EXAMINING LINKS AMONG ATTACHMENT, COMMITMENT, RELATIONSHIP WORK, AND SATISFACTION IN YOUNG ADULT COUPLES

by

Taylor Hampton

May, 2023

Directors of Thesis: Andrew Brimhall Ph.D.

Major Department: Human Development and Family Science

Using dyadic data, this study explored the relationships between attachment, commitment, relationship work (RW) and satisfaction within young adult couples (n=71). RW is operationalized as discussing romantic challenges with partners and friends (Jensen & Rauer, 2014). Research suggests that an individual's attachment is one of the most fundamental ways people form secure bonds with others (Bello et al., 2008). Attachment has been linked to several relationship outcomes (Feeney, 2016). While many studies have found individual links between attachment and our variables of interest, few have examined them simultaneously using dyadic data. Given the nature of these variables, and the connections between them, we expected that considering them simultaneously would deepen our understanding of these relational interactions. Our Actor-partner interdependence model (APIM) considered actor and partner effects of attachment on commitment, RW, and relationship satisfaction. Findings suggested important gender differences for both partners. These findings not only provide recommendations that will be beneficial for future research, but also provide clinicians important insights when working with couples.

EXAMINING LINKS AMONG ATTACHMENT, COMMITMENT, RELATIONSHIP WORK, AND SATISFACTION IN YOUNG ADULT COUPLES

A Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the Department of Human Development and Family Science

East Carolina University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science in Marriage and Family Therapy

by

Taylor Hampton

May 2023

Director of Thesis: Andrew Brimhall, Ph.D.
Thesis Committee Members:
Jake Jensen, Ph.D.
Damon Rappleyea, Ph.D.

© Taylor Hampton, 2023

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people whom I must acknowledge that have helped me accomplish this endeavor. First, to my wonderful thesis chair, Dr. Andy Brimhall, there are simply no words that describe the amount of gratitude I have for you. Your unwavering support and encouragement to complete a thesis helped me recognize my potential as a researcher and a clinician. Throughout my two years in this program you have demonstrated what a secure base looks like and helped me see the kind of therapist I hope to be. Thank you for not only being an amazing chair, professor, and supervisor but a wonderful human who brings kindness and warmth wherever you go. Dr. Jake Jensen, thank you for your expertise in relationship work and in statistics, which made this thesis possible. Thank you for the confidence you have instilled in me and how you have challenged me in ways I can grow as a researcher, clinician, and person. To Dr. Damon Rappleyea, thank you for your guidance and the encouragement to complete a thesis from the beginning. You have been a wonderful mentor throughout my time in the program and helped me grow as a therapist, student, researcher, and professional. I am extremely grateful to have learned and worked alongside you all.

To all others who make up the ECU MFT Program, thank you for being wonderful people, therapists, professors, and cohort mates. Growing and learning with you all over these two years has been one of the most rewarding times of my life. Specifically, thank you to Caleigh who has been the most wonderful dyadic partner and friend to complete a thesis with. Sitting in the hard moments does not feel so hard when you are there. To Molly, the greatest mentee and friend I could have dreamed of. Thank you for being one of my biggest cheerleaders and always seeing the best in me. Thank you for your many hours editing this thesis and working on various tasks for me. To my closest friends, Nerissa, Katie, and Ashley, who have shown me an inexpressible depth of love and who bring so much joy into my life. Thank you for loving all parts of me and walking with me in this life. To Luke, my love and the one I am joyfully going to commit my life too. I love growing in security and safety with you. Thank you for remaining steady and showing me incredible amounts of patience and encouragement throughout this process. Lastly, I must acknowledge the One who has gotten me to the end of this thesis and program. God, thank you for who you are: faithful, perfectly safe and secure, and always near to me. All knowledge and wisdom is from you, may what is presented here bring hope and healing to many couples and glory to you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LITERATURE REVIEW

RESULTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Shortly after John Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1980) developed a transformative theory for how infants develop attachment bonds to caregivers, researchers began to conceptualize this theory in relation to adult love (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Researchers have found that an individual's attachment style is one of the most fundamental ways people conceptualize their ability to form close and secure bonds with others (Bello et al., 2008; Feeney, 2016). Findings also show that attachment styles are linked to different relationship outcomes such as quality, stability, communication patterns, and overall satisfaction (Feeney, 1994; Feeney, 2016). Researchers began to combine different theories of love and attachment (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Bartholomew, 1990) to see how secure and insecure attachments correspond to different types of love (Levy & Davis, 1988; Madey & Rogers, 2009; Feeney 2016). Through this research, the field of attachment began to shift into looking at different components of romantic love and how attachment styles may influence different variables.

One of these variables is the level of commitment in romantic relationships. While researchers have stated that there is a lack of research on attachment and commitment in both dating and marital relationships (Ehrenberg, 2012), some researchers have found individual and dyadic links between attachment and commitment (e.g., Levy & Davis, 1988; Simpson, 1990; Kurdek, 2002). It has been shown that those with secure attachments often have greater relationship outcomes (e.g., commitment, satisfaction). Through a content analysis, research has also found that commitment is included in individuals working model of attachment (Feeney, 2016) which would support other researchers' idea that commitment in a relationship is a crucial aspect of a secure attachment (Duemmler & Koback, 2001).

Another construct that plays a role in an individual’s romantic relationship is the idea of relationship work. Relationship work (RW) stems from Helms et al. (2003) idea of marriage

work which is the amount of disclosure a spouse shares with their partner or friend. Jensen and Rauer (2014) have defined RW as discussions in non-married romantic relationships with one's partner and friend about their romantic relationship. Due to the recent exploration of RW in romantic relationships, there is very limited research done on this and only one study to date has tested possible links of attachment to RW (Jensen et al., 2019). While this study did run analyses of attachment and RW it did not report the full findings or look at any mediating effects on RW. This study (Jensen et al., 2019) and the researcher's previous work (Jensen & Rauer, 2015) show the importance of continuing to study attachment and RW because of attachment's role in relationship outcomes. Studying attachment and RW also have significant implications for both future research and clinical work as many clinicians are interested in couples' communication patterns and how their social networks may influence the presenting problem (Jensen et al., 2018) and how satisfied they feel in their relationships.

Relationship satisfaction is a construct that interests many researchers due to its practical implications for understanding relationships and clinical work. In a variety of populations (e.g., young adults, middle-aged, dating, remarried) attachment styles have been shown to be associated with relationship satisfaction (e.g., Hollist & Miller, 2005; Li & Chan, 2012; Hadden et al., 2014; Diamond et al., 2018). Most research finds that insecure attachments are linked with lower levels of romantic satisfaction (Feeney, 2016; Candel & Turliuc, 2019) while little research has been done to test mediating effects on satisfaction (Tuckers & Anders, 1999). In a recent meta-analysis on insecure attachments and relationship satisfaction (Candel & Turliuc, 2019), researchers defined relationship satisfaction as one's subjective quality of their relationship. In Candel and Turliuc's (2019) review of the literature, they found that the negative link between insecure attachment and relationship satisfaction has been found to be relatively consistent across different methodologies. Meanwhile, different moderators play a role in the

differences between anxious and avoidant attachment (e.g., relationship status and relationship length, respectively). These researchers also noted the more recent use of the actor-partner interdependence model (APIM) when studying relationship satisfaction due to the importance of evaluating the dyadic effects of attachment and satisfaction. Due to the importance of dyadic effects, the current study will utilize the APIM model in our data analyses.

While there is extensive literature on attachment theory and its associations with romantic relationships, this study is needed to further contribute to the literature by combining our independent and dependent variables with dyadic data. While research has examined the role of commitment within attachment and relationship satisfaction (Madey & Rodger, 2009) and the role of commitment in RW (Jensen & Rauer, 2014) with individual data, to the best of our knowledge, there have not been any studies done on combining our four variables with dyadic data. Moreover, many studies have found individual and dyadic links between attachment and each of the dependent variables. However, given the nature of these variables, and the possible connections between them, it seems that a model that considers each variable in connection with the other variables would help deepen our understanding of these relational interactions. Specifically, what is the role of attachment on commitment, RW, and relationship satisfaction when holding the other variables constant. It is hoped that this study will provide the field with information that will be beneficial for future research studies and clinical work with couples.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this quantitative cross-sectional study was to test attachment theory and the independent variables (IV), anxious and avoidant attachment behavior, to see if they were correlated to the dependent variables (DV) of commitment levels, relationship work (RW) with partner and friend, and overall relationship satisfaction for young adults at a large southeastern university. Researchers used a secondary dyadic data set to address the research questions to

show the individual and relational aspects of attachment behavior on commitment, relationship work, and relationship satisfaction. Overall, the aim of this study was exploratory in nature as the researchers sought to understand the association between the independent and dependent variables.

Conclusion

The following chapter (Chapter 2) will present an overview of the existing literature on attachment, commitment, relationship work, and relationship satisfaction. We will also explore how the current study was based on attachment theory and elaborate on how our research questions were derived from other studies based on attachment theory. Chapter 3 outlines specifically outline the methodology that were used to answer the questions of interest. Chapters 4 and 5 explain the results that were found and discuss clinical implications as well as directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

There is extensive research on attachment, commitment, relationship work, and relationship satisfaction individually. Yet, there is limited research on how these four variables are connected. The purpose of this review is to provide a brief overview of literature about attachment with each of the variables of interest in the context of romantic relationships. Attachment theory shapes the current study's view of these variables to help researchers see how they might be interconnected.

Attachment and Romantic Relationships

Since the origins of attachment theory, Bowlby (1969) advocated for the idea that attachment stays with the individual from the cradle to the grave. This pivotal idea expressed the importance of studying attachment into adulthood due to the behavior attachment elicits in individuals throughout their lifespan. Many researchers have supported and expanded this idea of attachment theory by looking at how attachment influences behavior in committed couple relationships and in sexual bonds (see Weiss, 1982; Ainsworth 1989; Feeney, 2016). Just as infants need proximity to their caregivers and a safe place to be in times of distress, this need carries over into adult relationships with their partners (Hazan and Shaver, 1994). As people age their attachment bonds and affections shift; as a child, their parents are their primary attachment figures but as they grow older this primary role is often replaced initially by friends and then typically romantic partners. While attachment is a working model (Hepper & Carnelly, 2012; Feeney, 2016), it is unlikely that attachment styles change in these relationships with peers or partners (Hazan and Shaver, 1994). Experiences with caregivers reinforce an individual's view of themself and others (Hepper & Carnelly, 2012). In romantic relationships, individuals look for behavior that fits into their schemas of relationships and therefore confirms how they were taught to view themselves and the world by their caregivers in infancy (Hazan & Shaver, 1994).

These different views of the self and others originally were made into three categories by Mary Ainsworth in her seminal study The Strange Situation (Ainsworth et al., 1971) and further expanded into romantic relationships by other researchers (Hazan and Shaver, 1987; Bartholomew, 1990). Secure individuals tend to have a working model that has a positive view of themselves and others (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Feeney, 2016). In romantic relationships, secure individuals often see their partners as reliable, trustworthy, accessible, responsive, and engaged. This is in contrast to insecure individuals who have either a negative view of themselves, others, or both. Individuals who are anxiously attached have a positive view of others and a negative view of self. These individuals tend to view themselves as misunderstood and often lack confidence. They also desire closeness in their relationships but often view their partner as unwilling to commit to them or not as accessible as they would like (Hazan and Shaver, 1987; Simpson, 1990; Feeney, 2016). In contrast, individuals who are avoidantly attached tend to see others as unreliable and therefore rely heavily on themselves, often avoiding intimacy because they see partners as often clingy, and overly needy. Bartholomew (1990) expanded upon the previous model of attachments and added a fourth style which is known as disorganized or fearful-avoidant. These individuals have a negative view of self and others, which often leaves them paralyzed because they do not have a safe place to go during times of distress. Research has found no significant differences between gender and attachment style, although some research suggests that gender differences play a role in relationship outcomes (Hazan and Shaver, 1987; Feeney and Noller, 1990; Kirkpatrick and Davis, 1994; Feeney, 2016). Recent literature (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007; Li & Chan, 2012; Mark et al., 2018) has moved away from researching attachment as four distinct categories and instead started measuring an individual's level of anxious and avoidant attachment on their respective subscale. Researchers felt that this approach captured the two key dimensions examined in research that was grounded

by attachment theory (Li & Chan, 2012). It was decided to use this approach in the current study. We will examine the relationship outcomes from individuals that score higher on the anxious or avoidant subscale of the measure.

The links between attachment insecurity and various relationship outcomes are extensive (e.g., Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007; Li & Chan, 2012; Feeney, 2016). Despite findings that show insecure attachments are overall linked with many negative relationship constructs (lower levels of satisfaction, trust, and quality), researchers have found differences in these outcomes between anxious attachment and avoidant attachment individuals (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007; Feeney, 2016). This is likely due to differences in the internal working model of self and others. In the current study, researchers are interested in looking at three specific constructs of romantic relationships (commitment, relationship work, and satisfaction) and how they are linked with anxious and avoidant attachment. The following section will provide a short overview of the literature that exist between attachment and each of these constructs individually.

Attachment and Commitment

Researchers have well established the central role that commitment plays in establishing secure attachments (Levy & Davis, 1988; Duemmler & Koback, 2001) and a core tenet of relationship maintenance (Ho et al., 2011). Studies have commented on the idea that commitment is influenced by past and present events and that these events often influence relationship dynamics (Kelly, 1983 & Lund, 1985), specifically whether a person decides to stay committed to the relationship or not. Commitment researchers often refer to two models of commitment: the investment model (Rusbult, 1979) and the barrier model (Lund, 1985). The investment model suggests that commitment levels in a relationship increase over time, since typically it becomes more difficult to leave a relationship as the costs of doing so become heavier (Rusbult, 1979). In comparison, the barrier model, proposed by Lund (1985), defines

commitment as the decision to continue in the relationship which is often strengthened by time, effort, and the resources put into the relationship. An attachment lens provides some potential insight into both models. As a person transitions their primary attachment from their parent to their partner, their level of commitment shifts, and the risk of losing that person often becomes much harder (investment model). How they invest their time, effort, and resources will often influence whether their partner feels safe within the relationship and therefore chose to stay; it creates barriers that would prevent people from leaving the relationship (barrier model). As felt security grows and stability is brought to the relationship, we can theorize that these individuals will have a greater commitment to the relationship they are choosing to stay in. Hence, creating an interrelated systemic loop that simultaneously strengthens commitment and attachment.

Attachment theory also helps researchers understand commitment through the working models of self and others. This is because we know that past experiences shape the way individuals can commit to and maintain the longevity of the relationship (Kelly, 1983; Tran & Simpson, 2009), and attachment is a key component across the lifespan in relationship functioning (Bowlby, 1969). We can also hypothesize a connection between commitment and attachment in how it may contribute to how easily individuals can turn towards or away from their partners. Turning towards your partner is when someone seeks security in times of distress and shows fewer avoidant behaviors. Attachment theory helps shape our view in hypothesizing why individuals may stay in their relationship if it is due to a mutual feeling of safety and security. When one partner views their partner as committed and invested in the relationship, it enhances the idea of felt security and reinforces the commitment they personally feel. The research outlining the connection between attachment and commitment has evolved, initially exploring if a connection existed. Once that connection was established, researchers began using dyadic models to gain a better understanding of how it impacted specific relationships. The

following section will summarize some of the research on the individual effects of attachment on commitment and then transition into the dyadic research.

Individual Effects

Several studies have examined the relationship between commitment and attachment finding that attachment behaviors influence the level of commitment in an individual's relationship (Bello et al., 2008; Ho et al., 2011; Ehrenberg et al., 2012). Comparing secure versus insecure attachments, secure individuals have been demonstrated to have a higher level of commitment to their relationship than their insecure counterparts (Feeney, 2016). This has been shown to contribute to higher levels of positive relationship functioning such as passion, intimacy, and satisfaction (Levy & Davis, 1988; Feeney, 2016). While most researchers who study commitment have found negative associations between insecure attachments and commitment, there have been different reports on the significance of findings for anxious and avoidant individuals. Levy and Davis (1988), using different measures each time, found that only avoidant attachment was significantly negatively associated with commitment with the first scale. Using the second scale, both anxious and avoidant were significantly negatively associated with commitment. Feeney (2016) summarizes these studies and reports an overall negative association between insecure attachment and commitment. Other studies have found avoidant attachment to be significantly negatively associated with commitment while reporting no significant findings for anxious individuals (Simpson, 1990; Ehrenberg et al., 2012; Oztekin et al., 2016). This is also compared to Ghezelseflo et al, (2016) that found both avoidant and anxious attachment styles to be significantly negatively associated with marital commitment in an Iranian sample. Similarly, Madey and Rodgers (2009) found greater insecurity led to lower levels of commitment. Within dating couples, Tucker and Anders (1999), found that anxious and

avoidant men and anxious women reported lower levels of relationship functioning such as commitment and satisfaction.

Dyadic Effects

Although the literature has primarily examined the individual's attachment and its impact on commitment few researchers have begun to look at the dyadic effects. Tran and Simpson (2009) argue that a higher degree of partner commitment is the foundation to which insecurely attached individuals can experience more positive relationship outcomes and confidence in their relationship. While a high degree of commitment is thought to help insecure individuals experience aspects of security, the partner effects should be greater for anxious individuals. This is because higher levels of commitment buffer the negative influence of anxious attachment. As anxious individuals experience more commitment from their partner, it reduces the anxious individual's insecurities as they learn to trust their partner is a secure base for them.

Knowing that anxious individuals have a positive view of others and therefore experience greater worry about rejection from romantic partners, commitment should help anxious individuals experience a secure attachment. Avoidant individuals may perceive higher commitment as a threat to their sense of self and valued independence. This is because avoidant individuals withdraw to themselves when experiencing distress or a threat. If the avoidant individual and their partner both view their relationship as highly committed, the avoidant individual may be able to experience a greater sense of security. The increase in a positive view of other people leads them to trust and turn to their partner in a moment of need. Simpson (1990) found similar dyadic effects in a group of dating couples. Anxious individuals were associated with less partner commitment compared to their avoidant counterparts.

These findings reinforce the idea that individuals look for behavior in their partners that reinforces their working models of others. Meaning, as someone becomes an attachment figure,

the individual experiences their behavior through the attachment-based schema which leads them to view the other person as safe or unsafe as well as themself as safe or unsafe. Some researchers have found the importance of considering the development of attachment security and how one decides to commit to a relationship (Duemmler & Koback, 2001). Attachment security refers to the idea of how someone develops a secure attachment and points to where people find their security. Duemmler and Koback's (2001) study is essential in understanding that increased attachment security increases the amount of dyadic commitment. When partners have differences in whom they turn to for security, it becomes problematic for the relationship. Avoidant individuals turn away from their partner which increases the feelings for their anxious partner that they are with someone who is not as committed as they are. While the anxious partner clings to their partner making the avoidant partner feel that their partner is too committed to the relationship. Secure attachment individuals would be able to remain secure in themselves while seeking their partner for comfort which would leave both individuals feeling committed to the relationship. Duemmler and Koback's (2001) study comments on the idea that secure attachment and commitment are interconnected. By knowing that the level of commitment someone experiences shape their ability to view their partner as an area of support, attachment theory applies to help us understand how insecure attachments influence the level of commitment in the relationship.

Overall, researchers have found individual and dyadic effects for avoidant and anxious attachment and commitment in romantic relationships. Individuals' attachment shapes their ability to commit to their partner and influences their view of their partners level of commitment. Research has clearly established that more securely attached individuals experience higher commitment. These studies reinforce the central role that attachment plays in the level of commitment experienced by both partners and how insecure attachments can negatively impact

relational interactions. The following section will transition to understanding the connection between attachment and relationship work.

Attachment and Relationship Work

Relationship work (RW) is a relatively new construct, yet researchers have been studying couples' communication and social networks for decades (McLeod et al., 2019). Researchers have advocated for the need to study couples in the context of other close relationships knowing that macro-level forces influence the way they view themselves, their partners, and their relationship (Huston, 2000). Relationship work is a construct to help researchers better understand the effects of social support on relationship outcomes; knowing that friends' communication towards partners can threaten or strengthen the relationship (Jensen & Rauer, 2014). Looking at how an individual communicates with their partner and their best friend about their relationship challenges can provide greater insight into individuals' overall relationship functioning, satisfaction, and commitment (Jensen & Rauer, 2014; Jensen & Rauer, 2015). RW has been shown to have significant effects on relationships for both men and women across the lifespan. Although, there are differences in the benefits of RW across the populations, for young adults more frequent RW with partners promotes better relationship functioning such as stability, less conflict, happiness, and love while RW in older adults shows different effects (Jensen & Rauer, 2014; Jensen & Rauer, 2015). In older adults, RW was shown to decline over time and an increase in RW had negative effects on the relationship (Jensen & Rauer, 2015), perhaps highlighting social preferences across the lifespan. These differences show the importance of examining RW within the context of the individual's social location. Although, regardless of age group, choosing to turn to partners to discuss romantic relationship problems instead of turning to friends appeared to have the most positive influence on the couple's relationship (Jensen & Rauer, 2014; Jensen & Rauer, 2015).

Considering young adults, which is the population used in the current study, findings show that they turn to their partners the most, their friends second, followed by their mothers and fathers (Jensen et al., 2018). These findings correspond to attachment theory knowing that attachment develops first with caregivers but then shifts to friends and then primarily romantic partners into adulthood (Bowlby, 1969; Hudson et al., 2015; Jensen et al., 2018). These findings highlight the importance of studying RW through the lens of attachment. In a subsequent study, Jensen et al (2019), did a secondary analysis testing the links between attachment and relationship work and found male and female avoidance was negatively linked to relationship work with the amount of RW work females engaged in with their partner. While only male avoidance was negatively linked with the amount of RW males engaged with their partner. Theoretically, these findings are congruent with the attachment model. Knowing that individuals with avoidant attachment tend to seek comfort within themselves rather than with their partner helps researchers understand the low level of RW for avoidant individuals. While Jensen et al. (2019) did not report any findings on anxious attachment individuals, one can theorize that they engage in higher levels of RW compared to avoidantly attached individuals due to their desire to seek out comfort and reassurance from their partner in moments of distress. Knowing that anxious and avoidant individuals tend to be in relationships with one another (Schneider & Brimhall, 2018), can show why different levels of RW may contribute to relationship dissatisfaction. If anxious partners tend to find comfort through engaging in higher levels of RW, it may push avoidant individuals away if it feels like a threat to their sense of self and independence. Consequently, avoidant individuals may influence their anxious partner's behavior if they withdraw towards themselves which contributes to increasing feelings of insecurity for the anxious partner. The lack of safety perceived by both partners for the amount their partner wants to engage in RW seems to influence the amount of overall satisfaction in the relationship.

Jensen and Rauer (2014) found significant associations between RW and commitment with young adults. Increased levels of RW with partner was linked to higher levels of commitment for both males and females. These findings show the importance of commitment when understanding how individuals decide to turn toward partners or their friends (Jensen & Rauer, 2014). This idea is consistent with the literature on commitment and its effects on relationship quality and the amount of disclosure individuals engage in with their partners (Zhang & Kline, 2009; Terzino & Cross, 2009). We expect to find similar results and provide more insight into how attachment influences commitment and RW which has major implications for research and clinical work. These studies (Jensen et al., 2019; Jensen & Rauer, 2014) show how RW is connected with attachment and commitment separately which, along with attachment theory, guide the current authors to consider how all the variables may be interconnected. This is because hypothetically if an individual is insecurely attached, it may lead to lower levels of commitment which in turn leads to lower amounts of RW. Making the connection between anxiously and avoidantly attached individuals, commitment and RW can then be applied to what research suggests about relationship satisfaction, which will be discussed below.

Attachment and Satisfaction

Relationship satisfaction is a construct that has been of interest to clinicians and researchers not only due to the impacts on relationship functioning but also on individuals' overall life satisfaction and well-being (Buhler et al., 2021). Many researchers view satisfaction as one's overall assessment of their romantic relationship (Buhler et al., 2021) or the subjective quality of their relationship (Candel & Turliuc, 2019). With various definitions of relationship satisfaction, it is important to distinguish how this current study will define and measure relationship satisfaction. Framing satisfaction from the lens of attachment and the dyadic nature of our study, we will define satisfaction as the subjective quality of their relationship with their

partner. This allows researchers to understand that each partner may view satisfaction differently than their partner due to the individual perspective on how their relationship is going. Then through our statistical plan, we were able to see how attachment in one partner influenced the satisfaction in the other.

Relationship satisfaction has been significantly linked to attachment styles with both individual and dyadic data (Kane et al., 2007; Li & Chan, 2012; Feeney, 2016; Candel & Turliuc, 2019). Insecure attachments have been shown to have significant negative impacts on a couple's relationship satisfaction and are consistent for both sexes and for the actor and partner effects (Candel & Turliuc, 2019). Although individuals with avoidant attachment are consistently shown to have a stronger negative correlation to satisfaction compared to anxiously attached individuals (Collins et al., 2002; Li & Chan 2012; Candel & Turliuc, 2019). When looking at the dyadic effects, those with partners who are more insecurely attached, report greater dissatisfaction with their relationship (Candel & Turliuc, 2019). Using the attachment lens this may be due to insecurely attached individuals feeling a lack of safety, connection, and love from others. Considering gender differences, some researchers have found that men are less satisfied when their female partners scored higher on attachment anxiety while females were less satisfied when their male partners scored higher on attachment avoidance (Kane et al., 2007). Secure individuals, by having a positive working model for themselves and others, report having greater satisfaction in relationships and in their life. When both partners can feel secure in themselves and with others, it allows for trust, security, love, and connection to foster feelings of satisfaction. This is compared with insecure individuals who either have a negative view of self or others which influences their interpersonal behavior and in turn can create dissatisfaction with their partner (Feeney, 2016). Our study expects to replicate the previous literature and find significant effects between insecure attachment and relationship satisfaction.

Gaps in the Literature

While all of our variables have been examined separately in previous literature, this study combined attachment, commitment, RW, and satisfaction to test the effects these four variables have on one another. In hopes of filling a gap in the literature, this study hoped to provide dyadic links among the variables, as well as, contribute more empirical evidence on how attachment behavior contribute to partners' communication with their social networks about their relationship. Since there is a need to examine these four variables together, this section will use attachment theory to postulate the potential effects of all four variables.

Multiple Variables

When compared to other personality measures, attachment appears to be a better predictor of commitment and satisfaction (Feeney, 2016). An individual's attachment is also necessary to evaluate how one selects their social environment. Through their working model of self and others, individuals view their social experiences in ways that support their preexisting schemas (Feeney, 2016). When considering the ability of partners to engage in relationship work, security provides a great ability to do so. This could be contributed to the commitment and safety they feel in the relationship, therefore, individuals may choose to engage in more relationship work by hoping it would produce greater satisfaction. We would expect this because as partners experience commitment and safety and engage in RW they move towards a secure base and safe haven (Ehrenberg et al., 2012). This process helps shift their working models of themselves and others to a more positive view. Which leads the individual to experience a more secure attachment and therefore greater relationship satisfaction.

This would suggest that relationship work can be influenced by their commitment to the relationship which could come from the degree of security individuals feel. As attachment security increases, one experiences a greater commitment toward their partner and relationship

which leads them to engage in more RW. Theoretically, the more RW they do the more connected they feel to their partner which presumably increases their satisfaction. Attachment theory grounds these ideas as these processes happen when people can be securely connected to others without threatening their sense of self. Attachment theory would suggest that developing a secure attachment to a partner is similar to how peer relationships develop (Allen & Tan, 2016). This is because in mid to late adolescence attachment figures shift to peers whom they have had long-term relationships with, therefore, individuals turn to their social network to receive feedback about their behavior and romantic partners. Allen and Tan (2016), further elaborate on the idea that secure individuals feel more comfortable in disclosure among peer relationships and their ability to seek emotional support. Therefore, these ideas contribute to the overall level of satisfaction produced by relationship work with their partner and closest friend. Where this could become problematic is when commitment is low in a relationship due to insecure attachment behavior which may lead to individuals turning more towards their friend than their partner (Jensen and Rauer, 2015; Feeney, 2016). This could be true for an anxious individual who may turn more frequently to a friend because their avoidant partner is not engaged or accessible. In some cases, the avoidant partner may welcome this shift in focus, preferring that their partner handles their needs through other relationships. However, if they felt their partner was talking negatively about them it may reinforce their fear that others, specifically their partner, cannot be trusted and enhance their desire to withdraw and rely solely on themselves. As mentioned previously, this may heighten the anxious partners concerns about the relationship and this pattern is exacerbated.

Research Questions

1. Are male and female anxiety and avoidance attachment behavior associated with levels of commitment in their relationship?

2. Are male and female anxiety and avoidance attachment behavior associated with levels of relationship work between partners?

3. Are male and female anxiety and avoidance attachment behavior associated with levels of relationship work between friends?

4. Are male and female anxiety and avoidance attachment behavior associated with overall relationship satisfaction?

Corresponding Hypotheses

1. Given that researchers (Levy and Davis, 1988; Duemmler and Koback, 2001) view commitment as an essential aspect of secure attachments in romantic relationships, we anticipated that individuals with more anxious or avoidant tendencies will show significantly lower levels of commitment. For partner effects, based on Simpson (1990), we anticipated that an individual's anxious attachment behavior was linked with lower levels of commitment from their partner.

2. Due to the findings in Jensen et al. (2019), we anticipated that avoidant behavior, for both male and female partners, would lead to significantly lower RW between the female and her partner. Similarly, we anticipated that males who scored higher on avoidant tendencies would experience significantly lower levels of RW with their partner but that their partner's level of avoidance would not significantly impact their level of RW. For individuals with higher anxiety tendencies, we anticipated that the associations would be negative but not significant for RW with their partner.

3. Given that Jensen et al. (2019) did not report any findings on attachment and levels of RW to the individual's friend, we suspected that the associations between avoidant attachment behavior and relationship work to friends would show a moderate negative significance for both males and females. For anxious attachment behavior, we anticipated finding a moderate positive

significance for females and males. This is due to research showing both sexes engage in the same amount of RW with friends and anxious attachment individuals tend to seek out others more frequently (Jensen & Rauer, 2014; Feeney, 2016).

4. Given the extensive research on attachment and relationship satisfaction (Candel & Turliuc, 2019), we anticipated that participants reporting higher anxious or avoidant behaviors would experience significantly lower levels of satisfaction. Based on findings in the previously cited meta-analysis we hypothesized that these associations would be true for both the actor and partner effects.

Conclusion

After examining research in the field on attachment, commitment, relationship work, and relationship satisfaction, it was apparent that there are various associations between these variables. While there are many significant correlations between the variables, to our knowledge there was a lack of literature on these four variables combined. Thus, this study aimed to examine how romantic attachment is associated with the dependent variables while exploring both the individual and dyadic impacts on these variables through the following research questions and hypotheses. Research questions one through four are shown in Figure 1.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Sample and Procedures

This study used a secondary dyadic data set that was collected from young adults at a large southeastern university. The data was a part of a larger study that was collected by the third author. The original study was primarily focused on relationship work in young adults. While the researchers collected data covering a breadth of topics (i.e., religious affiliation, tobacco and caffeine use, personality factors, friendship quality, and heart rate), only procedures and measures pertinent to the current study will be discussed here. Participants were recruited from a variety of undergraduate and graduate courses through visits to their classrooms from research assistants, flyers, and university email notifications. The various courses that participants were recruited from included but were not limited to Human Development, Biology, English, and Nursing.

In order to be eligible to participate, at least one participant in each group (partners and friends) must have been an ECU student, all group members were at least 18 years or older, partners must have identified that they were in some type of romantic relationship (i.e., dating, engaged) and each partner must have been able to bring a close friend to the on-campus research lab. The data was then collected at an on-campus research facility where participants (each partner and each friend) spent roughly 90 minutes engaging in various personal, romantic, and social functioning tasks. The participants also completed an online questionnaire via Qualtrics that captured demographics, their romantic relationship, and their friendship. For the current study, the researchers only used data from the partners' and not friends' responses to the questionnaires.

During the participants' 90-minute session, in order to measure relationship work, which was the primary focus of the original study, participants were asked to have a conversation about romantic challenges with their partner and their friend. While engaging in these conversations with partners, but not friends, psychophysiological measures were also recorded through breathing patterns and galvanic skin responses. While the current study looked at the construct of relationship work, due to the primary focus on attachment theory, this data was not included in the measure of relationship work. Compensation for the participant's time and input was rewarded through $50 Target gift cards for the partners and $35 Target gift cards for each friend.

Demographics. A total of 300 individuals participated in this study. This represents 75 groups of four people, including the couple and a friend of each partner. While the researchers recruited couples of all sexual orientations, only four same-sex couples participated in the study. In light of the research that has given recommendations for understanding the unique social location of same-sex couples (Graham & Barnow, 2013; Rotosky & Riggle, 2017) the four same-sex couples were dropped from the data set. This left 71 heterosexual couples (*n*= 142). This study did not include data from the friends that participated in the larger study. Female participants' age ranged from 18 to 24 years (M=20.32, SD=1.45). For male participants, age ranged from 18-31 (M=21.23, SD=2.42). The majority of the participants were Caucasian (73%), followed by Black (9%), Hispanic (8%), Asian (7%), and other (3%). The majority of the population reported being in a "committed relationship" (84%). While the other 16% described their relationship as some other status such as casually dating or engaged. Out of all the participants, only 24% reported cohabitating and none reported having children.

Measures

Attachment Style. To determine participants' attachment behavior, researchers used the Experiences in Close Relationships Scale-Short Form (ECR-SF; Wei et al., 2007). The use of

this scale was not used to categorize the participants into attachment style categories. Rather, it helped us understand how participants anxious or avoidant behavior influenced the dependent variables. The short-form version of this scale was used due to its sound psychometric properties. Wei et al. (2007) tested the ECR-SF in six different studies each time finding acceptable ranges of internal consistency and test-retest reliability as well as construct validity. Participants were asked to respond on a 7-point Likert scale, with 1 representing "Strongly Disagree" and 7 representing "Strongly Agree." Participants were asked to respond to the prompts considering how they feel in close relationships overall, not just in their current relationships. The ECR-SF was chosen in order to assess for overall anxious attachment or avoidant attachment behavior. Example questions from the avoidant and anxious subscales respectively show what was asked: "I try to avoid getting too close to my partner" and "I worry that romantic partners won't care about me as much as I care about them." Higher scores on the anxiety and avoidant subscales were indicative of higher levels of anxious and avoidant tendencies, respectively. The cut off score on the ECR-SF is a 3; scores higher than a 3 on each subscale indicates higher levels of anxious or avoidant behavior. In this sample, the female anxiety subscale's reliability was α = .72 and male anxiety α = .65. Female avoidance and male avoidance both showed good reliability with the Cronbach Alpha of α = .75 and α = .79, respectively.

Commitment Levels. The level of commitment participants felt in their current relationship was measured using an adapted, 8-item Commitment scale (Lund, 1985). Before the data collection, the researchers adapted the scale by dropping one of the questions that did not capture commitment levels but rather asked about obligation (i.e., "How obligated do you feel to continue this relationship?). Participants were asked to select a number on a 9-point Likert scale that captured their commitment to their current relationship, with 1 representing "Not at all" and

9 representing “Very much.” This questionnaire captured both the participant's view of commitment (i.e., how likely is it that you and your partner will be together six months from now) and the participant's view of their partner's commitment level (i.e., in your opinion how committed is your partner to this relationship). In the original 9-item commitment scale, Lund (1985) found good reliability with a Cronbach alpha of α =*.82.* The modified measure used in this sample displayed poor reliability with a Cronbach alpha of α = .69 for female commitment and α = .65 for male commitment.

Relationship Work. The amount of relationship work participants engaged in with their partners and friends was measured using a modified, 5-item Marriage Work Scale (Helms et al., 2003). Due to the population's current lifestyle, some questions were dropped from the original scale (i.e., items related to parenting and household tasks). Researchers kept the items from the original scale that seemed most pertinent to the population, such as “How often do you bring up the way that you and your partner spend free time (i.e., the activities you do, and/or the people you socialize with)?” Participants were asked to select a number on a 9-point Likert scale, with 1 representing “Never” and 9 representing “Always” that best described how often they bring up a concern and talk it through with their partner, friend, mother, and father. For the current study, we only used the data from the participant’s responses to bringing up a concern to their partner or friend. Researchers found that the modified scale, for both the partners and the friend, demonstrated good reliability (Jensen et al., 2019). For the partner scale, the female and male partners' reliability was α = .72 and α = .78, respectively. For the friend scale, the female and male partners' reliability was α = .75 and α = .85, respectively.

Relationship Satisfaction. The amount of relationship satisfaction in the participant's current relationship was measured using the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS; Busby et

al., 2007). This measure includes three subscales that look at consensus, satisfaction, and cohesion of the participant's current romantic relationship. The consensus subscale used a 6-point Likert scale as well with 0 representing “Always disagree” and 5 representing “Always agree.” Six questions on the consensus subscale evaluate how often participants experience disagreements over various topics (i.e., religious matters and career decisions). The RDAS defines consensus by looking at overall decision-making, values, and affection. The relationship satisfaction subscale consists of two questions about stability and two questions about conflict within their current relationship. The satisfaction subscale used a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 0 meaning “All the time” and 5 meaning “Never.” The cohesion subscale uses both a 4-point and 5-point Likert scale to evaluate how often participants spend time with participants in different activities (i.e., working on a project together, having a stimulating exchange of ideas). Cohesion was evaluated through questions about shared activities and discussions between partners. Lower scores on the RDAS indicates greater relationship distress. The cut off score for the RDAS is 48, meaning scores falling below suggest relationship dissatisfaction. The RDAS displayed poor reliability in this sample with female and male satisfaction (α = .64 and α = .68), respectively).

Data Analysis

To answer our research questions (which evaluate anxious and avoidant attachments and levels of commitment, RW, and satisfaction) we conducted bivariate correlational analysis and a regression analysis to examine the association between variables.

An Actor Partner Interdependence Model (APIM; Cook & Kenny, 2005) was utilized in this study to test the actor and partner effects of attachment within a male and female dyad on commitment levels, relationship work, and overall relationship satisfaction. The APIM model

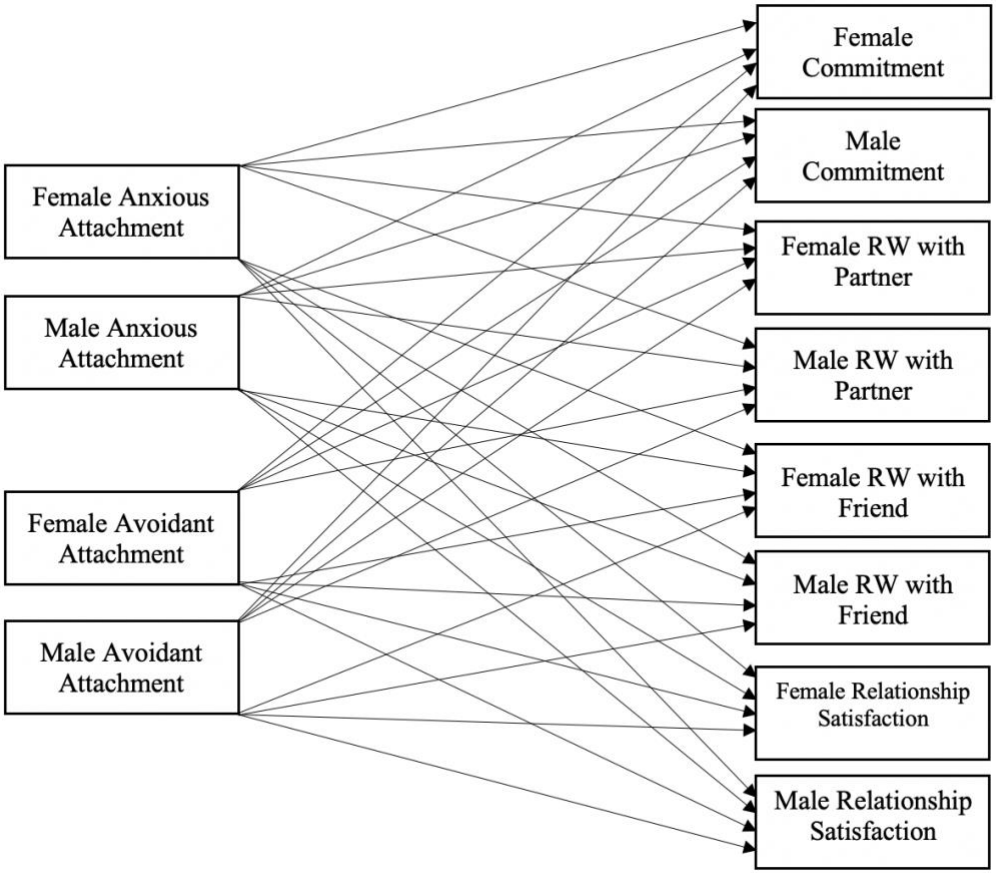
has been used with studies examining links with attachment and has proven to be a sufficient analytic test with these variables (Zhou, et al., 2020). The APIM model is displayed in Figure 1. This allowed the researchers to understand how the independent variable of one partner affects the dependent variable of the other partner (Fitzpatrick et al., 2016). We used Mplus version 8.8 to analyze the data and missing data was handled using the full information maximum likelihood.

Conclusion

This study aimed to examine young adults, their attachment behavior, and the outcomes of their romantic relationships. We achieved this by conducting a secondary data analysis that was collected with couples at a large southeastern university. This quantitative cross-sectional study allowed the researchers to understand the correlations between insecure attachment, commitment, relationship work, and relationship satisfaction.

Figure 1:

Actor-partner interdependence model



Note: All pathways shown here are predicting a negative association except for female and male anxious attachment with female and male RW with their friends.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Introduction

This section will provide an overview of the analyses conducted and the results found to answer the research questions that were explored in this study. It will begin by providing a summary of the descriptive statistics, then it will summarize the results of several linear regressions, and end with the findings of the APIM model. We will then discuss the findings, review the limitations of the study, and provide direction for future research. Using Attachment theory, we will explore clinical implications for the findings of this study.

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations were examined (see Table 1). Within the sample, participants' relationship length had a mean score of 22.40 months and a standard deviation of 19.42. Females that indicated attachment anxiety had a mean score of 3.96 with a standard deviation of 1.17. These scores were above the cut-off score, indicating that on average these participants experience higher levels of attachment anxiety in their romantic relationships. Male participants had a mean score of 3.10 with a standard deviation of 1.03 for attachment anxiety. Similar to the female participants, this score is indicative of higher levels of attachment anxiety within their romantic relationships. For female avoidance, participants in this sample showed a mean score of 2.01 with a standard deviation of .80. This falls below the cut-off score which is indicative that on average participants in this sample were not avoidantly attached in their romantic relationships. Males in this sample had a slightly higher mean score of 2.19 with a standard deviation of .91. This is also indicative of moderately low scores on the avoidant subscale. These results show that on average the participants in this sample showed more anxious tendencies compared to avoidantly attached individuals. Females' commitment for this

sample showed a mean of 7.97 and a standard deviation of .95. Male participants' mean commitment score was 7.63 with a standard deviation of 1.03. These scores are indicative of relatively high levels of commitment in the participants. Females' RW with their partners showed a mean score of 7.11 and a standard deviation of 1.23. Males' RW with their partners showed a mean score of 6.57 and a standard deviation of 1.45. Females' RW with their friends showed a mean score of 5.43 and a standard deviation of 1.69. Males' RW with their friends showed a mean score of 4.49 and a standard deviation of 1.87. This is indicative of participants doing more RW with their partner than with their friends. Both female and male participants' relationship satisfaction scores on average indicated relationship dissatisfaction with a mean score of 41.75 and 42.48, respectively. With a standard deviation of 6.78 for female and 7.52 for male participants. These scores fall below the cut-off score of 48 which is indicative of relationship dissatisfaction.

The correlational analyses highlighted several significant associations between some of the variables and can be seen in Table 1. Relationship length was significantly negatively associated with females' avoidance (r = -.32, p < .01). Relationship length was significant and positively associated with both females' (r = .25, p <.05) and males' commitment (r = .28, p < .05) as well as females' RW with their partner (r = .29, p <.05).

Attachment

Females' anxiety was significantly positively associated with female avoidance (r = .24, p <.05), and negatively associated with females' RW with their partners (r = -.33, p < .01). Females' anxiety also revealed a significant negative correlation with both female relationship satisfaction (r = -.34, p < .01) and male relationship satisfaction (r = -.33, p < .01). Males' anxiety was only significantly negatively associated with males' relationship satisfaction (r = -

.29, $p < .05$). Females' avoidance was marginally significant and had a negative association with both females' ($r = -.23$, $p < .10$) and males' commitment ($r = -.22$, $p < .10$). Females' avoidance was only significantly negatively correlated with females' relationship work with their partner ($r = -0.41$, $p < .01$). Males' avoidance was marginally significant and negatively associated with females' commitment ($r = -.23$, $p < .10$). Males' avoidance was negatively significantly associated with males' commitment ($r = -.45$, $p < .01$). Males' avoidance also revealed a significant negative association with both females' and males' RW with partners ($r = -.31$, $p < .01$; $r = -.36$, $p < .01$, respectively). Males' avoidance was marginally significant and negatively associated with females' relationship satisfaction ($r = -.20$, $p < .10$). There was also a negative significant association between males' avoidance and males' satisfaction levels ($r = -.30$, $p < .05$).

Commitment

Females' commitment levels in the sample were significantly positively associated with male commitment levels ($r = .54$, $p < .01$). Female participants commitment also showed a positive significant correlation with females' RW with their partner ($r = .33$, $p < .01$) and a marginally significant and positive association to males' RW with their partner ($r = .21$, $p < .10$). Females' commitment was significantly positively associated with females' relationship satisfaction ($r = .34$, $p < .01$). Males' commitment levels were significant and positively correlated with females' RW with their partner ($r = .29$, $p < .05$), and both females' and males' relationship satisfaction levels ($r = .29$, $p < .05$; $r = .40$, $p < .05$).

Relationship Work and Satisfaction

Females' RW with their partner was shown to have a positive significant correlation with females' RW with their friends in this sample ($r = .27$, $p < .05$). Females' RW with their partner

revealed a positive significant association with both females' and males' relationship satisfaction (r = .36, P < .01*;* r = .24, p < .05). Males' RW with their partner was found to be positively significantly correlated with males' RW with their friends and males' relationship satisfaction (r = .45, p < .01*;* r = .29, p < .05, respectively). Females' RW work with their friend was found to only be significant and positively associated with males' RW work with their friends (r = .25, p < .05). Males' relationship work with their friend was marginally significant and positively associated with males' relationship satisfaction (r =.22, p < *.10*). Females' relationship satisfaction revealed a positive and significant association with males' relationship satisfaction within the sample (r = .38, p < .05).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations for study variables (N = 142).

Variables		1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.
1.	Relationship Length	-												
2.	Females Anxiety	-.15	-											
3.	Males Anxiety	-.20	.01	-										
4.	Females Avoidance	-.32**	.24*	.05	-									
5.	Males Avoidance	-.15	.18	.12	.10	-								
6.	Females Commitment	.25*	.08	-.14	-.23†	-.23†	-							
7.	Males Commitment	.28*	-.15	-.16	-.22†	-.45**	.54**	-						
8.	Females RW Partner	.29*	-.33**	-.06	-.41**	-.31**	.33**	.29*	-					
9.	Males RW Partner	-.10	.04	-.08	.02	-.36**	.21†	.19	.15	-				
10.	Females RW Friends	-.13	.00	-.13	.10	.07	-.11	-.10	.27*	-.16	-			
11.	Males RW Friends	-.08	.06	-.13	.08	-.19	.03	.02	.06	.45**	.25*	-		
12.	Females Rel Satisfaction	.05	-.34**	-.13	-.28	-.20†	.34**	.29*	.36**	.20	.04	-.04	-	
13.	Males Rel Satisfaction	-.09	-.33**	-.29*	-.13	-.30*	.17	.40*	.24*	.29*	.02	.22†	.38*	-
	M	22.40	3.96	3.10	2.01	2.19	7.97	7.63	7.11	6.57	5.43	4.49	41.75	42.48
	SD	19.42	1.17	1.03	.80	.91	.95	1.03	1.23	1.45	1.69	1.87	6.78	7.52

Note: RW = Relationship Work, Rel = Relationship; *p < .05, **p < .01, † p < .10

Regressions

Following univariate and bivariate analyses, we next conducted multivariate regression analyses to examine the relationships between our variables of interest, controlling for relationship length in each model. First, we examined associations between our independent variables (female anxiety, male anxiety, female avoidance, male avoidance) and female commitment. Results revealed that females' anxiety (β = .19, p < .10) and males' avoidance (β = .23, p < .10) were each marginally associated with females' commitment. Next, we looked at the relationship between our independent variables and males' commitment. We found that males' avoidance (β = -.45, p < .01) was significantly negatively associated with males' commitment. We then studied the associations between our independent variables and females' RW with their partner. The tests revealed a marginally significant negative association between females' RW with their partner and females' anxiety (β = -.22, p <.10). The tests also revealed significant negative associations with females' avoidance (β = -.47, p < .01) and males' avoidance (β = -.45, p < .05). Next, we examined the association between our independent variables and males' RW with their partner. The tests revealed a significant negative associated with males' avoidance (β = -.67, p < .01). The model for females' and males' RW with their friend was not significant and did not produce any significant associations with the independent variables. For this reason, these dependent variables (female and male RW with their friends) were dropped from any further analysis. Next, we looked at female relationship satisfaction. The results revealed two marginally significant negative associations between females' relationships satisfaction and females' anxiety (β = -1.35, p < .10) and females' avoidance (β = -1.07, p < .10). Lastly, we studied the associations between our independent variables and males' relationship satisfaction. The results revealed a significant negative association between females' anxiety (β = -1.78, p <

.05) and males' anxiety (β = -2.07, p < .05). The tests also revealed a negative association between males' relationship satisfaction and males' avoidance (β = -2.01, p <.05).

Table 2.
*Summary of regression analyses linking study dependent variables with female anxiety, male anxiety, female avoidance, and male avoidance (*N=*142)*

	Female Commitment		Male Commitment		Female RW w/ Partner		Male RW w/ Partner	
Variable	*B*	*SE B*	*B*	*SE B*	*B*	*SE B*	*B*	*SE B*
Constant	8.10	.66	9.03	.67	9.38	.79	7.91	.99
Relationship Length	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	-.01	.01
Female Anxiety	.19†	.10	-.02	.10	-.22†	.12	.15	.15
Male Anxiety	-.05	.11	-.07	.11	.01	.13	-.07	.16
Female Avoidance	-.21	.15	-.15	.15	-.47**	.18	-.01	.22
Male Avoidance	-.23†	.12	-.45**	.12	-.30*	.15	-.67**	.18
R^2		.17*		.27**		.30**		.19*
F for change in R^2		2.02*		4.16**		4.85**		3.53*

	Female RW w/ Friend		Male RW w/ Friend		Female Rel Satisfaction		Male Rel Satisfaction	
Variable	*B*	*SE B*	*B*	*SE B*	*B*	*SE B*	*B*	*SE B*
Constant	6.30	1.26	5.92	1.37	55.42	4.57	64.00	4.82
Relationship Length	-.01	.01	-.01	.01	-.03	.04	-.10	.04
Female Anxiety	-.07	.19	.08	.21	-1.35†	.69	-1.78*	.73
Male Anxiety	-.28	.21	-.25	.23	-.59	.75	-2.07*	.79
Female Avoidance	.14	.28	.11	.30	-1.78†	1.01	-.79	1.07
Male Avoidance	.12	.23	-.41	.25	-1.07	.84	-2.01*	.89
R^2		.05		.07		.16*		.21**
F for change in R^2		.57		1.12		3.00*		5.63**

Note: RW = Relationship Work; Rel = Relationship
B = Unstandardized Coefficient; *SE B* = Standard error of the unstandardized beta coefficient
†p < .10, *p < .05, **p < .01

APIM

Utilizing actor–partner interdependence models allowed us to consider links between numerous independent and dependent variables, simultaneously controlling for all other pathways (Cook & Kenny, 2005). Data were analyzed using Mplus Version 8.8, and missing data were handled using full information maximum likelihood. We controlled for romantic relationship length, and all constructs were allowed to covary, as were residuals of dependent

variables. Goodness of fit was evaluated using the chi-square statistic, comparative fit index (Bentler, 1990), root mean square of approximation (Bentler, 1995), and standardized root mean square residual (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

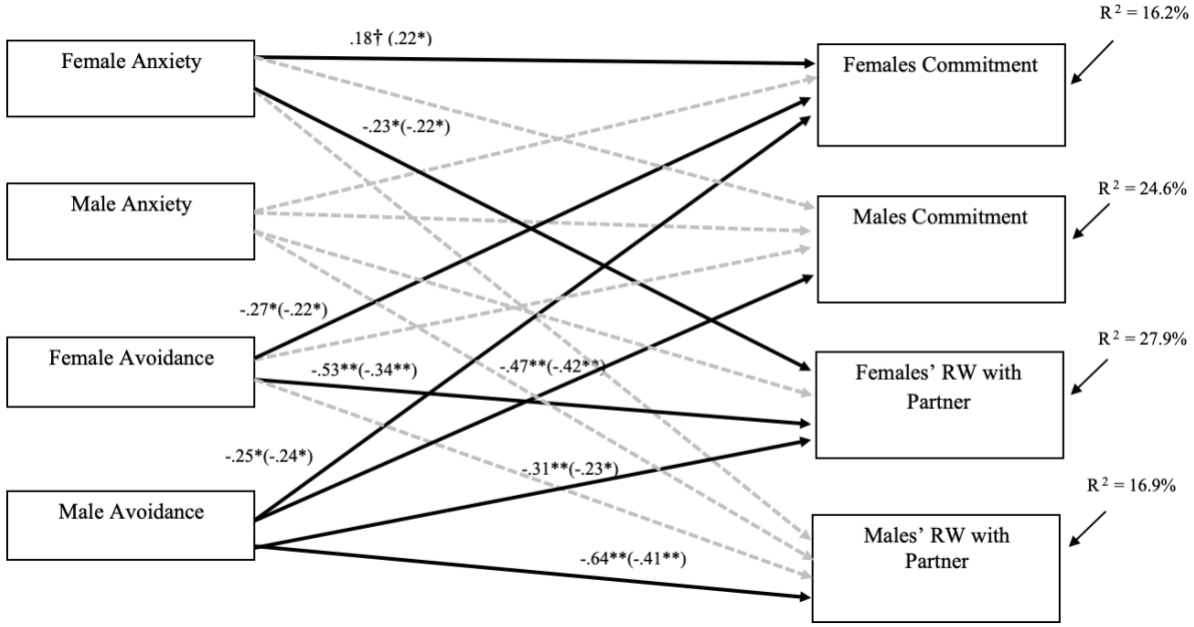
Initially, we included all study variables in the model, but the results revealed poor model fit. Therefore, we fit two distinct actor-partner interdependence models based on theoretical assumptions linking particular constructs of interest. Figure 1 shows our actor–partner interdependence model examining associations between the independent variables of female anxiety, male anxiety, female avoidance, and male avoidance with the dependent variables of females' and males' commitment and females' and males' RW with their partner. Figure 2 shows our actor-partner interdependence model examining the associations between the independent variables with the dependent variables of female relationship satisfaction and male relationship satisfaction. Our dependent variable of relationship work with their friends was not significant, so we did not include it in either of the models. In each of these models, we controlled for relationship length. Consistent with recommendations for analyzing distinguishable dyads (Peugh et al., 2013) and common to structural equation modeling (Kenny & Ledermann,2010), all models were fully saturated (i.e., all parameters were estimated, zero degrees of freedom; Cook & Kenny, 2005) and demonstrated perfect fit ($\chi 2 = 0.00$, df = 0; confirmatory fit index[CFI] = 1.00; Tucker Lewis Index[TLI] = 1.00; root mean square error of approximation[RMSEA] = 0.00). Results demonstrated significant actor and partner effects.

Looking at the first model, females' anxiety was shown to be marginally significant and positively associated with females' commitment (β = .18, p < .10). Females' anxiety was also found to be significantly negatively linked with females' RW with their partner (β = -.23, p

<.05). As expected, females' avoidance was significantly and negatively associations with two variables: females' commitment (β = -.25, p <.05) and females' RW with a partner (β = -.53, p <.01). As anticipated, males' avoidance was found to have a significant and negative link with both females' and males' commitment (β = -.25, p <.05 and β = -.47, p <.01, *respectively*). As expected, we discovered that males' avoidance was significantly negatively associated with females' and males' RW with their partner (β = -.31, p <.01 and β = -.64, p < .01, *respectively*). This model accounted for 16.2% of the variance in females' commitment, 24.6% in males' commitment, 27.9% in females' RW with their partner, and 16.9% in males' RW with their partner.

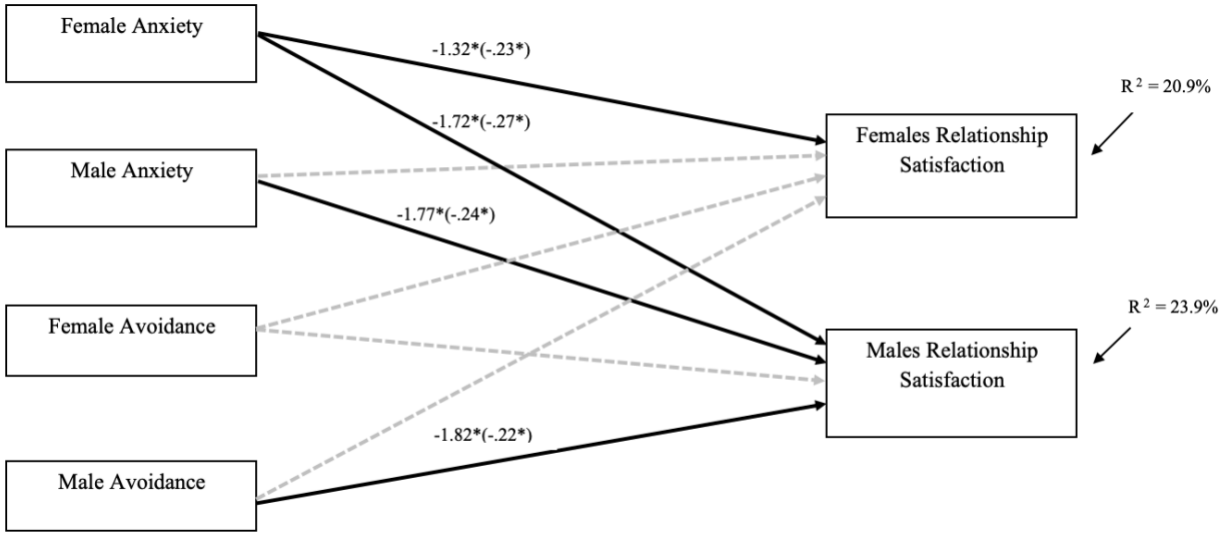
Next, the second APIM revealed several significant associations between the variables. As expected, female anxiety was found to be significantly negatively associated with females' relationship satisfaction (β = -1.32, p <.05) and males' relationship satisfaction (β = -1.72, p < .05). Males' anxiety was only significantly negatively associated with males' relationship satisfaction (β = -1.77, p <.05). Similarly, males' avoidance was discovered to be significantly negatively associated with males' relationship satisfaction (β = -1.82, p <.05). This model accounted for 20.9% of the variance in females' relationship satisfaction and 23.9% in males' relationship satisfaction.

Figure 1. Fully saturated actor-partner interdependence model of links between female anxiety, male anxiety, female avoidance, male avoidance, and females' and males' commitment and females' and males' RW with partner, controlling for romantic relationship length (N = 142).



Note for Figure 1. Unstandardized path coefficients are shown with standardized coefficients in parentheses. For ease of interpretation, non-significant pathways are represented by dashed lines. Only values for significant pathways are given. Model fit statistics: $\chi^2 = 0.00$, CFI = 1.00, TLI = 1.00, RMSEA = 0.00; SRMR = 0.00. *p < .05, **p < .01, †p < .10.

Figure 2. Fully saturated actor-partner interdependence model of links between female anxiety, male anxiety, female avoidance, male avoidance, and females' and males' relationship satisfaction, controlling for romantic relationship length (N = 142).



Note for Figure 2. Unstandardized path coefficients are shown with standardized coefficients in parentheses. For ease of interpretation, non-significant pathways are represented by dashed lines. Only values for significant pathways are given. Model fit statistics: $\chi^2 = 0.00$, CFI = 1.00, TLI = 1.00, RMSEA = 0.00; SRMR = 0.00. *p < .05, **p < .01, †p < .10.

Review of Research Questions

To review, our first research question examined the link between the independent variables and levels of commitment in the participants relationship. We anticipated that anxious or avoidant attachment behavior would be linked to lower levels of commitment. Our results supported this for females' avoidance and males' avoidance. For the partner results our hypothesis was support for males' avoidance. For our second research question, examining the links between anxiety and avoidant attachment behavior and RW with partners, our hypothesis was partially supported through negative associations with females' and males' own avoidance. However, we did not anticipate finding significant results for females' anxiety and their own RW levels and males' avoidance and their partners RW levels. For our fourth research, looking at the independent variables and RW with their friend, the hypothesis was not supported by our results. Lastly, our last research question looking at the independent variables and relationship satisfaction was partially supported. Our hypothesis was supported by females' anxiety as it was linked to lower levels of satisfaction for both the actor and partner. Males' anxiety and avoidance was linked to their own levels of satisfaction, however, was not linked to their partners.

Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the findings from several different analyses. First, descriptive statistics were analyzed revealing a more anxious, committed, and dissatisfied population. We then looked at correlations and regressions finding several significant results. Lastly, we used the APIM model to examine the actor-partner effects of our variables. These results revealed the importance of attachment theory in romantic relationship functioning. The following portion of this paper will discuss these results and how they can be applied to clinical work.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Discussion

Using a sample of young adults who were on average highly committed and highly dissatisfied, we examined the links between the individual and partner attachment behaviors and commitment, RW with their partner, and relationship satisfaction. Having a secure romantic relationship is of great interest to researchers and clinicians as it has been established to be a strong indicator of commitment, satisfaction, and other relationship variables (Feeney, 2016). However, insecure attachment can influence the degree to which partners are able to achieve this closeness and satisfaction in their relationships. Previous work has established the links between commitment and insecure attachment behaviors, finding that the more insecure individuals are, the less committed they are as well (Ghezelseflo et al., 2016). Given that RW had also been examined, due to it being an important indicator of commitment in relationships, it is important to understand the influence attachment may have on RW (Jensen & Rauer, 2014). Also, one must consider how overall relationship satisfaction is influenced by these variables and how clinicians can practically work with couples who are dissatisfied in their relationship.

To expand upon the current literature, we explored the links between these variables with dyadic data among different-sex dating couples. We found that females' anxiety was associated with females' commitment and females' RW with their partners, and in the second model, it was linked to both partners' satisfaction. For males' anxiety, there were no links found in the first model, and there was one association with males' relationship satisfaction in the second model. Similar to females' anxiety, females' avoidance was only linked to females' commitment and females' RW with their partners. Males' avoidance had the most significant findings. In both models, it was linked to all variables examined except for female relationship satisfaction. These

results add to the dyadic literature, finding that avoidant tendencies in females and males are linked to their own commitment and to their partner's commitment (Simpson, 1990; Tran & Simpson, 2009). Based on our findings, it is important to further discuss these associations and consider how clinicians engage couples with insecure attachments, especially avoidant men.

Links Between Attachment Behaviors and Commitment

There were several significant findings between attachment and commitment that highlight the importance of understanding how attachment behavior influences commitment. There have been mixed results for the association between anxious and avoidant attachment and commitment (Levy & Davis, 1988; Simpson, 1990; Ehrenberg et al., 2012; Oztekin et al., 2016). Our results found a positive link between females' anxiety and their own commitment. Meaning that the more anxious a female is, the more committed she tends to be. This aligns theoretically with anxious attachment behavior due to the idea that they cling closely to their partner in search of a secure base. Those with anxious attachment tendencies have an attachment-based schema of a positive view of others and a negative view of themselves (Feeney, 2016). This is consistent in our data, as females tend to be more anxious about the maintenance of the relationship which lead them to be more invested in their relationships. While females' anxious attachment did not show any links to male commitment, it can be hypothesized that males would be negatively impacted by the female partner's pursuit, aligning with the notion of a pursue-withdraw pattern. This is because of the common pursue-withdraw patterns shown in couples (Brimhall et al., 2018). As a female partner is pursuing, the male with avoidant attachment behavior perceives this as a threat to his safety and security and engages in avoidant behaviors of turning away and becoming disengaged.

Females' avoidance was also found to have a negative link to commitment, highlighting the opposite pattern. As a female disengages in the relationship, she shows lower levels of commitment. In our sample, males' avoidance was found to be negatively linked to both partners' commitment. This is an important finding as it suggests that the more disengaged males are in their relationship, the less committed both they and their partner are. Understanding that males who turn away from their relationships because they turn inward to feel a sense of security and safety shows that they are not as invested in the relationship which impacts their partners' commitment. Previous research had established the link between avoidant attachment and lower levels of commitment (Tucker & Anders, 1999; Etcheverry et al., 2012), yet our data highlights the relational impact. Helping men become more engaged, accessible, and responsive in their relationships not only would help them move towards a more committed relationship but also would help their partners be more invested in the relationship. Theoretically, this may also improve relationship satisfaction and quality of the relationship as our data and other researchers have established those links (Feeney, 2016).

Links Between Attachment Behaviors and Relationship Work

Relationship work has been established as an important construct that influences relationship functioning (Jensen & Rauer, 2014). As it points to how couples engage and turn toward each other in conflict, it is not surprising there were significant links to attachment. Supplementing established RW patterns from previous literature, our data showed significant associations between with females' anxiety and females' RW. The more anxious a female was, the less relationship work she engaged in. While anxious partners are expected to turn toward their partner for safety and security, one can understand these results through the idea that those with insecure attachments, in general, are doing less RW than secure individuals (Feeney, 2016).

RW requires partners to feel a sense of security to engage in difficult conversations. While the anxious female may still be pursuing her partner, it may come across as criticism and dysfunctional behavior rather than constructive conversations (Feeney, 2016; Johnson, 2019). These individuals may be worried that their partner would not see their needs as valuable or important, contributing to the sense of them feeling like a burden if they bring up their needs. Feeling insecure, these individuals, who have a high sense of rejection, may hold back from sharing their more vulnerable feelings and not engage in RW.

Females' avoidance was negatively linked to their own RW, which was expected from previous literature (Jensen et al., 2019). Their lack of safety experienced in the relationship leads them to not trust their partner to be there for them. This leads to decreased amounts of RW because if they retreat inward, they do not have to risk being hurt or let down by their partner (Feeney, 2016). Increased avoidance from males was also linked to decreased amounts of RW from their partner and themselves. Males who show avoidant attachment behavior have a strong sense of themselves and, when distressed, seek comfort by turning inward. Due to this, they are less likely to engage in RW themselves. On the other hand, when the female experiences her partner as aloof, she is less likely to reach out to her partner with her needs, which results in decreased amounts of females' RW with an avoidant male partner. In other studies, decreased amounts of RW are also linked to lower levels of commitment (Jensen & Rauer, 2014). This also shows the systemic interactions between the construct of relationship satisfaction. The less conversations a couple has about their relationship, the less commitment they experience (Jensen & Rauer, 2014), likely contributing to lower levels of relationship satisfaction.

Links Between Attachment Behaviors and Relationship Satisfaction

In general, insecure attachments have been shown to have negative associations with an individual's and their partner's relationship satisfaction (Feeney, 2016). In relationships where partners have a secure attachment, they are able to engage in conflict, have a strong sense of commitment, and experience stability in their relationships. The positive relationship functioning that is experienced in these relationships leads to overall satisfaction (Simpson, 1990; Feeney, 2016; Candel & Turliuc, 2019). In our sample, as expected, female anxiety showed a negative link to both the actor and partner satisfaction levels. Males' anxiety and avoidance showed no partner effects, but were associated with males' own satisfaction. Female avoidance was not found to be significantly associated with their own or their partner's satisfaction. This finding may be explained by considering that when the female partner is not pursuing their partner, there may be some level of feeling content from the male partner because the female's behavior is not perceived as nagging or critical (Brimhall et al., 2018).

Integration

To note, males' anxiety, with the exception of their own satisfaction, did not appear to have a significant impact on the study. When trying to understand this, it is important to look systemically at the interactions that may be happening within the couple dynamic. One possibility is that due to the anxious population we had, male's anxious behavior could be interpreted by the female partner as normal or something they are satisfied with. This behavior, of pursuing their partner, could then be perceived as good through their attachment-based schema because the female partners are making requests and the male partner is engaged. The females in this sample who are more anxious may experience this behavior from their partner as being needed and wanted so the pursue-pursue pattern continues. Some females who are more anxious may be looking to their partner for security and validation while idealizing them and

relying on them for affection (Feeney, 2016). Brimhall et al. (2018) adds to this, explaining that men and women are also socialized to interact in relationships differently. Women who display anxious behaviors tend to be seen as critical and nagging, whereas men who engage in the same behavior are seen as investing in the relationship and often received as positive. When men are more anxiously attached and showing behaviors that are seen as assertive and persistent, their partner may not nag them as much. This applies to our findings as our results did not show a significant negative association between male anxiety and their partners satisfaction levels.

Male avoidance was linked to all variables in the first model and their own satisfaction. This highlights the importance of men being engaged, accessible, and responsive as it not only helps their partner feel more committed and engaged in RW but improves their own relationship satisfaction as well. This aligns with previous research that has found males who engage in stonewalling behaviors, such as the listener not engaging or being present in the conversation, are shown to have decreased relationship satisfaction (Gottman, 1991; Hooper et al., 2017). These behaviors also heighten the pursue-withdrawal cycle. Men who consistently stonewall and turn away from their partner increase their partner's anxiety, leading them to become more critical. As the criticism persists, the males continue to turn away from their partner which leads to less commitment, relationship work, and decreased satisfaction. This is consistent with Jensen and Rauer's (2014) findings, indicating that less RW with ones partner is associated with less happiness, commitment, and love.

Clinical Implications

Marriage and family therapists and other helping professionals who work with couples can use these findings to aid couples in feeling more secure in their relationship and improving their relationship functioning. Therapy models that use an attachment framework, such as

Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT; Johnson, 2019), play an important role in this process. EFT works to help couples become more secure in their relationships by restructuring their interactions through accessing an individual's primary emotions. When individuals experience a secure attachment, they remain committed even when discussing their relationship challenges, which has been shown to improve relationship outcomes (Jensen & Rauer, 2014).

Research has suggested that couples who experience under-commitment may benefit from increasing the positive interactions they have and creating a secure bond rather than focusing on behavioral modification (Labonté et al., 2022). These researchers suggest that avoidant individuals, due to their lack of trust and safety in the relationship, can recommit to their partner by experiencing positive perceptions of their interactions. Our research helps explain this as males who are avoidant engage in fewer relationship work conversations and influence their partner's amount of relationship work. Clinicians can use EFT to increase the commitment partners feel by highlighting the positive interaction cycles couples engage in. Helping the couple see what is working well can increase their confidence in the relationship and improve their commitment which may influence their willingness to engage in relationship work. Deepening the emotional experience couples have with one another would allow each other to express positive regard toward their partner increasing the commitment they are experiencing. Our research specifically highlights the importance of engaging avoidant men in romantic relationships. Considering a common couple dynamic, the EFT therapist works to reengage the avoidant partner and soften the anxious partner, therefore, reducing the pursue-withdraw pattern. Modeling a secure attachment for the couple, the therapist can help the avoidant partner risk vulnerability and trust again. Meanwhile, the therapist works with the anxious partner to gain a stronger sense of self and not put so much pressure on the relationship to have a sense of security

(Johnson, 2019). In both partners, the goal is to help them achieve security and safety in different ways. The avoidant partner gains confidence in their partner that they will be met with what they need and will not be dismissed, helping them desire connection and security from others. The anxious partner gains confidence in themselves, knowing that they are not a burden and can trust themselves to meet some of their needs. As these processes occur and both partners are moving towards a more secure attachment, the therapist can then help the couple to integrate these patterns into their everyday lives increasing their positive interaction cycles. Gottman (1999) explains positive sentiment override as a sign of longevity and relationship satisfaction in romantic relationships. The therapist's work of creating a more secure attachment can help those who would typically experience attachment anxiety or avoidant behaviors feel more committed, connected, and satisfied in their relationship.

Limitations and Future Research

While there were many strengths to this model, it was not without limitations. Our sample of young adults on average displayed more anxious behaviors, higher commitment levels, and moderate dissatisfaction. In the emerging adult literature, it is not uncommon to have a more anxious population due to the increase in anxiety in this age group (Vannucci et al., 2017), however, it may limit the generalizability of the results. With the sample showing more anxiously attached behaviors, it may influence the associations that were found. However, for clinicians who work with emerging adults and couple relationships, this information is imperative as we see an increase in attachment anxiety. Theoretically, we can speculate that our population, due to being more anxious, views themselves as being a burden and not being good enough for their partner. As they internalize their avoidant partner's behaviors, they become increasingly worried about their influence on the relationship producing an over-commitment to

the relationship. Simultaneously their dissatisfaction increases as they realize their efforts are not being noticed by their avoidant partner.

As reported in our methodology, some scales (e.g., males' commitment) had moderately low-reliability scores, suggesting caution should be taken when interpreting results. Nevertheless, results do not suggest that constructs examined were inaccurately captured by the measures selected for the sample. Future research should replicate this study across different populations and demographics. Our sample was primarily White, educated, and did not have children. Studies that examine these associations with same-sex or elderly couples may find different results. Future research would continue to help clinicians and researchers understand these effects across different populations. Future research should consider using a non-college student sample and include minority participants to further our understanding of attachment and our dependent variables across different populations.

Conclusion

Overall, it is essential to examine the individual and relational impacts of attachment on commitment, relationship work, and relationship satisfaction in romantic relationships. The findings in our study show how attachment theory is linked to different aspects of relationship functioning in adult relationships for the individual and their partner. This adds to the existing literature by finding the dyadic links and what influences the amounts of commitment and relationship work experienced in a relationship. Researchers will need to continue to add to this literature to help us continue to explain the influence attachment has throughout the lifespan of romantic relationships.

REFERENCES:

Allen, J. P., & Tan, J. S. (2016). The multiple facets of attachment in adolescence. In J. Cassidy & P. R. Shaver (Eds.), *Handbook of Attachment, Third Edition: Theory, Research, and Clinical Applications* (399-415). Guilford Publications.

Ainsworth, M. S. (1989). Attachments beyond infancy. *American Psychologist*, *44*(4), 709–716. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.44.4.709

Ainsworth, M. D. S., Bell, S. M., & Stayton, D. J. (1971). Individual differences in strange-situation behaviour of one-year-olds. In Shaffer, H. R. (Ed.), *The origins of human social relations*. London & New York: Academic Press.

Bartholomew, K. (1990). Avoidance of intimacy: An attachment perspective. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *7*(2), 147–178. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407590072001

Bello, R. S., Brandau-Brown, F. E., & Ragsdale, J. D. (2008). Attachment style, marital satisfaction, commitment, and communal strength effects on relational repair message interpretation among remarrieds. *Communication Quarterly*, *56*(1), 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1080/01463370701838968

Bentler, P. M. (1990). Comparative fit indexes in structural models. *Psychological Bulletin*,107, 238–246. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.107.2.238

Bentler, P. M. (1995). EQS structural equations program manual [computer software manual]. Encino, CA: Multivariate Software.

Bowlby, J. (1969). Attachment and loss: Vol. 1. Attachment. New York: Basic Books.

Bowlby, J. (1973). Attachment and loss: Vol. 2. Separation: Anxiety and anger. New York: Basic Books.

Bowlby, J. (1980). Attachment and loss: Vol. 3. Loss. New York: Basic Books.

Brimhall, A. S., Bonner, H. S., Tyndall, L., & Jensen, J. F. (2018). ARE you there for me? The relationship between attachment, communication, and relationship satisfaction of law enforcement officers and their partners. *Journal of Couple & Relationship Therapy, 17*(4), 338-361.

Bühler, J. L., Krauss, S., & Orth, U. (2021). Development of relationship satisfaction across the Life Span: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, *147*(10), 1012–1053. https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000342

Busby, D. M., Christensen, C., Crane, D. R., & Larson, J. H. (1995). A revision of the dyadic adjustment scale for use with distressed and nondistressed couples: Construct hierarchy and multidimensional scales. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, *21*(3), 289–308. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1752-0606.1995.tb00163.x

Candel, O. S., & Turliuc, M. N. (2019). Insecure attachment and relationship satisfaction: A meta-analysis of actor and Partner Associations. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *147*, 190–199. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2019.04.037

Collins, N. L., Cooper, M. L., Albino, A., & Allard, L. (2002). Psychosocial vulnerability from adolescence to adulthood: A prospective study of attachment style differences in relationship functioning and partner choice. *Journal of Personality*, *70*(6), 965–1008. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6494.05029

Cook, W. L., & Kenny, D. A. (2005). The Actor–Partner interdependence model: A model of bidirectional effects in developmental studies. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 29(2), 101-109. https://doi.org/10.1080/01650250444000405

Diamond, R. M., Brimhall, A. S., & Elliott, M. (2018). Attachment and relationship satisfaction among first married, remarried, and post-divorce relationships. *Journal of Family Therapy*, *40*. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6427.12161

Duemmler, S. L., & Koback, R. (2001). The development of commitment and attachment in dating relationships: Attachment security as relationship construct. *Journal of Adolescence*, *24*(3), 401–415. https://doi.org/10.1006/jado.2001.0406

Ehrenberg, M. F., Robertson, M., & Pringle, J. (2012). Attachment style and marital commitment in the context of remarriage. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, *53*(3), 204–219. https://doi.org/10.1080/10502556.2012.663270

Etcheverry, P. E., Le, B., WU, T. F., & Wei, M. (2013). Attachment and the investment model: Predictors of relationship commitment, maintenance, and persistence. *Personal Relationships*, *20*(3), 546-567

Feeney, J. A. (1994). Attachment style, communication patterns, and satisfaction across the life cycle of Marriage. *Personal Relationships*, *1*(4), 333–348. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6811.1994.tb00069.x

Feeney, J. A. (2016). Adult romantic attachment developments in the study of couple relationships. In J. Cassidy & P. R. Shaver (Eds.), *Handbook of attachment: Theory, research, and clinical applications* (3rd ed., pp. 435–463). essay, The Guilford Press.

Fitzpatrick, J., Gareau, A., Lafontaine, M., & Gaudreau, P. (2016). How to use the actor-partner 74 interdependence model (APIM) to estimate different dyadic patterns in MPLUS: A step-by-step tutorial. *Tutorials in Quantitative Methods for Psychology*, 12(1), 74- 86. https://doi.org/10.20982/tqmp.12.1.p074

Ghezelseflo, M., Jazayeri, R., Bahrami, F., & Mohammadi Fesharaki, R. (2016). The role of relational maintenance behavior and attachment styles in predicting marital commitment. *Asian Social Science, 12*(9), 223. https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v12n9p223

Gottman, J. M. (1991). Predicting the longitudinal course of marriages. *Journal of marital and Family Therapy*, *17*(1), 3-7.

Gottman, J. M. (1999). *The marriage clinic a scientifically-based marital therapy*. W.W. Norton.

Hadden, B. W., Smith, C. V., & Webster, G. D. (2014). Relationship duration moderates associations between attachment and relationship quality. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, *18*(1), 42–58. https://doi.org/10.1177/1088868313501885

Hazan, C., & Shaver, P. R. (1994). Attachment as an organizational framework for research on close relationships. *Psychological Inquiry*, *5*(1), 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327965pli0501_1

Hazan, C., & Shaver, P. (1987). Romantic love conceptualized as an attachment process. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *52*(3), 511–524. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.52.3.511

Helms, H. M., Crouter, A. C., & McHale, S. M. (2003). Marital quality and spouses' marriage work with close friends and each other. Journal of Marriage and Family, 65(4), 963-977.

Hepper, E. G., & Carnelley, K. B. (2012). Attachment and romantic relationships: The role of models of self and other. In M. Paludi (Ed.), The psychology of love (Vol. 1, pp. 133-154). Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger.

Ho, M. Y., Chen, S. X., Bond, M. H., Hui, C. M., Chan, C., & Friedman, M. (2011). Linking adult attachment styles to relationship satisfaction in Hong Kong and the United States: The mediating role of personal and Structural Commitment. Journal of Happiness Studies, 13(3), 565–578. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-011-9279-1

Hollist, C. S., & Miller, R. B. (2005). Perceptions of attachment style and marital quality in midlife marriage. Family Relations, 54(1), 46–57. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0197-6664.2005.00005.x

Hooper, A., Spann, C., McCray, T., & Kimberly, C. (2017). Revisiting the basics: Understanding potential demographic differences with John Gottman's Four Horsemen and emotional flooding. The Family Journal, 25(3), 224-229.

Hu, L. T., & Bentler, P. M. (1999). Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. Structural equation modeling: a multidisciplinary journal, 6(1), 1-55.

Hudson, N. W., Fraley, R. C., Chopik, W. J., & Heffernan, M. E. (2015). Not all attachment relationships develop alike: Normative cross-sectional age trajectories in attachment to

romantic partners, best friends, and parents. Journal of Research in Personality, 59, 44-55.

Huston, T. L. (2000). The social ecology of marriage and other intimate unions. Journal of Marriage and Family, 62(2), 298–320. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2000.00298.x

Jensen, J. F., & Rauer, A. J. (2014). Turning inward versus outward: Relationship work in young adults and romantic functioning: Relationship work in young adults. Personal Relationships, 21(3), 451-467. doi:10.1111/pere.12042

Jensen, J. F., & Rauer, A. J. (2015). Marriage work in older couples: Disclosure of marital problems to spouses and friends over time. Journal of Family Psychology, 29(5), 732-732. doi:10.1037/fam0000099

Jensen, J., Fish, M., Dinkins, Q., Rappleyea, D., & Didericksen, K. W. (2019). Relationship work among young adult couples: Romantic, social, and physiological considerations. Personal Relationships, 26(2), 366–382. https://doi.org/10.1111/pere.12279

Jensen, J., Rauer, A., Rodriguez, Y., & Brimhall, A. (2018). Whom should I talk to? emerging adults' romantic relationship work. Journal of Social, Behavioral, and Health Sciences, 12(1). https://doi.org/10.5590/jsbhs.2018.12.1.02

Johnson, S. M. (2019). Attachment theory in practice: Emotionally focused therapy (EFT) with individuals, couples, and families. Guilford Publications.

Kane, H. S., Jaremka, L. M., Guichard, A. M. C., Ford, M. B., Collins, N. L., & Feeney, B. C. (2007). Feeling supported and feeling satisfied: How one partner's attachment style

predicts the other partner's relationship experiences. Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 24(4), 535–555. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407507079245

Kelly, H. H. (1983). Love and Commitment. In H. H. Kelley, E. Berscheid, A. Christensen, J. H. Harvey, T. L. Huston, G. Levinger, E. McClintock, L. A. Peplau, & D. R. Peterson (Eds.), Close Relationships, 265-314. New York: Freeman.

Kenny, D. A., & Ledermann, T. (2010). Detecting, measuring, and testing dyadic patterns in the actor–partner interdependence model. Journal of family psychology, 24(3), 359.

Kirkpatrick, L. A., & Davis, K. E. (1994). Attachment style, gender, and relationship stability: A longitudinal analysis. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 66(3), 502–512. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.66.3.502

Kurdek, L. A. (2002). On being insecure about the assessment of attachment styles. Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 19(6), 811–834. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407502196005

Labonté, T., Beaulieu, N., Brassard, A., Gauthier, N., Gagnon-Tremblay, J., & Péloquin, K. (2022). Attachment insecurities and under-commitment in distressed couples: The role of positive and negative partner behaviors. Journal of Marital and Family Therapy.

Levy, M. B., & Davis, K. E. (1988). Lovestyles and attachment styles compared: Their relations to each other and to various relationship characteristics. Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 5(4), 439–471. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407588054004

Li, T., & Chan, D. K.-S. (2012). How anxious and avoidant attachment affect romantic relationship quality differently: A meta-analytic review. European Journal of Social Psychology, 42(4), 406–419. https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.1842

Lund, M. (1985). The development of investment and commitment scales for predicting continuity of personal relationships. Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 2(1), 3–23. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407585021001

Madey, S. F., & Rodgers, L. (2009). The effect of attachment and Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love on relationship satisfaction. Individual Differences Research, 7(2), 76–84

Mark, K. P., Vowels, L. M., & Murray, S. H. (2018). The impact of attachment style on sexual satisfaction and sexual desire in a sexually diverse sample. Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy, 44(5), 450–458. https://doi.org/10.1080/0092623x.2017.1405310

McLeod, S., Berry, K., Hodgson, C., & Wearden, A. (2019). Attachment and social support in romantic dyads: A systematic review. Journal of Clinical Psychology, 76(1), 59–101. https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.22868

Mikulincer, M., & Shaver, P.R. (2007). Attachment in adulthood: Structure, dynamics, and change. New York: Guilford Press.

Oztekin, C. (2016). Attachment styles and close relationship beliefs as predictors of commitment in romantic relation (1) [Doctoral dissertation, Middle East Technical University]. Department of Educational Sciences.

Peugh, J. L., DiLillo, D., & Panuzio, J. (2013). Analyzing mixed-dyadic data using structural equation models. Structural Equation Modeling: A Multidisciplinary Journal, 20(2), 314-337.

Rotosky, S., & Riggle, E. (2017). Same-sex relationships and minority stress. Current Opinion in Psychology, 13, 29–38.

Rusbult, C. E. (1980). Commitment and satisfaction in Romantic Associations: A test of the investment model. Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 16(2), 172–186. https://doi.org/10.1016/0022-1031(80)90007-4

Schneider, C., & Brimhall, A. S. (2013). From scared to repaired: Using an attachment-based perspective to understand situational couple violence. Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 40(3), 367–379. https://doi.org/10.1111/jmft.12023

Simpson, J. A. (1990). Influence of attachment styles on romantic relationships. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 59(5), 971–980. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.59.5.971

Standley, S. M., Rhoades, G. K., & Whitton, S. W. (2010). Commitment: Functions, formation, and the securing of romantic attachment. Journal of Family Theory & Review, 2(4), 243–257. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1756-2589.2010.00060.x

Terzino, K. A., & Cross, S. E. (2009). Predicting commitment in new relationships: Interactive effects of relational self-construal and power. Self and Identity, 8(4), 321–341. https://doi.org/10.1080/15298860802102273

Tran, S. S., & Simpson, J. A. (2009). Prorelationship maintenance behaviors: The joint roles of attachment and commitment. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 97(4), 685–698. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0016418

Tucker, J. S., & Anders, S. L. (1999). Attachment style, interpersonal perception accuracy, and relationship satisfaction in dating couples. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 25(4), 403–412. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167299025004001

Vannucci, A., Flannery, K. M., & Ohannessian, C. M. (2017). Social media use and anxiety in emerging adults. Journal of affective disorders, 207, 163-166.

Wei, M., Russell, D. W., Mallinckrodt, B., & Vogel, D. L. (2007). The experiences in close relationship scale (ecr)-short form: Reliability, validity, and factor structure. Journal of Personality Assessment, 88(2), 187–204. https://doi.org/10.1080/00223890701268041

Weiss, R. S. (1982). Attachment in adult life. In C. M. Parkes & J. Stevenson-Hinde (Eds.), The place of attachment in human behavior (pp. 171-184). New York: Basic Books.

Zhang, S., & Kline, S. L. (2009). Can I make my own decision? A cross-cultural study of perceived social network influence in mate selection. Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 40(1), 3–23. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022108326192

Zhou, L., Lin, Y., Li, W., Du, J., & Xu, W. (2020). Mindfulness, attachment, and relationship satisfaction among heterosexual college student couples: An actor-partner interdependence model analysis. Current Psychology, 1-10.