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Conflict Communication Styles and Trust in Adult Attachment Styles

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationships between adult attachment, trust, and conflict communication styles in romantic relationships. It is hypothesized that there will be significant differences between attachment styles and their conflict communication styles. It is also hypothesized that there will be significant differences between attachment styles and their trust levels, as well as trust levels being a mediating factor in predicting conflict communication styles. Last, it is hypothesized that there will be a similar ratio in adult attachment styles as the ratio of child attachment styles as well as no significant gender differences. Multiple ANOVA's were conducted, as well as frequency tables and a chi-squared test of independence on the data. There were significant differences between secure and avoidant attachment in relation to trust scores, integrating communication style, and avoiding communication style. The results also indicate a similar, but not exact, ratio to child attachment, and there were no significant gender differences in attachment styles. Further research should be conducted with a better representative sample to enhance the results of this study.

Keywords: Adult Attachment, Conflict Communication, Trust, Romantic Relationship

Conflict Communication Styles and Trust in Adult Attachment Styles

Attachment plays a large role in how we view our relationships with other people. Attachment theory was created by John Bowlby in the 1970s. He proposed that humans are genetically born to love, with their first love being our caregivers (Karen, 1998). Children's interactions with their caregivers create working models of how they view themselves and others, which influences their attachment pattern as children and for the rest of their lives (Collins, Cooper, Albino, Allard, & Cooper, 2002). Attachment patterns have a hierarchical pattern where the mother is most often the primary attachment figure in a child's life, but it is essentially anyone who becomes the primary caregiver (Ainsworth, 1979; Karen, 1998). Bowlby found that when a child meets a stranger they develop anxiety and seek to be comforted by their primary attachment figure.

When working with children living in hospitals, Bowlby found that anxiety from being separated from their mother produced attachment behavior, which is not detrimental unless it is for long periods of time. The child has a secure attachment when the mother returns and is able to comfort the child after their separation, which turns off the attachment behaviors (Karen, 1998). The child's attachment pattern reflects trusting attachment figures to be there when they need to be comforted and relieve the anxiety, later known as secure attachment. If the attachment figure is unavailable for long periods of time when the child experiences anxiety, the child develops a mental model of not trusting others to be there to comfort them (Karen, 1998).

Mary Ainsworth furthered Bowlby's theory by developing a procedure to collect empirical evidence to support attachment theory (Van Rosmalen, Van Der Veer, & Van Der Horst, 2015). Ainsworth's Strange Situation Procedure (SSP) simplified what took Bowlby years to study in natural environments into a simple 20 minute lab procedure. Their focus was on the patterns of behaviors that the child presented, especially after being reunified with their caregiver (Ainsworth, 1979). The SSP starts with the child and the caregiver entering a play room. Then a stranger, a research assistant, enters the room with the child and the caregiver. The caregiver leaves the room, leaving the child alone with the stranger. After that, the caregiver enters the room again and the stranger leaves. Then the caregiver leaves the room

again, leaving the child alone, and after a while the stranger returns to the room. Eventually the caregiver returns to the room with the child and the stranger (Van Rosmalen et al., 2015).

The SSP engage the stranger anxiety that Bowlby described, and allow researchers to examine how the child responds to the caregiver when they enter the room again. Through this process, Ainsworth found three types of attachment patterns labeled as A, B, or C. Babies in group A were considered avoidant, group B were considered secure, and group C were considered ambivalent-resistant or anxious (Ainsworth, 1979).

In the SSP, babies in group B explored the room more and relied on their mother as a secure base they could always return to. When they are separated from their mothers, they became highly distressed and would not explore as much. When reunited, the babies would seek out the mother and maintain close proximity. Babies in group A did not express distress by crying when separated from their mothers. When reunited, they avoided their mothers by either completely avoiding or combining avoidance with some proximity seeking. Group C babies had high anxiety and distress even before the separation. During the separation they were highly distressed, but became hesitant when their mother returned (Ainsworth, 1979).

Important relationships evolve from caregivers, to friends, and onto romantic partners. Although, on the surface, relationships in the different stages of life vary, it has been shown that the beliefs that guide behaviors in the relationships are linked to attachment history (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Bowlby described three ways that attachment presents itself in children: (1) Children remain physically close to an attachment figure, and their distance decreases and they cry when they feel threatened; (2) when there is no threat, the child will exhibit behavior that they are comfortable and feel secure, as long as the attachment figure is present; (3) when the child's accessibility to their attachment figure is threatened, the child will exhibit protest behavior to keep from losing the attachment figure (Weiss, 1982).

Weiss (1982) found that attachment in adults matches the previously proposed criteria, but it does not look exactly the same. Attachment as an adult does not usually include a parent or custodial figure, it is usually a peer that has importance in the adult's life, like a best friend or romantic partner. Threatening

attachment is also not as debilitating in adults as it is in children. Adults can still give attention to other tasks in their life, where children can usually only focus on regaining their attachment figure again. The third way adult attachment differs is the relationship with whom it is directed towards, which, for adults, is usually a sexual partner. In adulthood, generally, romantic relationships become the most important relationships, and society's main focus. Individuals are attempting to find a partner to have a "successful" relationship with. Multiple behaviors like communication, intimacy, trust, etc. all create environments for either a functional or dysfunctional relationship.

Hazan & Shaver (1987) conducted a study that asked respondents to fill out a "Love Quiz," that was published in the newspaper, and mail it back to them. Part three of the questionnaire, measuring attachment, translated Ainsworth's descriptions of child attachment styles into adult romantic attachment language and found a ratio of 62% secure attachment, 23% avoidant attachment, and 15% anxious-ambivalent attachment in adult romantic attachment styles. The similar ratios are found in child-parent attachment styles, implying that attachment style does not vary much as one grows older (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Therefore, it is important to study attachment styles in relation to behaviors in a relationship and relationship satisfaction to better understand how history can affect romantic relationships.

Srouf (1979) also questioned if attachment styles and behaviors were consistent as children grew up, or if they were more fluid than we think. They proposed that there should be more focus on the patterns that cause behaviors rather than counting the frequency of the behavior being performed. The behaviors that a child uses are guided by their working models of themselves and others. As children grow older, their behaviors change based on their environments and social expectations, but it is important to focus on the working models behind the behaviors. Srouf's (1979) study followed up on 48 of their infants when they turned two years old and found that their behavior patterns reflected their attachment patterns from when they were infants. This study also stresses the importance of understanding attachment styles and how they may emerge in behaviors as people grow older.

Effective communication is a fundamental piece to a functional relationship, and studies have found that attachment style can predict communication patterns. A study by Gaines, Reis, Summers, Rusbult, Cox, Wexler, Marelich, and Kurland (1997) wanted to study how a threatening situation, much like the *Strange Situation* created by Ainsworth, would engage the attachment style and affect their communication patterns. They called the threatening situation an “accommodative dilemma” and predicted four possible reactions. The two constructive communication reactions were voice, actively trying to resolve the dilemma, and loyalty, passively waiting for conditions to improve in the relationship. The study found that more constructive and proximity promoting communication behaviors were linked to higher secure attachment (Gaines et al., 1997). Other research supports the theory by finding couples who both have secure attachment report more constructive communication, and they also had the least amount of demand-withdraw behavior (Domingue & Mollen, 2009). In line with this, Gaines and his colleagues (1997) found that the destructive communication behaviors were used by avoidant and anxiously attached individuals.

Previous research suggests that communication patterns found in conflict resolution are linked to specific attachment styles (Shi, 2003). In Shi’s review of the literature, they found that securely attached people will generally have higher levels of verbal engagement, self-disclosure, mutual discussion, and understanding. These behaviors arise out of secure attachment being characterized as having a high sense of relationship security, comfort with intimacy and interdependence, and they seek support from their attachment figures (Mikulincer, Shaver, & Pereg, 2003). Mikulincer et al. (2003) characterized anxious attachment as lacking relationship security, having a strong need for closeness to the attachment figure, always worrying about relationships, and an intense fear of rejection. That translates to a communication pattern that involves putting more pressure on the partner, domination in the conflict resolution process, and more hostility in the process (Shi, 2003). Lastly, avoidant attachment has been characterized as a lack of relationship security, extreme self-reliance, and a preference for emotional distance (Mikulincer et al., 2003). This presents itself in conflict resolution as withdrawing from the situation, less confidence in

regulating negative moods, and being more likely to compromise and integrate ideas so as to move on from the conflict sooner (Shi, 2003).

Shi's study (2003) used the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II to measure conflict resolution behavior in their subjects, along with using the Multiple-Item Measure of Adult Romantic Attachment to measure attachment, and found an association between attachment styles and conflict resolution behaviors. More specifically, avoidant individuals turned away from the discussion more than the others, which compares to how avoidant attachment behaviors are characterized. This was also supported in a study by McNeil, Rehman, and Fallis (2018) examined communication behavior in conversations about sexual concerns. They found that avoidantly attached participants expressed themselves more negatively when discussing sexual concerns. They also received more negative communication patterns from their relationship partners.

An interesting finding from the Mikulincer et al. (2003) study was that anxiously attached individuals used more obliging conflict resolution behaviors, which aligns with the characterization as well (Shi, 2003). Because they are fearful of being rejected, they may just agree to what their partner suggests so they do not upset them more and possibly lose the relationship.

Another important behavior in relationships is trust, which has also been linked to attachment styles. Trust in a relationship involves appraising a partner for being reliable and predictable, belief that the partner will be available and concerned with their needs, and confidence in the strength of the relationship (Mikulincer, 1998). Fitzpatrick and Lafontaine (2017) defined trust in a relationship; it "... is founded on confidence in, and positive expectations of, a partner's availability and responsiveness." (p. 643). Research psychologist, John Gottman, has done extensive research on romantic relationships and the role of trust. Gottman (2012) describes trust as "... the specific state that exists when you are both willing to change your own behavior to benefit your partner" (p. 6). In terms of attachment, securely attached people believe that both individuals in the relationship will behave in a way that benefits the relationship, not just themselves. They have a positive model of others that comes from their secure attachment style. Gottman's book (2012) has a Trust Metric that readers can complete to measure their trust in their partner.

The questions relate to how the respondent views their partner, or evaluates their working model of others.

A study by Mikulincer (1998) examined how attachment styles would affect trust related memories, goals, and coping strategies in romantic relationships. In terms of trust related memory recall, they found that securely attached individuals had an easier time recalling trust-validating memories, where both anxious and avoidant had an easier time recalling trust-violating memories (Mikulincer, 1998). In his book, Gottman (2012) describes something he calls “The Roach Motel,” where couple get stuck in a downward spiral. It starts with a partner’s bid for a connection, much like a child searching for their attachment figure to comfort them. The Roach Motel begins when the partner does not answer the bid for the connection. Gottman goes on to explain that people have an easier time recalling events that have not been completed, also known as the Zeigarnik (Gottman & Silver, 2012). Those with avoidant or anxious attachment may be under the influence of the Zeigarnik Effect, causing them to recall the negative trust moments and further shaping their mental models and attachment styles.

When trust is damaged, there can either be forgiveness and a restoration of trust, or there can be abandonment and no more trust exists. A mediating factor between trust and attachment could be forgiveness. A study by Kachadourian, Fincham, and Davilla (2004) hypothesized that the tendency to forgive is an additional mediator between attachment security and relationship satisfaction. They also hypothesized that those with more positive models of self and others, otherwise known as secure attachment, are more likely to forgive. They also predicted that a higher tendency to forgive would relate to higher relationship satisfaction. The first part of the study found that those with higher positive models of self and others did have higher rates of forgiveness, but there was not a relation to those with lower models of self and others. They also found more relationship satisfaction from those who had a higher tendency to forgive. They had the same results with the second part of their study (Kachadourian et al., 2004). Being able to forgive someone after they break trust is an integral part of relationships with others, and this study suggests that mediating factors like forgiveness could help us predict levels of trust in different attachment styles.

In the Western society, it is a widely held belief that men show more avoidant behaviors when in romantic relationships. In contrast to society, research has been inconclusive on the effects of gender on attachment styles. Studies have questioned if gender does play a role in the likelihood of certain attachment styles. Hazan and Shaver (1987) concluded from their study that there were no significant gender differences in attachment styles. Gaines and their colleagues (1997) also found no significant gender differences in attachment styles or reactions to accommodative dilemmas.

Schmitt (2003) conducted a study to evaluate if men were more avoidant in other cultures, along with the Western culture, to examine if we could consider the behavior universal. They found that men were significantly more avoidant in Western cultures like the United States, but other cultures either had no significant gender differences or women happened to be significantly more avoidant. On the other hand, Collins et al. (2002) found significant gender differences when evaluating if certain demographics were related to attachment differences. In their preliminary study, they found women to score higher in avoidance than men.

The purpose of this study will be to examine if attachment styles are related to the level of trust individuals have with their partner and communication patterns. The following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 1: Securely attached participants will have higher scores in integration and compromising communication patterns than anxiously and avoidantly attached participants.

Hypothesis 2: Avoidantly attached participants will score higher in avoiding and integrating communication patterns than anxiously and securely attached participants.

Hypothesis 3: Anxiously attached participants will score higher in dominating and obliging communication patterns than avoidantly and securely attached participants.

Hypothesis 4: Securely attached participants will have higher trust scores than anxiously attached participants, who will have higher trust scores than avoidantly attached participants.

Hypothesis 5: Participants with low trust scores will have the lowest scores for compromising and obliging communication patterns.

Hypothesis 6: There will be the same ratio of securely, anxiously, and avoidantly attached participants as suggested by Hazan and Shaver (1987).

Hypothesis 7: There will be no significant gender differences in attachment styles.

Method

Participants

A convenience sample of undergraduate students from two small, Catholic, liberal arts colleges in the Midwest, as well as social media users participated. The total sample ($N = 103$) consisted of participants ranging from ages 18 to 48. Participants consisted of 27.2% ($N = 28$) men and 72.8% ($N = 75$) women. 90.3% of participants were White, 4.9% of participants were Black or African American, 2.9% of participants were Hispanic/Latinx, and 1.9% of participants were Asian. In regards to partner identity, 94.2% of participants reported their partner being opposite-sex, 3.9% reported their partner being the same-sex, and 1.9% preferred not to answer.

Materials

The materials consist of several surveys, including a demographic questionnaire, attachment survey, Experience in Close Relationship Scale (short form), Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory – II, and Gottman’s Trust Metric.

Demographic Questionnaire. The demographic questionnaire will be used to determine certain demographics of the participants. It consists of five items that request information about the participants’ age range, racial identity, gender identity, relationship status, and relationship identity. Participants will be asked to choose the answer that best describes them or fill in the blank.

Attachment Survey. Hazan and Shaver (1987) converted Ainsworth’s original attachment style descriptions into a three choice question. The survey asks participants how they feel in their relationship, and asks them to choose one of the following three answers. The first choice describes behaviors and feelings of a securely attached person. It reads, “I find it relatively easy to get close to others and am

comfortable depending on them and having them depend on me. I don't often worry about being abandoned or about someone getting too close to me." The second answer describes the behaviors and feelings of an avoidantly attached individual. It reads, "I am somewhat uncomfortable being close to others; I find it difficult to trust them completely, difficult to allow myself to depend on them. I am nervous when anyone gets too close, and often, romantic partners want me to be more intimate than I feel comfortable being." The third answer describes the behavior and feelings of an anxiously attached individual. It reads, "I find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me or won't want to stay with me. I want to merge completely with another person, and this desire sometimes scares people away." For the purpose of this study, participants will choose the statement that best describes their feelings in their relationship.

Experience in Close Relationship Scale – Short Form. The Experience in Close Relationship Scale – Short Form (ECR-S) was designed by Wei, Russell, and Mallinckrodt (2007) as a shortened version of the ECR originally designed by Brennan, Clark, and Shaver (1998). The ECR-S is meant for surveys like the survey used in this study where length may be a limitation to participation. The purpose of the ECR-S is to measure levels of anxiety and avoidance, the two dimensions of adult attachment. The ECR-S focuses on evaluating general attachment patterns rather than attachment in the current relationship, which further separates results from being influenced by the participants' current situation. Participants rate each item on a seven-point Likert scale of strongly disagree to strongly agree. Examples of items are "it helps to turn to my partner in times of need" and "I try to avoid getting too close to my partner." Low scores of anxiety and avoidance would indicate a secure attachment pattern, and high scores of either anxiety or avoidance indicate an insecure attachment pattern. The average coefficient alphas for the ECR-S were .78 (anxiety) and .84 (avoidance). The original ECR had higher coefficient alphas, .92 (anxiety) and .93 (avoidance), but it was determined that the coefficient alphas for the ECR-S were still acceptable for use among a college population, which is the average age of participants. Correlation

between the anxiety and avoidance subscales was $r = .19$, indicating that the items used distinctly represent the dimensions of attachment (Wei et al., 2007).

Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory – II. The Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory – II (ROCI-II) was designed by Rahim (1983) to measure the five conflict handling styles: integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising. This inventory consists of 28 items that participants will answer using a five-point Likert scale of strongly disagree to strongly agree. For the purpose of this study, the word “peers” has been replaced with “partner” to measure conflict handling styles in romantic relationships. The scores for each style are averaged, with the highest score being the type of conflict resolution the participant prefers. Styles represent the combination of the two dimensions of conflict resolution: concern for self and concern for others. Examples of the items are “I generally try to satisfy the needs of my partner” and “I use my expertise to make a decision in my favor.” The test-retest reliability of the ROCI-II ranged between .60 and .83 for the five scales. The coefficient alphas for the ROCI-II ranged between .72 and .77 for the five scales (Rahim, 1983).

Gottman’s Trust Metric. Gottman (2012), a leader in relationship therapy, designed a questionnaire with a purpose of measuring a participant’s trust metric in their relationship. It consists of 42 items that participants answer on a five-point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. There are two steps to scoring the Trust Metric. In the first step, seven of the items are scored with 1 being awarded to strongly agree and 5 awarded to strongly disagree. In the second step, the rest of the items are scored in the reverse direction with 1 being awarded to strongly disagree and 5 to strongly agree. The two scores are added together to calculate the trust metric. Examples of items are “my partner is faithful to me” and “I believe that you can trust most people.”

Results

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to test hypotheses one, two, and three. There were no significant differences between attachment styles in the use of obliging communication style, $F(2,100) = .78, p = .46$, in the use of competing communication style, $F(2,100) = 1.13, p = .33$, and in the use of

compromising communication style, $F(2,100) = 2.13, p = .13$. There were significant differences in using an avoiding communication style, $F(2,100) = 6.08, p = .003$. An LSD post hoc test was conducted to compare the avoiding communication score means for secure, anxious, and avoidant attachment. The post hoc test results revealed that the avoidant attachment group has significantly higher avoiding communication scores ($M = 3.21, SD = .76$) than the secure attachment group ($M = 2.63, SD = .73$). The $\eta^2 = .11$, which is considered a large effect size. There were no significant differences in avoiding communication scores between the anxious attachment group and both the avoidant and secure attachment groups.

There were also marginally significant differences in using an integrating communication style, $F(2,100) = 2.99, p = .055$. An LSD post hoc test was performed to compare the integrating communication score means for secure, anxious, and avoidant attachment styles. The post hoc test results revealed the secure attachment group had significantly higher integrating communication scores ($M = 4.2, SD = .45$) than the avoidant attachment group ($M = 3.94, SD = .51$). The $\eta^2 = .06$, which is considered a medium effect size. There were no significant differences in integrating communication scores between the anxious attachment group and both the secure and avoidant attachment group. Hypotheses one and two are partially supported by the results of this ANOVA and post hoc test. Hypothesis 3 was not supported by the results of this ANOVA and post hoc test.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to test hypothesis four and it indicated significant differences in attachment styles and trust scores, $F(2,100) = 3.12, p = .049$. An LSD post hoc test was conducted to compare the trust score means of secure, anxious, and avoidant attachment styles. The post hoc test results revealed the secure attachment group had significantly higher trust scores ($M = 166.52, SD = 18.62$) than the avoidant attachment group ($M = 156, SD = 23.03$). The $\eta^2 = .059$, which is considered a medium effect size. There were no significant differences in trust scores between the anxious attachment ($M = 168.71, SD = 20.15$) group and both secure and avoidant attachment groups. The results from this ANOVA and post hoc test partially support hypothesis four.

Hypothesis 5 was tested using a one-way ANOVA as well. There were no significant differences for trust scores in integrating communication, $F(53,49) = 1.27, p = .2$, in obliging communication, $F(53,49) = 1.11, p = .36$, in competing communication, $F(53,49) = .70, p = .9$, in avoiding communication, $F(53,49) = .91, p = .63$, or in compromising communication, $F(53,49) = 1.25, p = .22$. These results do not support hypothesis five, and the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Frequencies were calculated for the three different attachment styles: secure, anxious, and avoidant. 63.1% of participants responded having secure attachment, 6.8% of participants responded having anxious attachment, and 30.7% of participants responded having avoidant attachment. These results do not support the sixth hypothesis.

Discussion

The first three hypotheses of this study related to attachment style and conflict communication patterns. The first hypothesis was partially supported by the results of this study. Results indicate that securely attached individuals use an integrating conflict communication style significantly more than avoidantly attached individuals. The second hypothesis was also partially supported, indicating that avoidantly attached individuals use an avoidant conflict communication style significantly more than securely attached individuals. The results agree with previous research by Shi (2003), which stated that securely attached individuals are more understanding and willing to have mutual discussion, but avoidantly attached individuals are more likely to withdraw from the situation. Although, Shi (2003) did state that avoidant attachment was also characterized as being more willing to integrate and compromise to get past the conflict situation quicker, the results of this study found no significant differences for avoidantly attached individuals in those conflict communication styles.

There were no significant differences between the attachment styles in the other three conflict communication styles, and anxious attachment was not significantly different from the other two attachment styles in any of the conflict communication styles. These findings suggest that anxiously attached individuals do not have a clear conflict communication style that they use and are more likely to be able to switch between styles depending on the situation. Because anxious attachment is characterized

by the fear of losing their partner, they might be more likely to use the communication style that would be most likely to satisfy their partner and keep them around. Integrating and avoidant communication styles are distinctly different and can cause trouble when trying to communicate and get through conflict in a relationship. The results of this study are potentially important for relationship and marriage counseling because it can help the counselors and their couples understand why and what communication styles are being used. With a simple attachment questionnaire, the counselor will have a better idea on what communication skills need to be worked on with their couples. Although avoidant and secure attachment have distinct communication styles, the results of this study did not produce significant differences in relation to the anxious attachment and the other communication styles, which would suggest that further research should be conducted to focus on conflict communication styles for more sensitivity to differences.

Hypothesis four was also partially supported by the results of this study. There were significant differences in trust scores between securely attached individuals and avoidantly attached individuals, which correlates with previous research by Kachadourian, Fincham, and Davilla (2004). The results suggest that those with secure attachment styles have more trust in their partners and in their relationship, which can lead to healthier communication and a healthier relationship overall. Those with avoidant attachment have significantly lower trust levels, which can cause conflict in a relationship not only from themselves but also from their partners who might not be doing anything to break trust. These findings are important for couples to understand each other and how their attachment history may present itself in a relationship. Although anxious attachment did not have significantly different trust levels compared to secure and avoidant, it did have a mean trust score that was higher than both secure and avoidant. This could indicate that anxiously attached individuals present as extremely trusting of their partners because they do not want to cause problems. This could also be because there was a low number of anxiously attached participants and there is not enough data to generalize the results.

Both the results of conflict communication styles and trust levels are important when thinking about romantic relationships, either privately or in counseling. Any combination of attachment styles

other than secure-secure in a relationship can lead to problems. Partners can use attachment theory to understand their behaviors in a romantic relationship, and to try to understand their partner's behaviors in the relationship. Relationship counselors can use attachment theory to understand and explain the relationship dynamics and begin to teach the couple techniques for constructive communication and get to the foundation of why there may be a lack of trust. Attachment history is an important tool to be utilized in cultivating a strong and healthy romantic relationship.

The results indicate no support for hypothesis five, which means trust is not a mediating factor between attachment styles and conflict communication styles. Although there were no significant results, it is important to understand that trust scores might not a reliable predictor of conflict communication styles and another measure should be used. More research should be pursued in possible mediating factors of attachment style and conflict communication styles.

Hypothesis six predicted the same ratio of secure, anxious, and attached individuals in adults as in children, which would correlate with the findings of Hazan and Shaver (1987). The results of this study indicate a similar breakdown of attachment styles, but not exactly the same. Increased number of participants might show more similar ratios to those in Hazan and Shaver's (1987) findings, which is what I would suggest for further research. It was also hypothesized that there would be no significant gender differences in attachment styles, which was supported by the results of this study. This indicates that men and women are not significantly different in their potential for attachment styles, men and women are equally as likely to be securely, anxiously, or avoidantly attached.

The results of this study compound on previous research supporting the importance of attachment history and the affects it can have on romantic relationships in adulthood. Attachment theory is an important predictor of behavior and can be used to understand partners and create plans to work on destructive behavior or try to create a secure attachment.

There are some limitations to this study. The first being because of time, cost, and COVID safety, responses to the survey were self-reported. Some may have answered the survey with what they perceived their relationship and behaviors to be, when in reality, they are different. Participants may have also

answered the survey in the way they want to be perceived, not honestly responding about their beliefs and behaviors. Also, because there is no way to tell if both partners in the relationship responded, we cannot account for the possible disparities in reality versus perception. A second limitation is this study only examined current attachment styles, and does not have access to or inquire about attachment history, meaning assumptions about continuity of attachment patterns would need to be explored with further research.

There could be attrition caused by the length of the survey. There are 80 total items, which may deter possible participants from completing the survey. There are also some confounding variables that could have affected the internal validity. Participants may have answered based off their current relationship and not their general feelings and behaviors in romantic relationships, which could change their attachment style. Another confounding variable could be societal expectations. The study did not measure the effects of societal expectations on behavior. In the Western culture, women are perceived to be more emotional and anxious in relationships and men are perceived to draw back from relationships. These perceived expectations could have affected participants' answers.

Another limitation could be the background of the sample. The majority of the participants are from two Catholic, private institutions, implying that they come from a higher socioeconomic background because they can afford to attend. Children in a higher socioeconomic background might be more likely to have parents that were able to create an attachment bond and maintain it throughout their childhood, making them more likely to have a secure attachment style as an adult. This would create a non-representative sample, and a lack of external validity.

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Appendix A
Survey

Demographics

1. Relationship Status

Single In a relationship Married

2. Age?

3. Gender Identity

Man Woman Non-binary Transgender Other

4. Race

Caucasian Black/African Indigenous American

Asian Pacific Islander Hispanic/Latinx

5. Is your partner:

Same-sex Opposite-sex Prefer not to say

Attachment Survey

6. Which of the following best describes your feelings in your relationship?

- a. I find it relatively easy to get close to others and am comfortable depending on them and having them depend on me. I don't often worry about being abandoned or about someone getting to close to me.
- b. I am somewhat uncomfortable being close to others; I find it difficult to trust them completely, difficult to allow myself to depend on them. I am nervous when anyone gets

too close, and often, romantic partners want me to be more intimate than I feel comfortable being.

- c. I find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me or won't want to stay with me. I want to merge completely with another person, and this desire sometimes scares people away.

Experience in Close Relationship Scale – Short Form

The following statements concern how you feel in romantic relationships. Please respond to each statement by indicating how much you agree or disagree.

7. It helps to turn to my romantic partner in times of need.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Disagree Neutral

Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree

8. I need a lot of reassurance that I am loved by my partner.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Disagree Neutral

Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree

9. I want to get close to my partner, but I keep pulling back.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Disagree Neutral

Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree

10. I find that my partner does not want to get as close as I would like.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Disagree Neutral

Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree

11. I turn to my partner for many things including comfort and reassurance.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Disagree Neutral

Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree

12. My desire to be very close sometimes scares people away.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Disagree Neutral

Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree

13. I try to avoid getting too close to my partner.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Disagree Neutral

Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree

14. I do not worry about being abandoned.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Disagree Neutral

Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree

15. I usually discuss my problems and concerns with my partner.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Disagree Neutral

Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree

16. I get frustrated if my romantic partner is not available when I need them.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Disagree Neutral

Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree

17. I am nervous when my partner gets too close to me.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Disagree Neutral

Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree

18. I worry that a romantic partner will not care about me as much as I care about them.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Slightly Disagree Neutral

Slightly Agree Agree Strongly Agree

ROCI-II Measuring Communication patterns

19. I try to investigate an issue with my partner to find a solution acceptable to us.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

20. I generally try to satisfy the needs of my partner.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

21. I attempt to avoid being "put on the spot" and try to keep my conflict with my partner to myself.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

22. I try to integrate my ideas with those of my partner to come up with a decision jointly.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

23. I try to work with my partner to find solution to a problem that satisfies our expectations.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

24. I usually avoid open discussion of my differences with my partner.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

25. I try to find a middle course to resolve an impasse.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

26. I use my influence to get my ideas accepted.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

27. I use my authority to make a decision in my favor.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

28. I usually accommodate the wishes of my partner.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

29. I give in to the wishes of my partner.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

30. I exchange accurate information with my partner to solve a problem together.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

31. I usually allow concessions to my partner.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

32. I usually propose a middle ground for breaking deadlocks.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

33. I negotiate with my partner so that a compromise can be reached.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

34. I try to stay away from disagreement with my partner.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

35. I avoid an encounter with my partner.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

36. I use my expertise to make a decision in my favor.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

37. I often go along with the suggestions of my partner.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

38. I use "give and take" so that a compromise can be made.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

39. I am generally firm in pursuing my side of the issue.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

40. I try to bring all our concerns out in the open so that the issues can be resolved in the best possible way.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

41. I collaborate with my partner to come up with decisions acceptable to us.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

42. I try to satisfy the expectations of my partner.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

43. I sometimes use my power to win a competitive situation.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

44. I try to keep my disagreement with my partner to myself in order to avoid hard feelings.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

45. I try to avoid unpleasant exchanges with my partner.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

46. I try to work with my partner for a proper understanding of a problem.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

Gottman's Trust Metric

47. I feel protected by my partner

Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral** **Agree** **Strongly Agree**

48. My partner is faithful to me.

Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral** **Agree** **Strongly Agree**

49. My partner is there for me financially.

Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral** **Agree** **Strongly Agree**

50. Sometimes I feel uneasy around my partner.

Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral** **Agree** **Strongly Agree**

51. I don't think my partner has intimate relationships with others.

Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral** **Agree** **Strongly Agree**

52. From now on, my partner would not have children with anyone but me.

Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral** **Agree** **Strongly Agree**

53. My partner fully loves our children and/or is at least respectful of my own children.

Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral** **Agree** **Strongly Agree**

54. I believe that you can trust most people.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

55. My partner helps me feel emotionally secure.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

56. I know my partner will always be a very close friend.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

57. My partner will commit to help provide for our children.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

58. When the chips are down, I can count on my partner to sacrifice for me and our relationship.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

59. My partner does housework.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

60. My partner will work hard to increase our financial security.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

61. My partner doesn't respect me.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

62. My partner makes me feel sexually desirable.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

63. My partner takes my feelings into account when making decisions.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

64. I know that my partner will take care of me when I am sick.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

65. When we are not getting along, my partner will work with me on our relationship.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

66. My partner is there for me emotionally.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

67. My partner does not overuse alcohol and/or drugs.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

68. My partner acts romantically towards me.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

69. My partner is kind to my family.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

70. I can rely on my partner to talk to me when I'm sad or angry.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

71. My partner belittles or humiliates me.

Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral** **Agree** **Strongly Agree**

72. There is at least one person who comes first to my partner rather than me.

Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral** **Agree** **Strongly Agree**

73. My partner will work with me as a part of a financial unit.

Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral** **Agree** **Strongly Agree**

74. I have power and influence in this relationship.

Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral** **Agree** **Strongly Agree**

75. My partner shows others how much he or she cherishes me.

Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral** **Agree** **Strongly Agree**

76. My partner helps carry the load of childcare.

Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral** **Agree** **Strongly Agree**

77. I just can't trust my partner completely.

Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral** **Agree** **Strongly Agree**

78. My partner keeps his or her promises.

Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral** **Agree** **Strongly Agree**

79. My partner is a moral person.

Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral** **Agree** **Strongly Agree**

80. My partner does what he or she agrees to do.

Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral** **Agree** **Strongly Agree**

81. My partner will betray my confidences.

Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral** **Agree** **Strongly Agree**

82. My partner is affectionate toward me.

Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral** **Agree** **Strongly Agree**

83. In arguments I can trust my partner to really listen to me.

Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral** **Agree** **Strongly Agree**

84. My partner shares in and honors my dreams.

Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral** **Agree** **Strongly Agree**

85. I fear my partner could stray.

Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral** **Agree** **Strongly Agree**

86. My partner's words and deeds reflect the values we say we agree on.

Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral** **Agree** **Strongly Agree**

87. My partner makes love to me often.

Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral** **Agree** **Strongly Agree**

88. I can count on my partner to build or maintain a sense of relationship and community with me.

Strongly Disagree **Disagree** **Neutral** **Agree** **Strongly Agree**