction. The majority of hypotheses were supported: relationship satisfaction was significantly linked to attachment status, positive aspects of communication were linked to women's attachment status, men's use of Support Validation was significantly related to their partners' attachment status, couple communication and relationship satisfaction were significantly related, and relationship satisfaction (specifically problem intensity) was significantly associated with couple communication.

Most importantly, this study makes a major contribution to the couple attachment literature by linking the intrapsychic sphere of attachment to the interpersonal sphere of communication behavior. Up to this point, such a link has been primarily measured by parents' internal working models of attachment (as measured by the AAI) and their subsequent behavior with their children during the Strange Situation. The present study examines couples' intrapsychic attachment representations (as measured by self-reports) and their interpersonal relationship communication behavior (as observed using the IDCS) and evidences a connection between the two.

Appendix A

Locke Wallace Relationship Measure (MAT)
(Locke, H.J., Wallace, K.M., 1959)

Couple #: _____ Gender: Male_____ Female_____

1. Please check the dot on the scale below which best describes the degree of happiness, everything considered, of your present relationship. The middle point, "happy", represents the degree of happiness which most people get from their relationships, and the scale gradually ranges on one side to those few who are very unhappy in their relationships, and on the other, to those few who experience extreme happiness in their relationships.

0 2 7 15 20 25 35
o----------o----------o----------o----------o----------o----------o

Please state the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner on the following items. Please check one column for each item.

	Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Occasionally Disagree	Frequently Disagree	Almost Always Disagree	Always Disagree
2. Handling Finances	*5*	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*	*0*
3. Matters of recreation	*5*	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*	*0*
4. Demands affection	*8*	*6*	*4*	*2*	*1*	*0*
5. Friends	*5*	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*	*0*
6. Sex relations	*15*	*12*	*9*	*4*	*1*	*0*
7. Conventionality	*5*	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*	*0*
8. Philosophy of life	*5*	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*	*0*
9. Dealing with Relatives	*5*	*4*	*3*	*2*	*1*	*0*

10. When disagreements arise, they usually result in:
(a) You giving in *1* (b) Your partner giving in (c) Agreement by mutual give and take *10*

11. Do you and your partner engage in outside interests together?
(a) All of them *1* (b) Some of them *8* (c) Very few of them *3 (d)* None of them *0*

12. In leisure time do you generally prefer: (a) To be "on the go" (b) To stay home
Does your partner prefer: (a) To be "on the go" (b) To stay home

If both answer “at home” = *10;* if both answer “on the go” = *3;* if different = *2*

13. Do you confide in your partner? (a) Almost never *0* (b) Rarely *3* (c) In most things *8*
(d) In everything *15*

Answer the following only if you are married or planning to marry your partner:
14. Do you ever wish you had not married your partner (or planned marriage)?
(a) frequently *0* (b) Occasionally *3* (c) Rarely *8* (d) Never *15*

15. If you had your life to live over, do you think you would? (a) Marry (or plan to marry) your current partner *15* (b) Marry (or plan to marry) a different person *8* (c) Not marry (or plan to marry) at all

Appendix B

Relationship Agendas Protocol

Consider the list below of issues that all relationships face. Please rate how much of a problem each area currently is in your relationship by writing a number form 0 (not at all a problem) to 100 (a severe problem). For example, if "children" were somewhat of a problem, you might enter 25 next to "children". If "children" were not a problem in your relationship, you might enter a 0 next to "children." If "children" were a severe problem, you might enter 100. If you wish to add other areas not included in our list, please do so in the blank space provided. Please be sure to rank all areas.

____MONEY	_____RECREATION	_____JELOUSLY
____DAILY/WEEKLY SCHEDULES	_____COMMUNICATION	_____RELIGION
_____FREINDS	_____PACE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PARTNERS	_____TIME TOGETHER VS. TIME APART
_____IN-LAWS	_____CHILDREN	_____ALCOHOL & DRUGS
_____SEX	_____DIFFERENCES IN TIME PERSPECTIVES	_____CAREER
_____MANAGING TIME	_____OTHER	

Appendix C

Interactional Dimensions Coding System
(Julien, D., Markman, H.J., & Lindhal, K.M., 1989)
Individual Codes

Conflict (Conf)
Level of tension, hostility, dissension, antagonism or negative affect an individual displays.

- speaks with a negative voice (e.g. impatient, angry, whining, cold)
- escalates negative affect (i.e. reacts with negative affect to own or partner's negative affect)
- makes critical comments directed at partner or at partner's relatives and friends
- puts down, blames, uses sarcasm, **defensiveness**, antagonizes partner
- disagrees more often than agrees with partner
- negative mindreading i.e. attributes negative feelings, attitudes, beliefs, motives to partner (regardless of whether it's true e.g. "You hate my mum.")
- rejects partner's mindreading
- comments negatively on partner's negative behavior
- complains in response to partner's complaints

Note: **Tone can be calm while content denotes conflict**.

Withdrawal (WD)
Avoidance or **denial** of the interaction or of the problem discussion in some way. The individual may evade the issue or seem to "pull him/herself out of" the interaction. They may seem to retreat into a shell, back off or try to displace the conversation. **A process code**.

- gives up the discussion, **sense of hopelessness**
- clams up, **omission of information**, **quietness, sighing, sense of resignation.**
- displays low level of communicative assertiveness
- is unresponsive to partner,
- rarely adds new information to discussion
- displays low level of self-disclosure

Communication Skills (CS)

- Appropriate and positive expressive skills.
- Expressive voice (e.g. variations in intonation and rhythm)
- Expresses emotions about partner and other persons (e.g. relatives, friends)
- Displays high self-disclosure
- Expresses opinions in a clear and direct manner
- Is able to exit negative cycle, i.e. reacts positively/neutrally to partner's negative statement/affect
- Summarizes mutual opinion or decision
- Comments about communication process i.e. makes statements about the way both partners are interacting
- Asks partner for more information
- Displays appropriate humor, laughs.

Note: Individual must be **talking <u>to</u> partner**, not talking against partner.
"Yes, but" statements are NOT positive expressive skills.
If language skills affect clarity of communication: to be considered as being unclear. i.e. lack of clarity is not to be discounted even if its because of poor language skills.

Support Validation (SV)
Appropriate and positive listening skills and speaking skills which convey supportiveness and understanding to the partner. E.g. speaking skills which are supportive and validating positively reinforce the partner's preceding statements. Positive reinforcement means that the partner's statements seem to be registered, acknowledged and encouraged. **"Yes, but" statements are not supportive statements**.

- attends, responds, reacts to, assents when partner is speaking
- expressive voice (variations in rhythm and intonation)
- expresses warmth, concern, sympathy towards partner
- positive, neutral mindreading (e.g. attributes thoughts, feelings or motives that facilitate partner's clarification)
- accepts partner's mindreading
- summarizes, paraphrases, agrees or acknowledges partner's statements
- encourages, flatters, compliments partner, minimizes partners self-deprecating statements.

Positive Affect (PA)
Emotional tone or quality of the voice. The degree to which an individual is positive on this dimension.
Single or multiple variations in volume, pitch, inflection, rate and rhythm may combine in different patterns to communicate different emotions. Some descriptors are: affectionate, warm, soft, tender, caring, loving, cheerful, excited, buoyant, bubbly, happy, joyous, satisfied, relieved, empathic, concerned. Chuckling & laughter (unless they have negative implications e.g. sarcasm).

Negative Affect (NA)
The degree to which an individual is negative, with regard to, emotional tone or quality of the voice.
Cues: cold, tense, impatient, clipped, whining, sarcastic, angry, furious, hurt, depressed, accusing, irritated.
Note: **Tone of resignation is suggestive of Withdrawal (WD).**

Problem solving (PS)
Ability to define a problem in the relationship and work towards a mutually satisfactory solution for the problem. Needs to be done in a constructive manner.

- recognition, definition, description of problem
- clear expression of wishes and desired outcome
- proposal of solutions, making positive hypothetical plans
- negotiation and compromise
- keeping focused and directed towards solution of problem

Note: Do not pass judgment on the solutions suggested. Couple should be given credit for generating solutions.
If we think that an individual doesn't seem committed to proposals of his/her partner, but is merely paying "lip service" e.g. "Sure.", "okay", it counts less towards compromise/PS, than if they were more enthusiastic and validating e.g. "That's a great idea!".
When couple gets off the topic of discussion, but the new topic is discussed constructively, it does count towards good problem solving skills.

Appendix D

Adult Attachment Scale (AAS)
(Collins, N.L., & Read, S.J., 1990)

Please read each of the following statements and rate the extent to which it describes your feelings about close relationships in general. That is, we want you to think about how you feel in all close relationships including your romantic relationships, friendships, and family relationships. Please use the scale below and indicate the degree to which each statement is characteristic of you by placing a number between 1 and 5 in the space provided to the right of each statement.

1----------2----------3----------4----------5
Not at all characteristic Very characteristic

1. I find it relatively easy to get close to others. _____
2. I do not often worry about being abandoned. _____
3. I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on others. _____
4. People are never there when you need them. _____
5. In relationships, I often worry that others do not really love me. _____
6. I find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. _____
7. I am comfortable depending on others. _____
8. I do not often worry about someone getting too close to me. _____
9. I am somewhat uncomfortable being close to others. _____
10. I am nervous when anyone gets too close. _____
11. In relationships, I often worry that others will not want to stay with me. _____
12. I want to merge completely with another person. _____
13. My desire to merge sometimes scares people away. _____
14. I am comfortable having others depend on me. _____
15. I know that others will be there when I need them. _____
16. I find it difficult to trust others completely. _____
17. Often, people want me to be closer than I feel comfortable being. _____
18. I am not sure that I can always depend on others to be there when I need them. _____

Appendix E

Attachment Style Inventory (ASI)
(Spearling & Berman, 1991)

Below are the scales that describe different styles in relationships. Try to imagine your general, or most common, style of relating to your partner. Begin by reading the first four paragraphs. Then rate from one to nine how characteristic each style is for you and your spouse. After this, place a check mark next to the one style that best describes your relationship, even though none may be completely appropriate.

not at all characteristic slightly characteristic moderately characteristic very characteristic extremely characteristic
1----------2----------3----------4----------5----------6----------7----------8----------9

	Ratings	Best Description
I tend to avoid closeness with my partner because close involvement can lead to disappointment, conflict, or hurt. I prefer to keep more to myself.	_____	_____
I tend to be very closely attached to my partner. I value dependence with others and feel almost compelled to have very strong closeness.	_____	_____
I tend to often be angry with my partner. I frequently feel distrustful or hostile toward him or her.	_____	_____
I tend to feel both angry and dependent toward my partner, or alternate between the two. There is always a struggle between my desire to be very close and my discomfort or anger at closeness.	_____	_____

The scale below refers to the way you think about your relationship. At each end are opposite descriptors. You should circle a number from one to nine, according to which point on the scale is the best description of you.

I worry about my relationship. I am often anxious about it. I am often unsure how it will work out. ... I do not worry about my relationship. I am not very anxious about it. I am confident it will work out.
1----------2----------3----------4----------5----------6----------7----------8----------9

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