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PARENTAL ATTACHMENT, ROMANTIC COMPETENCE, AND
PSYCHOSOCIAL ADJUSTMENT IN AN EMERGING ADULT SAMPLE

by

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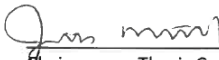
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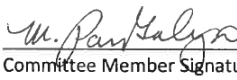
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ABSTRACT

PARENTAL ATTACHMENT, ROMANTIC COMPETENCE, AND PSYCHOSOCIAL ADJUSTMENT IN AN EMERGING ADULT SAMPLE

Shaina Kumar

Previous research has found a significant relation between parental attachment and psychosocial adjustment among emerging adults. This study aimed to examine whether the links between parental attachment and adjustment outcomes in emerging adults were mediated by the development of romantic competence and relationship satisfaction. The hypothesized model proposed adjustment outcomes are the result of not only parental attachment, but also romantic competence and relationship satisfaction. One hundred eighty-eight volunteer participants were recruited and participated in a semi-structured interview and completed self-report questionnaires. Results showed mother and father attachment each uniquely predicted overall distress levels and life satisfaction. Regression analyses also showed romantic competence and relationship satisfaction mediated the link between mother attachment and adjustment outcomes to a significant degree. These results imply maternal attachment is an important contributor to psychosocial adjustment and that romantic competence and relationship satisfaction play an important role within emerging adults' development.

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Chapter 1:

Introduction

Researchers have shown individuals of all ages seek relationships with family, friends, and intimate partners in order to feel a sense of security (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In relation to familial relatedness and security, John Bowlby described a secure base parental attachment as an eventual generalized expectation that the primary caregiver would be there for their child, save their child if there is trouble, and restore balance to current activities in the event of a disruption (Waters & Waters, 2006). Consequently, an insecure parental attachment would have the opposite effect: the child would come to believe their primary caregiver would not be there, not come to the rescue if there is trouble, and be unable to restore balance to current activities in the event of a disruption. Given the significant role that caregivers play in their children's lives, it is important to examine exactly how caregivers are contributing to their children's psychosocial adjustment.

Chapter 2:

Literature Review

Literature suggests parental attachment formed during childhood has a significant effect on individuals over time, where secure parental attachment is linked with better psychological adjustment in adulthood (Whittaker & Cornthwaite, 2000). Recently, secure parental attachment has also been associated with emerging adults' increased academic achievement and adjustment to college (Mattanah, Lopez, & Govern, 2011; Schnuck & Handal, 2011), increased relationship satisfaction (Amitay, Mongrain, & Fazaa, 2008), frequent positive behaviors directed towards romantic partners (Conger, Cui, Byrant, & Elder, 2000), and overall greater sense of self-worth (Mattanah et al., 2011). Thus, one may conclude that those who exhibit a secure parental attachment during childhood generally have a higher satisfaction in life during adulthood, as well as less symptomatic distress.

In addition to improving overall psychological adjustment and better relationship functioning, parental attachment has also been implicated in the etiology of depressive and anxious symptoms. First, a generally hostile, disruptive, and negative home environment during childhood has been shown to be a major risk factor in developing these maladaptive symptoms (Greenberg, Cicchetti, & Cummings, 1990). More specifically, insecure parental attachment has been positively related to several indices of psychological distress, including shame, anger, depression and anxiety, negative affect, emotional distress, and general distress symptoms (Wei, Shaffer, Young, & Zakalik, 2005). Second, insecure parental attachment has also been linked to increased feelings of loneliness and low self-esteem among emerging adult populations (Wei et al., 2005).

Overall, variation in parental attachment has been implicated in the development of both adaptive and maladaptive outcomes across the developmental spectrum from early childhood through emerging adulthood.

Although the link between parental attachment and developmental outcomes among emerging adults is clear, less research has examined what variables may mediate those relationships. However, a few studies have shown that self-esteem (Roberts, Gotlib, & Kassel, 1996), self-efficacy (Strodl & Noller, 2003), ineffective coping (Lopez et al., 2001), social competence and emotional awareness (Mallinckrodt & Wei, 2005), perceived social support (Wu & Yang, 2012), and emotional reactivity and emotional cutoff (Wei et al., 2005) are all variables that may mediate the relationship between insecure parental attachment and symptomatic distress. Furthermore, Wei et al. (2005) also found the satisfaction of basic psychological needs may serve as a mediator between insecure parental attachment and shame, depression, and loneliness.

In addition to studies examining self-perceptual variables as mediators of parental attachment, it is possible that the effects of parental attachment on psychosocial adjustment, especially emerging adult romantic relationship functioning, are mediated by students demonstrating greater competence in romantic relationships. Recently, Davila et al. (2009) introduced the concept of romantic competence and researched the role that it may play in the psychological adjustment of individuals. Davila et al. (2009) define romantic competence as:

The ability to think about relationships with a consideration of mutuality, in a thoughtful, insightful way, that shows learning from experience, and ability for consequential thinking; the ability to make decisions and engage in behaviors that

maintain care and respect of self and others and that can be successfully dealt with emotionally; and the ability to regulate emotions and the self in response to relationship experiences. (p. 58)

In order to measure this concept, Davila et al. (2009) created the Romantic Competence Interview (RCI), a semi-structured interview that allows participants to answer open-ended questions with regard to their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in actual and hypothetical romantic circumstances, as well as their general thoughts and ideas about what a romantic relationship entails. During the RCI, participants are rated on three different scales (described in detail in the methods section) and a global competence scale that reflects the individual's level of overall romantic competence. The initial study of the RCI conducted by Davila et al. (2009) found that lower romantic competence was linked with participants coming from non-intact families and having more negative views of their parents' marriages. In addition, Davila et al. (2009) also found participants who identified as having an insecure parental attachment also exhibited lower romantic competence.

In a related study, Shulman, Zlotnik, Shachar-Shapira, Connolly, and Bohr (2012) found adolescents from divorced families showed lower levels of romantic competence that was then expressed negatively in their behaviors, attitudes, and skills with regard to handling relationships. Furthermore, less competent adolescents reported a lower likelihood of ever marrying, as they had been exposed to negative models of relationships during childhood and they tended to view relationships in a negative fashion (Davila et al., 2009). To note, previous research on romantic competence has been limited to adolescent populations. The current study sought to advance these studies by examining

the relationship between parental attachment patterns and romantic competence within an emerging adult population. In addition, the current study examined whether romantic competence mediated the relationship between insecure parental attachment, symptomatic distress, and satisfaction with life among college students.

In addition to examining predictors of romantic competence, the current study also hypothesized romantic competence and romantic relationship satisfaction would be strong predictors of better psychological adjustment among emerging adults. In support of this suggestion, Steinberg and Davila (2008) have already found that a higher frequency of unsatisfying romantic experiences and poor romantic competence were both associated with higher levels of current depressive symptoms. Moreover, a number of other studies have shown that healthy romantic relationships during emerging adulthood are strong predictors of increased mental well-being and decreased psychological distress. For example, Braithwaite, Delevi, and Fincham (2010) found that, in a sample of 1,621 college students, those who were in committed relationships experienced overall fewer mental health problems in comparison to their counterparts. Likewise, researchers found that those who were in committed relationships showed an overall decrease in problematic behaviors, such as risky sexual activity, resulting in a decreased rate of problematic outcomes during college years (Braithwaite et al., 2010). In general, it has been noted that positive intimate relationships are associated with an enhanced emotional well-being in emerging adult populations, as well as increased, healthy psychological functioning resulting from support from the romantic partner (Simon & Barrett, 2010). As many emerging adults begin serious relationships during their college years, it is

important to review and understand the implications that these relationships may have on the future of this population's psychosocial adjustment.

As stated, research examining the effects of parental attachment on psychosocial adjustment outcomes is quite clear. The current study argues that romantic competence may be a particularly salient mediator of this relationship during the emerging adult period. Specifically, it is during emerging adulthood that individuals begin to explore romantic relationships in greater depth and need to balance the demands for identity exploration and career exploration with the negotiation of longer term, intimate relationships (Shulman & Connolly, 2013). Emerging adulthood specifically challenges individuals to transition into roles and relationships that require commitment and responsibility, and it has been theorized that parental attachment affects whether emerging adults have gained the skills and adjustment necessary to succeed in all facets of life, including social interactions, romantic relationships, and general psychological adjustment (Karre, 2015). Studying emerging adulthood is particularly important because this a time where parental attachment, romantic relationships, and psychosocial adjustment begin to intersect, and emerging adults develop more solidified schemas based on their current experiences (Eberhart, Auerbach, Bigda-Peyton, & Abela, 2015). Emerging adulthood may be a prime time for clinical intervention, as clinicians may be able to intervene before emerging adults' schemas become more maladaptive in nature and lead to a multitude of dangerous outcomes.

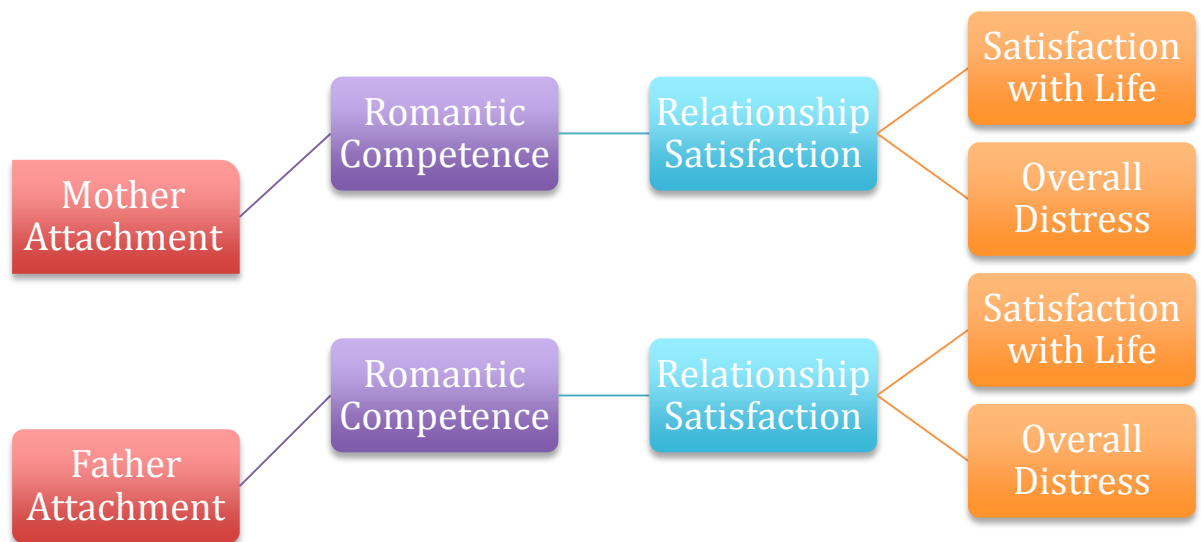
The current study proposed that romantic relationship competence and better romantic relationship functioning serve as important mediators of the effects of secure parental attachment on college students' overall psychological functioning and

symptomatic distress levels. Additionally, the current study proposed that secure parental attachment would directly affect college students' overall psychological functioning and symptomatic distress levels even after controlling for the mediated effect through romantic competence and relationship satisfaction. Parental attachment likely affects students' adjustment in multiple ways and not just through enhancing competence.

Present Study

The purpose of this study is to examine whether parental attachment leads to increased satisfaction with life and decreased distress and whether romantic competence and relationship satisfaction are the mechanisms through which parental attachment is linked to satisfaction with life and overall distress (i.e. parental attachment → romantic competence → relationship satisfaction → (1) satisfaction with life, (2) overall distress) (see Figure 1). The current study hypothesized (1) participants with a secure parental attachment exhibit an overall higher satisfaction with life and less overall distress. Furthermore, the current study hypothesized (2) romantic competence and relationship satisfaction mediate the link between parental attachment and satisfaction with life and overall distress.

Figure 1. Hypothesized Models of the Current Study



Chapter 3:

Method

Participants

One hundred eighty-eight students at a mid-sized regional university in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States participated in the current study. Students received four credits through a Research Pool system to fulfill class requirements, as well as a small prize for their participation. Inclusion criteria permitted only students who had been in an identifiable romantic relationship for at least one month prior to the study to participate. The final sample consisted of both women (74.9%) and men (25.5%), where the average age was approximately 19.65 years old ($SD = 3.51$). The final sample consisted of Caucasian (81.7%), African American (13.3%), Latino/a (2.8%), and Asian/Pacific Islander (2.2%) participants. Additionally, the final sample consisted of heterosexual (31.4%), homosexual (1.1%), and bisexual (1.1%) participants, and 63 participants elected to not answer the question. In terms of family configuration, the sample included those who lived with two biological parents (79.8%), biological/adoptive mother only (8.5%), biological/adoptive mother and stepfather (6.9%), biological/adoptive father and stepmother (1.6%), biological/adoptive father only (1.1%), grandparents (0.5%), aunt (0.5%), two adoptive parents (0.5%), and foster family/group home/other (1.6%).

With regard to participants' romantic experience, most participants reported currently being in a serious romantic relationship that has lasted over one year (55.3%), but other participants stated they were currently in a serious romantic relationship that has lasted less than one year (36.2%), dating casually (3.2%), or married (3.2%). The

average length of participants' current romantic relationship was 102.40 weeks ($SD = 86.55$) with a range from a minimum of four weeks to a maximum of 508 weeks.

Measures

Participants in the laboratory completed a multitude of measures during a single two-hour session. The measures are outlined below along with the present sample's alpha levels.

Parental Attachment. In order to assess an individual's level of attachment to his or her parental figures, the current study used the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987). The IPPA is a 75-item self-report questionnaire that measures secure parental attachment of individuals towards their mothers, fathers, and peers (25 items for the target individual; the current study focused only on attachment to mothers and fathers). The three subscales of this measure are Trust, Communication, and Alienation. Sample items include, "My mother accepts me as I am," (Trust subscale; $\alpha = .93/.93$ mother/father) "I get upset easily around my father," (Alienation subscale; $\alpha = .84/.88$ mother/father) and, "My friends listen to what I have to say," (Communication subscale; $\alpha = .93/.94$ mother/father). An overall parental attachment score for participants' designated parental figures was created by averaging the Trust, Communication, and Alienation (reverse-coded) items ($\alpha = .96/.96$ mother/father). These responses are coded on a 5-point Likert format scale (i.e., 1 = *almost never or never true*, 5 = *almost always or always true*). This measure demonstrated good internal consistency in previous research, with alphas ranging from .86 to .91. In terms of validity, this measure has shown to be correlated with the Family

Self-Concept Scale ($r = 0.78$ with parent attachment) and the Social Self-Concept subscale ($r = 0.46$ with parent attachment) (Gullone & Robinson, 2005).

The IPPA attachment scales have also been used to assess mother/mother pairs, father/father pairs, aunt/uncle pairs, single parents, and so forth, as participants are allowed to designate who is the most relevant attachment figure in their lives. In the current study, participants were asked to report on a “mother figure” and/or “father figure” who was most responsible for raising them during their school-age years.

Romantic Competence. In order to assess an individual’s level of romantic competence in his or her relationship, the current study used the Romantic Competence Interview (RCI) (Davila et al., 2009). The RCI is a semi-structured interview comprised of approximately fifty questions. This semi-structured interview’s aim is to gather open-ended answers from participants about what they would do in certain situations, both from past experience and hypothetically, as well as how they think, feel, and react to these particular situations. Sample questions include, “Thinking about where you have learned about romantic relationships, who or where have you learned the most from? What have you learned?” “How is your communication?” and, “Do you ever have conflicts or disagreements? How were those handled?”

From these open-ended responses, coders rate the participants’ overall level of romantic competence on three scales: Learning/Insight, Mutuality, and Emotion Regulation. In addition, a Global Competence Level score is also calculated, where the interviewer assigns the participant a global romantic competence rating based on the overall interview. These responses are coded at the end of the interview by trained interviewers/coders on a 5-point Likert format scale for each subscale (e.g., 1 = *low*

mutuality, 5 = *high mutuality*; 1 = *no evidence of competence*, 5 = *significant evidence of competence*). Interviewers/coders consisted of clinical and experimental psychology graduate students who were trained on how to administer the RCI properly by the original developer of the RCI, Dr. Davila. Dr. Davila provided an intensive one-day workshop to lab members in order to teach how to properly administer and code the interview. Multiple coder training meetings were held after the original training in order to practice interview administration and to ensure coder inter-rater reliability. In order to check reliability, 30 interviews were double-coded by two separate interviewers. Interviewers' inter-rater reliabilities were quite respectable in this study and comparable to those gathered on the original study using the RCI (Mutuality: Intra-Class Correlation (ICC) = .67, α = .80; Learning/Insight: ICC = .64, α = .77; Emotion-Regulation: ICC = .59, α = .74; Global Score: ICC = .72, α = .84). Because the three subscales of the RCI were highly correlated with the overall Global Competence scale (correlations ranged from .65-.81), the current study chose to focus on the global scale as a singular measure of romantic competence.

The RCI demonstrated good inter-rater reliability in previous research, demonstrating an alpha of .80 for the entire interview. In terms of validity, the RCI has shown to be correlated with the Adult Attachment Scale – Romantic Version ($r = 0.45$ with other sex closeness; $r = 0.40$ with opposite sex dependence; $r = -.32$ with opposite sex anxiousness) and the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment ($r = 0.32$ with opposite sex trust; $r = 0.37$ with opposite sex communication) (Davila et al., 2009).

Relationship Satisfaction. In order to assess an individual's level of satisfaction with his or her relationship, the current study used the Couple Satisfaction Index (CSI)

(Funk & Rogge, 2007). The CSI is a 32-item self-report questionnaire, with responses coded on a variety of Likert format scales (e.g., 0 = *extremely unhappy*, 6 = *perfect*; 0 = *always disagree*, 5 = *always agree*). Sample items include, “Our relationship is strong,” “For me, my partner is the perfect romantic partner,” and, “I cannot imagine another person making me as happy as my partner does”. This measure demonstrated good internal consistency in previous research, with alphas ranging from .90 to .98. The current study used an overall mean score across the 32 items, which demonstrated very high internal consistency in the sample ($\alpha = .97$). In terms of validity, this measure has shown to be correlated with Marital Status Inventory ($r = 0.78$) and the Communication Patterns Questionnaire ($r = 0.71$ for positive communication) (Funk & Rogge, 2007).

Satisfaction with Life. In order to assess an individual’s level of satisfaction with his or her life, the current study used the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). The SWLS is a 5-item self-report questionnaire that measures each individual’s subjective well-being (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin, 1985). Sample items include, “In most ways my life is close to my ideal,” “The conditions of my life are excellent,” and, “I am satisfied with life.” These responses are coded on a 5-point Likert format scale (i.e., 1 = *not at all*, 5 = *very much*). This measure demonstrated good internal consistency in previous research, with alphas ranging from .80 to .86. The current study used an overall mean score across the five items, which demonstrated a respectable internal consistency in the sample ($\alpha = .86$). In terms of validity, this measure has shown to be positively correlated with self-esteem ($r = .40$), perceived social support from friends ($r = .26$), and perceived social support from significant others ($r = .21$) (Durak, Senol-Durak, & Gencoz, 2010).

Overall Distress. In order to assess an individual's level of overall distress, the current study used the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales Short Version (DASS) (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). The DASS is a 21-item self-report questionnaire that measures each individual's current level of depression, anxiety, and stress. Sample items include, "I felt that I was using a lot of nervous energy," (Stress subscale) "I felt downhearted and blue," (Depression subscale) and, "I felt I was close to panic," (Anxiety subscale). These responses are coded on a 4-point Likert format scale (i.e., 0 = *did not apply to me at all*, 3 = *applies to me very much, or most of the time*). Additionally, an overall measure of distress is calculated at the end of the questionnaire by averaging participants' scores across the three subscales ($\alpha = .94$). This measure demonstrated good internal consistency in previous research, with alphas ranging from .87 (stress) to .89 (anxiety) to .96 (depression). In terms of validity, this measure has shown to be positively correlated with the Beck Anxiety Inventory ($r = .56$) and the Beck Depression Inventory ($r = .48$) (Oei, Sawang, Goh, & Mukhtar, 2013).

Procedure

After signing a consent form, each participant first completed the Romantic Competence Interview, lasting anywhere from 30 to 60 minutes. The participant then completed an online self-report questionnaire consisting of the above measures, as well as additional measures used in the larger study from which these data were drawn. The survey was provided through an online protocol, SurveyMonkey, and took approximately 30 to 45 minutes to complete. After completion of the survey, the participant was debriefed.

Chapter 4:

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for all variables of interest to this study and depicts differences in mean levels of these variables across men and women. Table 1 shows that men and women reported similar levels of parental attachment to their mother and father. Furthermore, men and women also reported similar levels of romantic competence, relationship satisfaction, overall distress, and satisfaction with life. It is important to note that, in the serial regression model below, there were no significantly different patterns of effects across gender for the variables of interest. Given this lack of difference, gender was not statistically controlled for in the serial mediation models presented below. Additionally, some of the current study's variables violated assumptions of normality, but data analyses that corrected skew via log transformation yielded an identical pattern of results compared to analyses using non-transformed data. Thus, the current study reports all analyses using original, non-transformed data.

Table 1. Gender Differences for all Variables Included in the Study

Variable	Men		Women		<i>t</i> (⁶)	<i>p</i>
	M	SD	M	SD		
Mother Attachment ¹	3.85	.81	4.02	.83	1.225	.222
Father Attachment ¹	3.63	.77	3.70	.95	.438	.662
Romantic Competence ²	3.60	.69	3.67	.55	1.032	.304
Relationship Satisfaction ³	4.92	.97	5.17	.78	1.763	.079
Overall Distress ⁴	1.66	.59	1.63	.55	-.305	.761
Satisfaction with Life ⁵	5.10	1.22	5.29	1.06	.995	.321

¹Range for all attachment scales = 1-5.

²Range = 1-5.

³Range = Question 1: 0-6; Questions 2-32: 0-5.

⁴Range = 0-3.

⁵Range = 1-5.

⁶Range = 179-186.

Correlations Between Attachment Scales, Romantic Competence, Relationship Satisfaction, and Adjustment

In order to determine the most effective model and test the first hypothesis, the current study examined the correlations between all variables of interest before continuing with the proposed regression analyses. As seen in Table 2, mother attachment was moderately and significantly correlated with greater romantic competence and relationship satisfaction. Expectedly, mother attachment was moderately and significantly correlated with a decrease in overall distress and an increase in satisfaction with life, as well. Additionally, father attachment was moderately and significantly correlated with decreased overall distress and increased satisfaction with life. Unfortunately, however, father attachment was not significantly correlated with romantic competence and relationship satisfaction. Given these findings, it was not possible to examine romantic competence and relationship satisfaction as possible mediators of the effect of father attachment on adjustment outcomes. Therefore, the regression analyses presented below will only focus on the mediation of mother attachment through romantic competence and relationship satisfaction to adjustment outcomes. Nonetheless, the first hypothesis was supported: participants with a secure parental attachment to both their mother and father exhibited an overall higher satisfaction with life and less overall distress.

Table 2. Correlations between Attachment Scales, Romantic Competence, Relationship Quality, and Adjustment Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Mother Attachment	-	.40**	.22**	.15*	-.37**	.34**
2. Father Attachment		-	.14	.12	-.31**	.27**
3. Romantic Competence			-	.31**	-.28**	.30**
4. Relationship Satisfaction				-	-.28**	.30**
5. Overall Distress					-	-.37**
6. Satisfaction with Life						-

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Serial Regression Models Predicting Distress and Satisfaction with Life from Maternal Attachment, Romantic Competence, and Relationship Satisfaction

The primary focus of this study was to determine whether romantic competence and relationship satisfaction mediated the relationship between parental attachment and adjustment outcomes. Specifically, the current study hypothesized a serial mediational model wherein secure parental attachment would be related to greater romantic competence, which would be related to greater relationship satisfaction, which, in turn, would predict greater overall life satisfaction and less overall distress. Recently, Hayes (2013) argued the best way to test serial regression is through ordinary least squares (OLS) regression path analyses, subsequently utilizing bootstrap re-sampling techniques to test the significance of indirect effects. Hayes (2013) noted that traditional Sobel-like tests for indirect effects consist of incorrect assumptions about the normal distribution of such effects. As such, these tests are inappropriate and most likely underpowered. The current study utilized Hayes' *PROCESS* macro for SPSS, as it allows for regression analyses and a test of indirect effects through more efficient bootstrap re-sampling techniques. The current study utilized Hayes' model for serial mediation (model 6) and requested the original sample be re-sampled 10,000 times in order to estimate indirect effects, as recommended by Hayes. By using this technique, indirect effects are considered to be statistically significant if the values' 95% confidence interval does not contain the value "0." Results of the serial regression analyses for predicting satisfaction with life and overall distress, along with total, direct, and indirect effects are displayed in Tables 3 and 4. A visualization of the mediational effects is also displayed in Figures 2 and 3.

Table 3 shows that mother attachment, romantic competence, and relationship satisfaction each uniquely predicted overall distress levels. When examining the indirect effects, it was found that the hypothesized pathway, IPPA-M \rightarrow RCI \rightarrow CSI \rightarrow DASS, was significant: after controlling for this indirect pathway, mother attachment still significantly predicted overall distress levels, suggesting that the hypothesized mediating pathway is only one way in which maternal attachment affects students' distress levels.

Table 4 shows that mother attachment, romantic competence, and relationship satisfaction uniquely predict overall satisfaction with life. Once again, the hypothesized mediational pathway from mother attachment through romantic competence and relationship satisfaction to satisfaction with life was significant. Additionally, the direct effect of maternal attachment on satisfaction was also significant.

Table 3. Regression Analyses Examining Mediation of Mother Attachment on Overall Distress through Romantic Competence and Relationship Satisfaction Variables

Variables Entered	B	SE B	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI
A. Outcome Variable: Overall Distress (DASS)* [Total $R^2 = .20$, ($N = 186$)]					
Mother Attachment (IPPA-M)	-.21	.05	-4.5	.00	[-.2961, -.1155]
Romantic Competence (RCI)	-.15	.07	-2.3	.03	[-.2847, -.0191]
Relationship Satisfaction (CSI)	-.11	.05	-2.3	.02	[-.2025, -.0162]
B. Total, Direct, and Indirect Effects					
Total Effect of X on Y	-.24	.05	-5.30	.000	[-.3351, -.1534]
Direct Effect of X on Y	-.21	.05	-4.50	.000	[-.2961, -.1155]
Indirect Effects of X on Y					
1: IPPA-M→RCI→DASS	-.02	.01			[-.0597, -.0047]
2: IPPA-M→RCI→CSI→DASS	-.01	.00			[-.0210, -.0015]
3: IPPA-M→CSI→DASS	-.01	.01			[-.0305, .0053]

Note. * $p < .0000$

Table 4. Regression Analyses Examining Mediation of Mother Attachment on Satisfaction with Life through Romantic Competence and Relationship Satisfaction

Variables

Variables Entered	B	SE B	t	p	95% CI
A. Outcome Variable: Satisfaction with Life (SWLS)* [Total R² = .20, (N = 186)]					
Mother Attachment (IPPA-M)	.35	.09	3.83	.00	[.1675, .5244]
Romantic Competence (RCI)	.34	.13	2.58	.01	[.0805, .6052]
Relationship Satisfaction (CSI)	.25	.09	2.73	.01	[.0706, .4387]
B. Total, Direct, and Indirect Effects					
Total Effect of X on Y	.43	.09	4.71	.000	[.2519, .6157]
Direct Effect of X on Y	.35	.09	3.83	.000	[.1675, .5244]
Indirect Effects of X on Y					
1: IPPA-M→RCI→SWLS	.05	.03			[.0108, .1378]
2: IPPA-M→RCI→CSI→SWLS	.02	.01			[.0020, .0562]
3: IPPA-M→CSI→SWLS	.02	.02			[-.0119, .0692]

Note. * $p < .0000$

Figure 2. Effect of Mother Attachment on Romantic Competence, Relationship Satisfaction, and Overall Distress

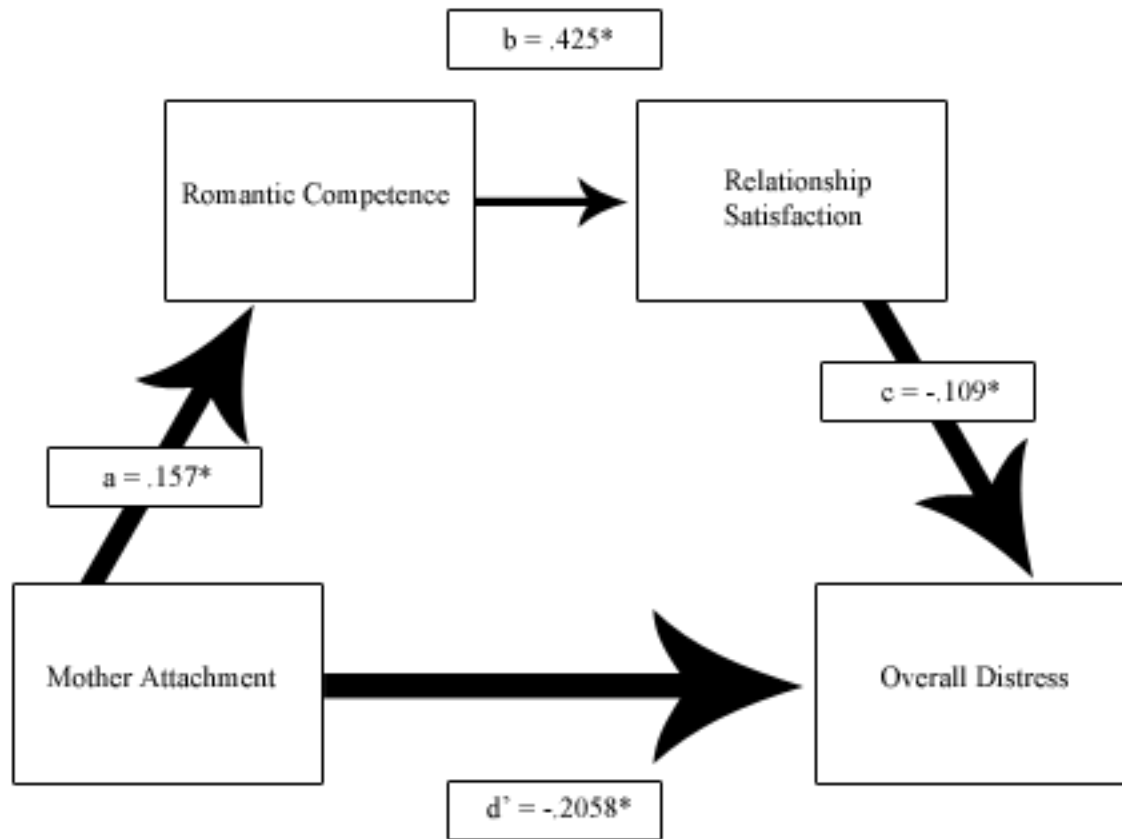
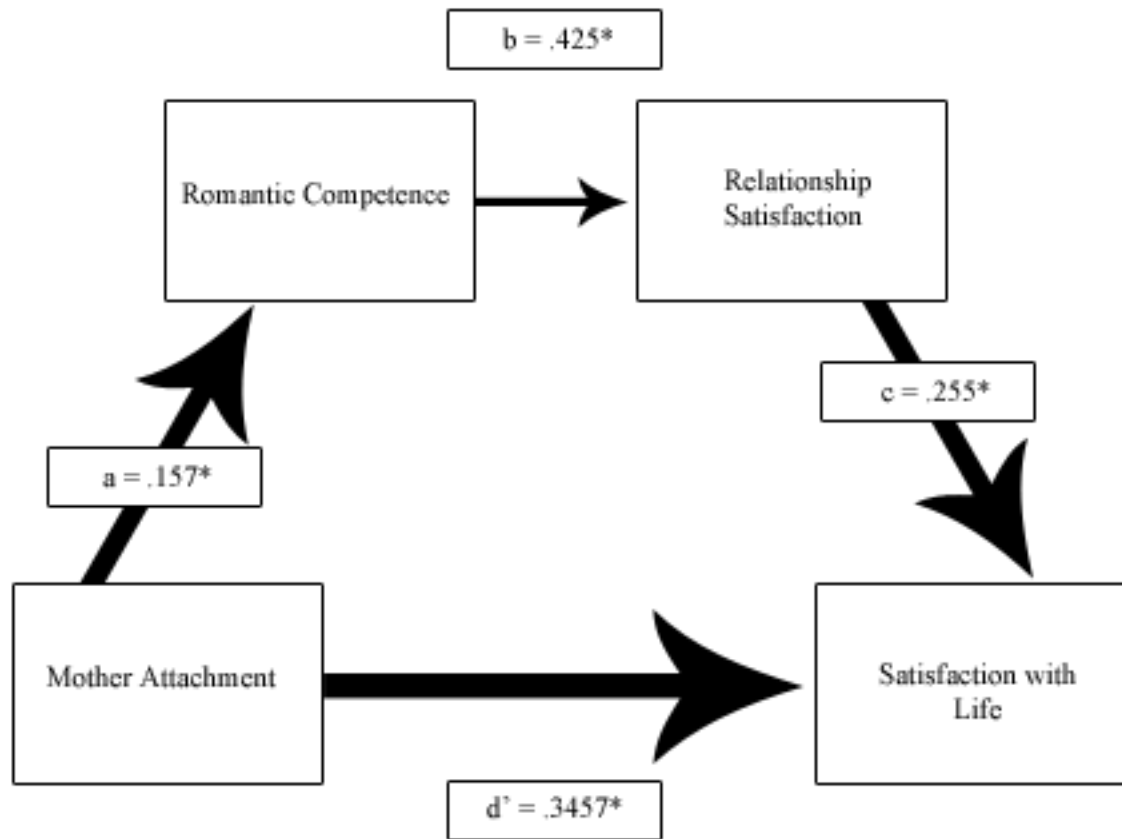


Figure 3. Effect of Mother Attachment on Romantic Competence, Relationship Satisfaction, and Satisfaction with Life



Chapter 5:

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine whether the links between parental attachment and adaptive outcomes in college students are mediated by students' development of romantic competence skills, followed by their level of relationship satisfaction with their partner. Specifically, the model hypothesized that (1) participants with a secure parental attachment exhibit an overall higher satisfaction with life and less overall distress and (2) romantic competence and relationship satisfaction mediate the link between parental attachment and satisfaction with life and overall distress. The hypotheses applied in the context of both mother and father attachment.

When examining participants' parental attachment in relation to their adjustment outcomes as college students, a secure attachment style to both mother and father figures was linked to positive adjustment outcomes (i.e. a higher satisfaction with life, less overall distress levels). Additionally, when examining the additional mediational links between participants' attachment to their mother and adjustment outcomes, both romantic competence and relationship satisfaction mediated the link to a significant degree. These results support our hypothesis that both mother and father attachment are linked to positive adjustment outcomes and that romantic competence and relationship satisfaction are the mechanisms through which mother attachment is linked to positive adjustment outcomes. The hypothesis that romantic competence and relationship satisfaction are the mechanisms through which father attachment is linked to positive adjustment outcomes was not supported.

Secure Parental Attachment

Secure parental attachment, consistent with John Bowlby's theory, is a cultivation of positive experiences from which individuals come to believe they are worthy, others are reliable, and the world is relatively safe (Luke, Sedikides, & Carnelley, 2012). Researchers believe that this overall "felt security" is a consequence of secure attachment, and security leads to positive adjustment throughout the lifespan (Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 2000). Positive adjustment through parental attachment can lead to a multitude of positive factors, including positive affect and willingness to explore (Luke, Sedikides, & Carnelley, 2012), healthy problem solving, seeking social support, and positive coping skills (Li, 2008), and positive virtues such as humility, gratitude, and forgiveness (Dwiwardani et al., 2014). With regard to romantic relationships, Selterman and Maier (2013) found that those individuals who were primed with a secure attachment experienced less romantic jealousy, upset, hurt, and anger in relationships when faced with an aversive situation, leading to a positive psychological boost. The current study's results are consistent with research literature, as the results have shown that secure parental attachment is linked to healthy adjustment outcomes (i.e., less distress and higher satisfaction with life).

Furthermore, prior research has named both romantic competence and relationship satisfaction as variables that contribute to healthy adjustment outcomes as well, and again results remain consistent with that research, as the current study found that those who have higher romantic competence and relationship satisfaction levels are less likely to experience maladaptive outcomes. Whitton and Kuryluk (2013) note a number of researchers have found that those who have less relationship satisfaction tend

to have higher concurrent and future depressive symptom levels and distress. More specifically, evidence has also suggested depression and mental health of emerging adults may be influenced by their levels of romantic competence and dating relationships (Davila, 2011).

To contribute to these well-established models, the current study's model explored a new vein of thought: researchers know that romantic competence and relationship satisfaction can individually mediate the link between attachment style and adjustment outcomes, but now the current study's results show that these variables can also act in sequence to predict adaptive and maladaptive outcomes from mother attachment. Additionally, the current study has shown that both mother and father attachment are important for psychosocial adjustment outcomes although maternal attachment seems uniquely important when examining romantic competence and romantic relationship satisfaction. We comment further on the differential effects of mothers and fathers below.

Overall, both mother and father attachment play important roles in psychosocial adjustment, as both individuals add unique variance to their children's adjustment outcomes, but mother attachment plays a larger role in predicting emerging adults' romantic competence and relationship satisfaction levels. This is not to suggest that father attachment is not linked to romantic competence or relationship satisfaction. There are several possible reasons as to why the same results were not found for father attachment. One reason may be that the constructs of romantic competence and relationship satisfaction do not encompass what emerging adults are acquiring from positive relationships with their fathers. To illustrate, fathers are more likely to foster autonomy,

provide encouragement, and facilitate problem-solving guidance, while mothers are more likely to provide reassurance and facilitate emotion regulation (Duchesne & Ratelle, 2014), skills that are more closely linked to romantic competence and relationship satisfaction. Alternatively, researchers have suggested that there is a “hierarchy of attachment,” where mothers are the preferred parental figures and have more influence on their children, but fathers could also be secondary parental figures in secure attachment relationships (Palm, 2014). Finally, the reason that the same results were not found for father attachment may simply be due to a characteristic of this particular sample.

Mother Attachment.

The current study found that mother attachment was moderately and significantly correlated with a decrease in overall distress and an increase in satisfaction with life. Duchesne and Ratelle (2014) found similar results, where adolescents who felt secure in their relationship with their mother were less at risk for reporting and developing moderate depressive symptoms. Al-Yagon (2014) also found that those who viewed themselves as more securely attached to their mothers reported lower levels of loneliness and manifested fewer internalizing behavior problems, such as anxiety, depression, and social withdrawal. Individuals who have a secure attachment with their mothers are also found to use more social-support coping, have enhanced peer relationships, and generally experience more positive emotions (Abraham & Kerns, 2013). Overall, many researchers have shown that mother attachment alone has a significant effect on adjustment outcomes for all ages.

Father Attachment.

The current study found that father attachment was moderately and significantly correlated with a decrease in overall distress and an increase in satisfaction with life. Consistent with the current study, Al-Yagon (2014) also found positive outcomes linked to a secure father attachment, where secure father attachment was linked to higher levels of hope and effort, higher agency thinking, higher levels of investment, intensity, and persistence in task accomplishment, and a higher tendency to see the world as comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful. Newland, Chen, and Coyl-Shepherd (2013) note that individuals who hold a secure attachment with their fathers are more likely to experience positive psychosocial adjustment through an increased level of self-reliance, problem-solving skills, and academic achievement, and a decreased level of maladaptive internalizing and externalizing behaviors. Father attachment has also been found to influence early life stages as well, where studies have found that secure child-father attachment in preschoolers was found to be linked to less anxiety, isolation, and behavior problems, and increased attention, participation, and cognitive engagement (Bacro, 2012). From these results and more, it may be concluded that secure father attachment is equally important as secure mother attachment in predicting various life adjustment outcomes.

Applications and Limitations

Because the mediational model results are relatively new findings, the current study should be repeated across appropriate samples in order to determine if its results are truly reliable. If results remain significant after further testing, this will give further evidence to the idea that romantic competence and relationship satisfaction together are

important functions of healthy adjustment in emerging adults' lives. Additionally, reliable significant results will lend more power to what researchers already know: secure attachment bases in childhood are significant contributors to the development of healthy psychosocial outcomes in later years of life. Future studies may expand upon these results by testing other psychosocial outcomes so researchers may have more evidence to showcase that these variables can lead to a multitude of adjustment outcomes. For example, with college students specifically, it may be meaningful to look at how their grades and social behaviors are impacted by the presence of a secure attachment relationship in conjunction with a high level of romantic competence and relationship satisfaction. If results show that romantic competence and relationship satisfaction are still significant mediators among college students' adjustment levels, these variables may serve as a focus when developing clinical interventions for college students.

Furthermore, future studies also have to expand upon these results by testing other mediators that may contribute to the link between attachment style and adjustment outcomes. With regard to real world applicability, the current study's models accounted for 16% to 20% of the variance. As such, there are many other possible variables that can be accounted for in the model. From an emerging adult standpoint, it may be worthwhile to see if other variables relating to childhood, such as perceived marital conflict, solidify the link between attachment and adjustment outcomes.

With regard to replicating this study, there is one important limitation to be noted beforehand. All information gathered from participants was through self-report measures on a computer in a private area, aside from the RCI. There was no opportunity to observe participants' body language or facial expressions as they were completing the survey

questions related to their level of attachment to their mother and father figures, relationship satisfaction, satisfaction with life, and distress levels. Furthermore, the survey protocol itself was time-consuming, taking approximately an hour to complete. Participants may have become fatigued while completing the survey, leading to inaccurate results due to a lack of effort and/or attention. However, the negative impact of this limitation may not be so significant, as there was the semi-structured interview in place to off-set potentially monotonous survey-taking. Moreover, even though the survey protocol was answered on a computer in a private area, it is possible that participants were actually more likely to answer the questions honestly because it was administered in a private area and participants were able to take their time while answering the questions. In future studies, it would be beneficial to either (a) shorten the length of the overall survey or (b) allow participants to take breaks as needed. One or both of these small adjustments will most likely offset this limitation of the current study.

Unfortunately, this study also suffers from two notable limitations in methodology. First, when measuring romantic competency and relationship satisfaction, the current study did not examine feedback from both partners in the relationship, but rather it examined feedback from a sole participant in the relationship. A high or low competence or satisfaction score is not representative of the relationship as a whole, but rather a piece that one participant is providing. In reality, the participant may or may not be exhibiting proper insight, emotion regulation, mutuality, and satisfaction in the relationship, as there is no other source to support this claim. In order to expand upon the current study's results and claims, it would be beneficial for future studies to bring in both partners in the relationship to determine proper reliability of the participants' claims.

Second, this study's sample entirely consisted of college students. As the emerging adult population does not only consist of college students, this study's results may not fully generalize to individuals outside of the college setting. Arnett (2004) has termed emerging adults who do not attend college "the forgotten half" and this study did not make any attempts to study this half of the emerging adult population. Clearly, more research is needed to explore psychosocial development among emerging adults who choose not to attend college.

A final limitation has to do with the cross-sectional nature of these data. Because data were not collected in a longitudinal design, the current study cannot confidently conclude that parental attachment is predicting romantic competence that in turn is predicting adjustment outcomes. As a matter of fact, the causal arrows could very well go in the opposite direction. In order to more fully test the mediational hypotheses, it would be best to collect a longitudinal data set on these variables.

Chapter 6:

Conclusion

Overall, the purpose of the current study and its findings relating to attachment, romantic competence, and relationship satisfaction on adjustment outcomes are meant to underline the importance of how different variables may affect these adjustment outcomes differently. As evidenced by previous literature and the current study's significant pathway models, a secure attachment, higher levels of romantic competence, and relationship satisfaction have meaningful effects on individuals' lives as depicted by their overall satisfaction with life and distress levels. These findings are important to understand and take into account when developing treatment interventions for maladaptive adjustment outcomes potentially caused by insecure attachment relationships during childhood. With the current study's results in mind, it may be wise for therapists providing treatment to said individuals to examine whether romantic competence and relationship satisfaction are contributing to their distress symptomatology.

The more specified and tailored a treatment intervention is to a client, the more effective the results will be. Regardless of the type of behavioral manifestation, a "one size fits all" model is not helpful in clinical utility, as each individual copes with distress differently. Nevertheless, having insight into how maladaptive behaviors are formed and what is contributing to their prolonged presence is a great place to start. In the end, as supported by results in the current study and previous literature, treatment intervention should be focused on an effort to reduce the adverse impact of an insecure attachment base during childhood while taking into account individuals' levels of romantic competence and relationship satisfaction. In order to justify this focused effort, the

current study should be replicated in order to demonstrate reliable findings regarding the current study's pathway model, as well as to potentially find other mediators and adjustment outcomes that may result from the model.

APPENDICIES

Appendix A. IRB Approval Letter



Date: Monday, September 23, 2013

NOTICE OF APPROVAL

TO: Jonathan Mattanah DEPT: PSYC

PROJECT TITLE: *The romantic relationship study*

SPONSORING AGENCY: None

APPROVAL NUMBER: 14-A019

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Participants has approved the project described above. Approval was based on the descriptive material and procedures you submitted for review. Should any changes be made in your procedures, or if you should encounter any new risks, reactions, injuries, or deaths of persons as participants, you must notify the Board.

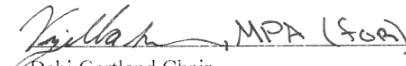
A consent form: ☒ is ☐ is not required of each participant

Assent: ☐ is ☒ is not required of each participant

This protocol was first approved on: 23-Sep-2013

This research will be reviewed every year from the date of first approval.




Debi Gartland, Chair

Towson University Institutional Review Board

Appendix B. Informed Consent

Idnumber:



The Romantic Relationship Study INFORMED CONSENT FORM

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Jonathan Mattanah

PHONE: 410-704-3208

Purpose of the Study:

This study is designed to investigate a number of different issues related to how students are doing in college. We are particularly interested in looking at students' relationships with their friends, parents, and romantic partners and seeing how those relationships effect students' social and emotional adjustment to college and their use of alcohol and other substances. **Please note that you must be 18 years old or older to be a part of this study and you must currently be in a romantic relationship lasting at least 1 month or more.** If you are under 18 or not in a relationship currently, please return this consent form to the experimenter now.

Procedures:

At part of this study, you will be interviewed by one of the research assistants about how you feel about your romantic relationships. Some of these questions may be quite personal and you can choose not to answer them, if you so wish (although we are very interested in learning about your experiences). Your interview will be audio recorded and will be listened to later in order to make some ratings. The interview usually takes about 30 to 45 minutes to complete. Along with your interview, you will be asked complete a task for which you will be given more details when you get to it.

Finally, you will be given an extensive survey to complete on a computer, using a password protected website. This survey will ask about a wide-range of issues, including questions about your relationships with your parents, friends, and romantic partners, how you are doing socially and academically in college, your levels of depression, anxiety, and loneliness, and your use of alcohol and other substances. All information you provide in these surveys will be kept strictly confidential and will not be shared with any other personnel at the university. In addition your name will not be attached to any surveys you complete. Finally, please realize that you are free to leave blank any questions that make you uncomfortable or that you do not wish to answer.

Risks/Discomfort:

There are minimal risks associated with participation in the study. If you should become distressed by answering any of the questions in the survey, you may end your participation in this study immediately. Additionally, the research assistants of the study are available to discuss any concerns or feelings you may have arising from participating in this study. Also, if you are distressed by reporting on your use of substances, the research assistants of this study can give you a list of campus resources to deal with substance abuse problems. If you do experience significant distress after completing this study, we recommend your contact the Towson university Counseling Center (at 410-704-2512) to discuss your concerns further.

Benefits:

It is hoped that the results of this study will provide us with additional information on what factors allow students to make a successful adjustment to college. Information from this study may help counselors and higher education personnel to assist college students who are in distress. By completing this study you have also helped a number of graduate students complete work on their masters theses.

Additionally, you will receive 4 units of research credit that can be used in your Psychology 101/102 class or as extra credit in any class in which your professor is offering extra credit for participation in research.

Alternatives to Participation:

Participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to withdraw or discontinue participation at any time. Refusal to participate in this study will in no way affect your standing in any of your classes.

Confidentiality:

All information collected during the study period will be kept strictly confidential. You will be identified through identification numbers. No publications or reports from this project will include identifying information on any participant. If you agree to join this study, and are at least 18 years of age, please check the appropriate boxes below and sign your name.

_____ I have read and understood the information on this form.

_____ I have had the information on this form explained to me.

Print your Name Here

Date

Participant Signature

Date

Separate consent to access your GPA for this Semester

As part of this study, we would like to investigate the correlation between students' answers to various questions asked about in this survey with how those students are doing academically in college. As such, we are asking that you grant the principal investigator of the study (Dr. Jonathan Mattanah) permission to access your final grade point average through the Peoplesoft system at the end of this semester (Dr. Mattanah will only be recording your final GPA and not any other information available in the system). If you are willing to give permission to Dr. Mattanah to view your final GPA please indicate so below:

_____ Yes, I give Dr. Mattanah permission to access my final GPA for this semester through the Peoplesoft system (please print your onecard number clearly here: _____)

_____ No, I do not give Dr. Mattanah permission to access my grades for this semester.

Participant Signature

Date

Please note this study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Participants at Towson University. If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact Dr. Mattanah at (410) 704-3208 or the Towson University Institutional Review Board Chairperson, Dr. Debi Gartland, Office of University Research Services, 8000 York Road, Towson University, Towson, Maryland 21252; phone (410) 704-2236.

Appendix C. Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA)

INVENTORY OF PARENT AND PEER ATTACHMENT (IPPA)

This questionnaire asks about your relationships with important people in your life; your mother, your father, and your close friends. Please read the directions to each part carefully.

Part I

Some of the following statements asks about your feelings about your mother or the person who has acted as your mother. If you have more than one person acting as your mother (e.g. a natural mother and a step-mother) answer the questions for the one you feel has most influenced you.

Please read each statement and circle the ONE number that tells how true the statement is for you now.

	Almost Never Or Never True 1	Not Very Often True 2	Sometimes True 3	Often True 4	Almost Always or Always True 5		
1.	My mother respects my feelings.		1	2	3	4	5
2.	I feel my mother does a good job as my mother.		1	2	3	4	5
3.	I wish I had a different mother.		1	2	3	4	5
4.	My mother accepts me as I am.		1	2	3	4	5
5.	I like to get my mother’s point of view on things I’m concerned about.		1	2	3	4	5
6.	I feel it’s no use letting my feelings show around my mother.		1	2	3	4	5
7.	My mother can tell when I’m upset about something.		1	2	3	4	5
8.	Talking over my problems with my mother makes me feel ashamed or foolish.		1	2	3	4	5
9.	My mother expects too much from me.		1	2	3	4	5
10.	I get upset easily around my mother.		1	2	3	4	5
11.	I get upset a lot more than my mother knows about.		1	2	3	4	5
12.	When we discuss things, my mother cares about my point of view.		1	2	3	4	5
13.	My mother trusts my judgment.		1	2	3	4	5
14.	My mother has her own problems, so I don’t bother her with mine.		1	2	3	4	5
15.	My mother helps me understand myself better.		1	2	3	4	5
16.	I tell my mother about my problems and troubles.		1	2	3	4	5
17.	I feel angry with my mother.		1	2	3	4	5
18.	I don’t get much attention from my mother.		1	2	3	4	5
19.	My mother helps me talk about my difficulties.		1	2	3	4	5
20.	My mother understands me.		1	2	3	4	5

21.	When I am angry about something, my mother tries to be understanding.	1	2	3	4	5
22.	I trust my mother.	1	2	3	4	5
23.	My mother doesn't understand what I'm going through these days.	1	2	3	4	5
24.	I can count on my mother when I need to get something off my chest.	1	2	3	4	5
25.	If my mother knows something is bothering me, she asks me about it.	1	2	3	4	5

Part II

This part asks about your feelings about your father, or the man who has acted as your father. If you have more than one person acting as your father (e.g. natural and step-father) answer the question for the one you feel has most influenced you.

1.	My father respects my feelings.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	I feel my father does a good job as my father.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	I wish I had a different father.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	My father accepts me as I am.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	I like to get my father's point of view on things I'm concerned about.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	I feel it's no use letting my feelings show around my father.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	My father can tell when I'm upset about something.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Talking over my problems with my father makes me feel ashamed or foolish.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	My father expects too much from me.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	I get upset easily around my father.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	I get upset a lot more than my father knows about.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	When we discuss things, my father cares about my point of view.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	My father trusts my judgment.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	My father has her own problems, so I don't bother her with mine.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	My father helps me understand myself better.	1	2	3	4	5
16.	I tell my father about my problems and troubles.	1	2	3	4	5
17.	I feel angry with my father.	1	2	3	4	5
18.	I don't get much attention from my father.	1	2	3	4	5
19.	My father helps me talk about my difficulties.	1	2	3	4	5
20.	My father understands me.	1	2	3	4	5
21.	When I am angry about something, my father tries to be understanding.	1	2	3	4	5
22.	I trust my father.	1	2	3	4	5
23.	My father doesn't understand what I'm going through these days.	1	2	3	4	5
24.	I can count on my father when I need to get something off my chest.	1	2	3	4	5
25.	If my father knows something is bothering me, he asks me about it.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix D. Romantic Competence Interview (RCI)

IdNumber: _____

Romantic Competence Interview

I'd like to ask you some questions now about romantic relationships, dating... those kinds of things. For simplicity, I'm going to use that kind of terminology, but what I really mean is any kind of romantic or sexual interaction with someone. Do you know what I mean?

We really want to get a sense of your experiences and how things have been going for you recently.

So, I'd like for us to focus on the last 6 months. So that would be since _____. So, think about that time frame. I'm going to be asking you about different experiences you may have had, how you think and feel about romantic types of things, what you think you might do or what you have done in certain situations... things like that.

Let me begin by asking you a question that you might consider a little personal. We're asking because we really want to make sure that we understand what's going on for you, and we don't like to make any assumptions about people. So, what do you consider your sexual orientation or preference to be. Do you consider yourself:

_____ straight _____ lesbian _____ gay _____ bisexual

_____ unsure/questioning _____ pass

_____ write-in

OK, now I'd like to get a sense of what's been going on in the past 6 months for you.

What would you say your relationship status is **right now**? (let them respond, then narrow it down; they may fall into multiple categories; **for each get length of relationship(s), and how serious each is**)

For each, also prompt the student for the first name or initial of the individual(s) for each relationship spoken about. You will be mentioning the name or the initial later.

_____ (name of partner)

_____ in a serious exclusive relationship; _____ in person _____ online

_____ in a serious non-exclusive relationship; _____ in person _____ online

_____ dating someone (not seriously); _____ in person _____ online

_____ dating a number of different people; _____ in person _____ online

_____ engaging in a sexual relationship with one person (but not considered a romantic relationship);

_____ in person _____ online

_____ engaging in sexual relationships with multiple people (but not considered romantic relationships);

_____ in person _____ online

_____ not involved romantically or sexually with anyone

OK, now I want to get a sense of the **entire past 6 months**. Have you been _____ (fill in from above) for the past 6 months? If no, get history, narrow it down using the categories above, and probe accordingly.

_____ in a serious exclusive relationship; _____ in person _____ online

_____ in a serious non-exclusive relationship; _____ in person _____ online

_____ dating someone (not seriously); _____ in person _____ online

_____ dating a number of different people; _____ in person _____ online

_____ engaging in a sexual relationship with one person (but not considered a romantic relationship);

_____ in person _____ online

_____ engaging in sexual relationships with multiple people (but not considered romantic relationships);

_____ in person _____ online

_____ not involved romantically or sexually with anyone

OK, I think I have a good sense of what's been going on for you. It sounds like... (summarize).

A little later on I'm going to ask you more about what you told me, but right now I'd like to ask you some general questions about the kinds of people you like.

First, what kind of people do you hang out with? What clique are you in? (e.g., jocks, etc.). What are your friends like (what do they like to do)?

When you/if you were going to get involved with someone, do/would you ever go out with anyone outside of your group or do/would you only get involved with someone who is one of your friends? Why?

When you/if you were going to get involved with someone, what kind of person do/would you like to be with? What do/would they look like, act like, etc...?

Do you ever meet people that you feel interested in/attracted to (in person or online) – that you would want to be involved with? What happens? What do you think/feel/do?

Do you ever have crushes on anyone (in person or online)? Who? What's that like? What do you do?

What are your ideas about what makes a good romantic relationship?

What are your ideas about what makes a bad romantic relationship?

What are your ideas about what makes a good marriage?

What are your ideas about what makes a bad marriage?

Are your parents married?

If yes: what is your parents' marriage like? If you get married someday, how would you want your marriage to be different from your parents' marriage?

If no: is either of your parents in a relationship? If yes, how would you want a relationship of yours to be different from that of the one your parent is in?

Now I'm going to ask you some questions about what you might do and think and feel in different situations, all relating to romantic or sexual types of involvements. If you've been in these situations you can base your answer on that experience. If you've never been in a situation that I ask about, then just think about what you would do if you were in that situation.

What would you do/think/feel if...(probe with why and how come; make sure to probe emotion regulation – i.e., How would you (did you) deal with that? Can you tell me more about that?)

Someone was interested in you and you liked him/her?

Someone was interested in you and you didn't like him/her?

You were involved with someone and you really liked him/her and you wanted him/her to know that?

You were involved with someone and he/she betrayed your trust in some way (e.g., cheated on you or flirted with someone else; told someone else something personal/private about you or spread rumors about you; didn't respond to your efforts for contact or ignored you?

You were involved with someone and you were unhappy about how it was going?

You were involved with someone and you wanted to be exclusive but he/she didn't?

You were involved with someone and you didn't want to be exclusive?

You were involved with someone and you wanted to end it or break up?

The person you were involved with ended it or broke up with you?

What would you say is the worst situation you've ever found yourself in with regards to dealing with a partner or a difficult romantic or sexual situation? How did you handle it?

In general, how important is it to you to be involved with someone? Why?

In the long term, how important would it be to you to be in a romantic relationship? What do you see in your future?

Do you ever worry about not finding someone to be with/date? What about that worries you?

What do you think you would miss by not dating or being in a relationship?

What do you think you would gain by not dating or being in a relationship?

If you were involved with someone, how would you decide how far to go, sexually? Do you ever feel pressure to do more than you might want to? Pressure from who?

Thinking about where you have learned about dating/boys/girls/romantic relationships, who/where have you learned the most from? What have you learned? Who/where do you prefer to go to learn about romantic relationships?

OK, now I'd like to go back to where we began and ask you more about your experiences. You said that in the past 6 months you... (summarize again). I'm going to ask you about that now.

[Go to appropriate interview section.]

Interview for participants who have not had any involvements in the past 6 months:

You said that you have not been involved with anyone in the past 6 months...

How do you feel about that? Have you wanted to be involved with someone in any way?

Do you ever feel lonely without a romantic relationship/someone to date/someone to be involved with?

Is there anyone that you are currently interested in or would like to get involved with?

If yes: What's that person like?

Are you doing anything to pursue that person or any other type of involvement/relationship now? Explore.

Do you feel that you know what to do?

What do you do?

Are your friends involved or in relationships?

If yes: How does that make you feel? Jealous? Left out?

Do you think your friends are ever jealous of you because you are not involved with anyone? Explore.

Do you ever feel any pressure from others to be involved with someone or in a romantic relationship?

Would you like to be involved with someone in any way right now?

If no: How come?

Do you see any advantages to not being involved with someone over being involved?

Are you interested in getting involved with someone in any way in the near future?

How often do you think about it?

What do you think will happen?

“OK, those are all the questions I have for you about these things. Thanks!”

Interview for participants who are currently or have been in the past 6 months involved with someone in any way that resembles a relationship (defined as such by them or by the interviewer):

**** Note:** Use past tense for past relationships. And make sure to use the participants' language throughout! ******

***You said that you are/were involved with...* [Write name of person here _____]**

How did you get together/become involved? (get the **brief** version of the story).

When you met _____, what did you think of him/her? What first attracted you to _____? Why did you want to get involved with/date him/her?

Can you tell me a little about what _____ is like? What are some of the good things/things you like about being involved with him/her? What are some of the not so good things/things you don't like?

If necessary: What do you like most about being involved with _____?
What don't you like?

What do you think _____ likes most about you? And least?

If necessary: What would they say? How do you know?

How do/did you get along with _____?

How do/did _____ treat you?

Do/did you ever have conflicts or disagreements? Why/why not? How were those handled? Did they get resolved? How/why not?

How is/was your communication? Were/are you on the same page with what you both wanted? Were/are you equally invested? Are/were you both getting what you wanted?

Did you ever break up (past 6 months)? When? Why? What happened? How would you (did you) cope with that?

Had/have you ever thought about breaking up? When? Why?
If yes, tell me your thoughts about it.

How much do you worry about whether you will stay involved?

How difficult would it be for you if you broke up? How would you (did you) cope with that?

If necessary: Have you ever had regrets or doubts about dating/going out with _____?

What do you see as the future of your relationship? Have you talked about this with _____ (partner's name)? What has been said?

If not still together:

Tell me about your break-up. Who broke up with who? How did it go? What was it like for you? How did you feel? How would you (did you) cope with that?

Thinking about your involvement, is there anything you would do (would have done) differently if you could do it again?

What have you learned from this involvement? [If necessary – about yourself, or other people, or about what relationships are like.]

Interview for participants who have or have had some type of involvement, but not anything that resembles a real relationship:

**** Note: Use past tense for past relationships.****

**[Note the person/people/involvements that you are probing here
_____]**

Probe the following things as appropriate to the kinds of experiences they have had:

How much involvement? How often? How many people?

What are/were the people you're involved with like? (personality, behavior...)

How do/did you get along with them?

How do/did they treat you?

Do/did you ever have conflicts or disagreements? Why/why not? How were those handled? Did they get resolved? How/why not?

How is/was your communication? Were/are you on the same page with what you both wanted? Were/are you equally invested? Are/were you both getting what they wanted?

What are/were the good things about your involvements?

What are/were the things that are/were not so good or that you don't/didn't like?

When things ended, how did that go?

Thinking about your involvements, is there anything you would do (would have done) differently if you could do it again?

What have you learned from these involvements? [If necessary – about yourself, or other people, or about what relationships are like.]

Appendix E. Couple Satisfaction Index (CSI)

Couples Satisfaction Index

Note. CSI(4) is made up of items 1, 12, 19, and 22. CSI(16) is made up of items 1, 5, 9, 11, 12, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 26, 27, 28, 30, 31, and 32.

1. Please indicate the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship.

Extremely Unhappy	Fairly Unhappy	A Little Unhappy	Happy	Very Happy	Extremely Happy	Perfect
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

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

	Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Occasionally Disagree	Frequently Disagree	Almost Always Disagree	Always Disagree
2. Amount of time spent together	5	4	3	2	1	0
3. Making major decisions	5	4	3	2	1	0
4. Demonstrations of affection	5	4	3	2	1	0

	All the time	Most of the time	More often than not	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
5. In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?	5	4	3	2	1	0
6. How often do you wish you hadn't gotten into this relationship?	0	1	2	3	4	5

	Not at all True	A little True	Somewhat True	Mostly True	Almost Completely True	Completely True
7. I still feel a strong connection with my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5
8. If I had my life to live over, I would marry (or live with/date) the same person	0	1	2	3	4	5
9. Our relationship is strong	0	1	2	3	4	5
10. I sometimes wonder if there is someone else out there for me	5	4	3	2	1	0
11. My relationship with my partner makes me happy	0	1	2	3	4	5
12. I have a warm and comfortable relationship with my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5
13. I can't imagine ending my relationship with my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5
14. I feel that I can confide in my partner about virtually anything	0	1	2	3	4	5
15. I have had second thoughts about this relationship recently	5	4	3	2	1	0
16. For me, my partner is the perfect romantic partner	0	1	2	3	4	5
17. I really feel like part of a team with my partner	0	1	2	3	4	5
18. I cannot imagine another person making me as happy as my partner does	0	1	2	3	4	5

	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Mostly	Almost Completely	Completely
19. How rewarding is your relationship with your partner?	0	1	2	3	4	5

20. How well does your partner meet your needs?	0	1	2	3	4	5		
21. To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?	0	1	2	3	4	5		
22. In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?	0	1	2	3	4	5		
	Worse than all others (Extremely bad)			Better than all others (Extremely good)				
23. How good is your relationship compared to most?	0	1	2	3	4	5		
	Never	Less than once a month	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Once a day	More often		
24. Do you enjoy your partner's company?	0	1	2	3	4	5		
25. How often do you and your partner have fun together?	0	1	2	3	4	5		
For each of the following items, select the answer that best describes <i>how you feel about your relationship</i> . Base your responses on your first impressions and immediate feelings about the item.								
26.	INTERESTING	5	4	3	2	1	0	BORING
27.	BAD	0	1	2	3	4	5	GOOD
28.	FULL	5	4	3	2	1	0	EMPTY
29.	LONELY	0	1	2	3	4	5	FRIENDLY
30.	STURDY	5	4	3	2	1	0	FRAGILE
31.	DISCOURAGING	0	1	2	3	4	5	HOPEFUL
32.	ENJOYABLE	5	4	3	2	1	0	MISERABLE

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Appendix F. Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

Below are five statements that you may agree or disagree with. Using the 1 - 7 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by placing the appropriate number on the line preceding that item. Please be open and honest in your responding.

- 7 - Strongly agree
- 6 - Agree
- 5 - Slightly agree
- 4 - Neither agree nor disagree
- 3 - Slightly disagree
- 2 - Disagree
- 1 - Strongly disagree

_____ In most ways my life is close to my ideal.

_____ The conditions of my life are excellent.

_____ I am satisfied with my life.

_____ So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.

_____ If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.

- 31 - 35 Extremely satisfied
- 26 - 30 Satisfied
- 21 - 25 Slightly satisfied
- 20 Neutral
- 15 - 19 Slightly dissatisfied
- 10 - 14 Dissatisfied
- 5 - 9 Extremely dissatisfied

Appendix G. Depression Anxiety Stress Scales Short Version (DASS)

DASS ₂₁		Name:	Date:
<p>Please read each statement and circle a number 0, 1, 2 or 3 which indicates how much the statement applied to you <i>over the past week</i>. There are no right or wrong answers. Do not spend too much time on any statement.</p> <p>The rating scale is as follows:</p> <p>0 Did not apply to me at all 1 Applied to me to some degree, or some of the time 2 Applied to me to a considerable degree, or a good part of time 3 Applied to me very much, or most of the time</p>			
1	I found it hard to wind down	0	1 2 3
2	I was aware of dryness of my mouth	0	1 2 3
3	I couldn't seem to experience any positive feeling at all	0	1 2 3
4	I experienced breathing difficulty (eg, excessively rapid breathing, breathlessness in the absence of physical exertion)	0	1 2 3
5	I found it difficult to work up the initiative to do things	0	1 2 3
6	I tended to over-react to situations	0	1 2 3
7	I experienced trembling (eg, in the hands)	0	1 2 3
8	I felt that I was using a lot of nervous energy	0	1 2 3
9	I was worried about situations in which I might panic and make a fool of myself	0	1 2 3
10	I felt that I had nothing to look forward to	0	1 2 3
11	I found myself getting agitated	0	1 2 3
12	I found it difficult to relax	0	1 2 3
13	I felt down-hearted and blue	0	1 2 3
14	I was intolerant of anything that kept me from getting on with what I was doing	0	1 2 3
15	I felt I was close to panic	0	1 2 3
16	I was unable to become enthusiastic about anything	0	1 2 3
17	I felt I wasn't worth much as a person	0	1 2 3
18	I felt that I was rather touchy	0	1 2 3
19	I was aware of the action of my heart in the absence of physical exertion (eg, sense of heart rate increase, heart missing a beat)	0	1 2 3
20	I felt scared without any good reason	0	1 2 3
21	I felt that life was meaningless	0	1 2 3

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