

# The Impact of Attachment Style Pairings on Romantic Relationship Satisfaction

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This study investigated whether couples' attachment styles pairing was associated with their romantic relationship satisfaction. In addition, this study investigated the association between self-disclosure and relationship satisfaction and between an individual's attachment style and relationship satisfaction. We sampled 295 undergraduate students who completed the *Relationship Questionnaire*, the *Self-Disclosure Index*, and the *Relationship Assessment Scale*. We found that self-disclosure was positively associated with relationship satisfaction. We also found differences in relationship satisfaction based on an individual's attachment style and differences in relationship satisfaction based on the participants' perception of their partner's attachment style. However, we found no significant difference in relationship satisfaction based on couples' attachment style pairings, beyond the impact of self-disclosure and each individual's attachment style. These results provided evidence for the benefit of understanding the perception of couple's attachment styles in relationship satisfaction.

*Keywords:* attachment style, relationship satisfaction, self-disclosure, security, social psychology

Cette étude investiguait si l'appariement des styles d'attachement des couples était associé à la satisfaction conjugale. De plus, cette étude investiguait le lien entre l'auto-divulgation et la satisfaction conjugale, ainsi que le lien entre le style d'attachement des individus et leur satisfaction conjugale. Le *Questionnaire relationnel*, l'*Index d'auto-divulgation* et l'*Echelle d'évaluation de relation* ont été complétés par 295 étudiants de premier cycle. L'étude montre que l'auto-divulgation était associée positivement à la satisfaction conjugale. L'étude montre également des différences dans la satisfaction conjugale en fonction du style d'attachement d'un individu et en fonction de la perception qu'ont les participants du style d'attachement de leur partenaire. Cependant, il n'y a aucune différence significative dans la satisfaction conjugale basée sur l'appariement des styles d'attachement des couples, au-delà de l'impact de l'auto-divulgation et du style d'attachement personnel. Ces résultats montrent les bienfaits de comprendre la perception des styles d'attachement des couples dans la satisfaction conjugale.

*Mots-clés :* style d'attachement, satisfaction conjugale, auto-divulgation, sécurité, psychologie sociale

Close relationships, especially romantic relationships, play a key role in college students' social and emotional development (Furman, Brown, & Feiring, 1999). Erik Erikson's (1950) psychosocial theory of development states that the conflict of young adulthood is between intimacy and isolation. Resolution of the conflict (i.e., successful completion of the stage) indicates that an individual is able to connect and form a secure attachment to others, whereas unsuccessful completion of this stage results in fear of intimacy and commitment (Erikson, 1950). For example, individuals who successfully resolve this conflict may find it easy to commit themselves to a relationship and find others to be trustworthy. If

Erikson's work was translated into attachment theory, then these individuals might be classified as having a secure attachment style (Franz & White, 1985). Individuals who did not successfully resolve this conflict may face difficulties in making commitments to others, whether by avoiding intimacy with another individual or by inducing anxiety over the unwanted results of commitment (Cann, Norman, Welbourne, & Calhoun, 2008). Attachment theory might classify these individuals as having one of the three insecure attachment styles (e.g., preoccupied, fearful, or dismissive). These attachment styles may impact an individual's relationships by creating a constant need for approval and reassurance, drawing attention to either the self's or the partner's flaws, and focusing on unrealistic expectations from the partner.

Based on previous research, not only can the individual's attachment style affect their relationships (Kirkpatrick & Davis, 1994; Miller, 2014), but other factors can affect relationships as well (Cann et al., 2008; Laurenceau, Barrett, & Pietromonaco, 1998;

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Sprecher & Hendrick, 2004). These factors can include an individual's overall well-being, and importantly in our case, self-disclosure. Self-disclosure is a form of communication where individuals convey personal thoughts, feelings, and beliefs to another person, as communication has been indicated as a crucial aspect of maintaining relationship satisfaction (Sprecher & Hendrick, 2004). In a study done by Byers and Demmons (1999), it was found that when both partners perceived the relationship as positive and self-disclosed about themselves to their partner, they both felt open to self-disclosing sexual likes and dislikes to each other. Individual characteristics (e.g., number of past sexual partners, gender) had a minimal effect in self-disclosure. Although there is no clear causal claim of self-disclosure leading to relationship satisfaction, overall, there is a clear link between the importance of self-disclosure, both sexual and nonsexual, and building relationship satisfaction.

However, previous studies have not investigated the relation between a couple's attachment styles pairing and relationship satisfaction. For the purpose of the study, we will look at the combination of one's own attachment style and their partner's attachment style. We will refer to this as attachment style pairing throughout the study. For example, one partner may try to avoid intimate situations because this person has an avoidant attachment style, while the other partner may demonstrate anxiety over future consequences of the relationship because this individual has an anxious attachment style. The difference in the attachment styles of the two partners may lead to conflict in the couple unit, which would affect the overall satisfaction within the relationship. Therefore, in the present study, we replicated and extended previous findings on the relation between individual's attachment style, self-disclosure, and relationship satisfaction (Holland, Fraley, & Roisman, 2012; Moore & Leung, 2002; Strauss, Morry, & Kito, 2012). More specifically, we extended these findings by investigating if couples' attachment styles pairing had an impact on their romantic relationship satisfaction. These findings may provide new insight in studying attachment style when looking at relationships.

### **Self-Disclosure, Attachment Styles and Relationship Satisfaction**

Self-disclosure can be defined as "an act of intimacy [that] serves as a maintenance strategy" (Sprecher & Hendrick, 2004, p. 857). An example of self-disclosure could be sharing details about one's past relationships or discussing one's fears. Self-disclosure has been shown to strongly correlate with marital satisfaction, and is a variable most commonly assessed when measuring relationship

satisfaction (Hendrick, 1981; Keelan, K. K. Dion, & K. L. Dion, 1998; Sprecher & Hendrick, 2004). Previous research showed that self-disclosure can provide a prediction of the couple's cohesion and satisfaction, validate the individual's self-worth in the relationship, and confirm the type of relationship an individual has with their partner (Greene, Derlega, & Mathews, 2006; Sprecher & Hendrick, 2004). That is why it is an important variable to include when assessing relationship satisfaction.

Along with assessing self-disclosure in a romantic relationship, attachment style is a variable that strongly correlates with relationship satisfaction (Hammond & Fletcher, 1991). Through relational experiences with others, attachment style governs people's outlook on romantic relationships. The work of Hazan and Shaver (1987) helped develop a more comprehensive evaluation of attachment styles. The authors applied Bowlby's (1958, 1969) and Ainsworth and Wittig's (1969) work on an attachment model for infants to classify adult attachment styles and conceptualize romantic involvement. Individuals were categorized in a three-category model as either secure, anxious/ambivalent, or avoidant depending on their answers to a self-report survey. A limitation of the three categories was that there was no differentiation in the avoidant category for those who need and those who do not need others' acceptance, even though they both tend to avoid intimacy. Bartholomew and Horowitz's (1991) new model of attachment styles, which is used in this study, divides the avoidant category of Hazan and Shaver's (1987) model into two different attachment styles: fearful and dismissive, and extends the three-category model into four categories. According to Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991), the four adult attachment styles are secure, preoccupied, fearful, and dismissive. The preoccupied, fearful, and dismissive styles can be grouped to form the insecure category.

A secure attachment style defines a person as comfortable with closeness and independence, thus making the person more positive and less needy (Moore & Leung, 2002). Whitson and Mattingly (2010) summarized secure individuals as having "a sense of worthiness and an expectation that others are accepting and responsive". They tend to feel high levels of self-worth and have a positive perception of others (Moore & Leung, 2002).

The three insecure attachment styles (e.g., preoccupied, fearful, dismissive) hold some characteristics that put people at a disadvantage when forming and maintaining an intimate relationship, whether because of their anxiety of being abandoned by a partner or their avoidance of intimacy in the relationship (Cann et al., 2008). An individual with a

preoccupied attachment style has a negative perception of himself or herself but a positive perception of others (Moore & Leung, 2002). Out of the four attachment styles, preoccupied people tend to experience the most anxiety (Guerrero, Farinelli, & McEwan, 2009), and it is most likely caused by their constant need for acceptance from their partner (Miller, 2014). The last two types of attachment styles are similar since they were the result of dividing the avoidant category. Those with a fearful attachment style feel unworthy and see others as untrustworthy (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). They are categorized with social insecurity, high defensiveness, and lack of assertiveness (Keelan et al., 1998). Those with a dismissive attachment style are usually uninterested in intimacy and feel self-sufficient (Miller, 2014). It is the only group out of the four that is comfortable without close relationships.

Attachment style not only affects the individual's perception of himself or herself, but it also may affect satisfaction levels within the couple unit. There are three hypotheses (i.e., similarity, complementary, and security) that help explaining the satisfaction levels in regards to different couple pairings (Klohnen & Luo, 2003). The similarity hypothesis states that individuals will demonstrate higher levels of satisfaction with someone who has the same attachment style as them (Strauss et al., 2012). Therefore, a secure person may be more satisfied with a secure partner because of similar aspects in their attachment style. Individuals also have a preexisting preference set by past experiences and introspection. According to Miller, Perlman, and Brehm (2007), the similarities that a couple shared on their outlook of life were related to an increase in fondness for each other and a stronger connection between partners. Evidence was also found that insecure individuals may prefer a partner who has the same insecure attachment style (e.g., fearful-fearful). This commonality may be a source of satisfaction for these couples (Strauss et al., 2012). The complementary hypothesis states that an individual would be more satisfied with a partner of a different attachment style, which would enhance the individual's perspective on their romantic relationship. For example, a preoccupied individual and a dismissive individual may have a continuing relationship because the dismissive partner, who has a negative view of others, would validate the preoccupied partner's negative self-views (e.g., consider oneself as unworthy; Strauss et al., 2012). People may find the complementary style more appealing because their partner will confirm their perceptions of the world, even if their perceptions are negative ones. There is not much support for this hypothesis due to contradictory findings. For example, preoccupied and dismissive individuals may have a relationship that only benefits one partner. While the

dismissive partner may exhibit behaviors that confirm a preoccupied individual's perspective, a preoccupied partner would want to show intimacy and affection to their dismissive partner, who would generally avoid it (Klohnen & Luo, 2003).

Contrary to the similarity and complementary hypotheses, the security hypothesis says that no matter what attachment style an individual has, an individual would be most satisfied with a secure partner (Strauss et al., 2012). Forming a bond with a secure person results in a faster forming and emotionally closer bond than with insecure people (Holmes & Johnson, 2009). Although findings have been somewhat inconsistent, there is a greater amount of evidence for the similarity hypothesis and more theoretical support due to the idea of parents shaping their children to respond and comply with their own attachment style (Klohnen & Luo, 2003). Parents tend to interact with their children in accordance with their attachment style. Children then grow accustomed to their parents' behaviors, and adopt their attachment style (Klohnen & Luo, 2003).

Previous studies have only investigated the relationship between an individual's attachment style and romantic relationship satisfaction (Holmes & Johnson, 2009; Strauss et al., 2012) and have generally ignored whether the partners' attachment styles can also impact relationship satisfaction. By only observing the attachment style of the individual and disregarding aspects of the entire couple unit, research may be missing a variable that could affect relationship satisfaction. In other words, current research is lacking the impact that the particular pairing of the couple's attachment styles has on the relationship. Certain pairings may demonstrate higher levels of relationship satisfaction compared to others. In this way, we may be able to recommend the ideal partner's attachment style depending on the individual's own attachment style.

### Present Study

The current study aims to investigate the relationship between couples' attachment styles pairing and romantic relationship satisfaction, as well as to replicate previous studies that focused on the relation between self-disclosure, individual's attachment style and relationship satisfaction. Using a self-report relationship questionnaire, we identified individual's and their partner's attachment styles based on the individual's self-report of their own attachment style as well as their perception of their partner's attachment style. The hypotheses are as follows:

H1: There will be a positive correlation between self-disclosure to the partner and relationship

satisfaction, replicating previous results (Hendrick, 1981; Keelan et al., 1998).

H2: Individuals who have a secure attachment style would have the highest levels of relationship satisfaction out of the four attachment styles, replicating previous results (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Couperthwaite, 2014; Holland et al., 2012; Holmes & Johnson, 2009).

H3A: Based on the similarity hypothesis, couples with similar attachment styles (e.g., secure-secure, insecure-insecure) would have higher levels of relationship satisfaction than couples with dissimilar attachment styles, beyond the impact of self-disclosure and each individual's attachment style (Klohnen & Luo, 2003).

H3B: Based on the complementary hypothesis, couples with opposed attachment styles (e.g., secure-insecure, insecure-secure) would have higher levels of relationship satisfaction than couples with similar attachment styles, beyond the impact of self-disclosure and each individual's attachment style (Klohnen & Luo, 2003).

H3C: Based on the security hypothesis, couples with at least one secure partner (e.g., secure-secure, secure-insecure, insecure-secure) would have higher levels of relationship satisfaction than couples with insecure-insecure attachment styles, beyond the impact of self-disclosure and each individual's attachment style (Klohnen & Luo, 2003).

## Method

### Participants and Procedure

Before conducting the study, approval was given by Alvernia University's Institutional Review Board. Around 3,000 students at the university received an email regarding the survey. This email included a brief description of the project. Undergraduates who were at least 18 years old and currently in a romantic relationship for at least three months were asked to follow a link included in the email to take the survey (there was no incentive to take this survey). The survey took about 5 to 10 minutes to complete. Survey order was randomized to minimize order effects; however, each respondent initially completed the demographic survey. A total of 340 undergraduate students (11.3% of the student body population; 22.6% of the undergraduate population) responded. Of the 340 respondents, 295 (251 women; 44 men) students' survey were kept for the study, and the remaining 45 respondents were excluded from analysis because they did not complete the demographic page of the survey.

### Materials

A demographic questionnaire, the *Relationship Questionnaire*, the *Self-Disclosure Index* and the *Relationship Assessment Scale* were distributed through the survey program SurveyMonkey. The following are brief descriptions of each measure.

For our demographics, we asked participants to indicate their gender, their partner's gender, and the duration they have been in the relationship.

**Attachment style.** The *Relationship Questionnaire* (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) is adapted from Hazan and Shaver (1987) and measures the four attachment styles. Participants read four short paragraphs and chose the one that best matched their attachment style, as well as the paragraph that best fits their partner's attachment style. Although shorter than the *Revised Experiences in Close Relationships* measure (ECR-R), the *Relationship Questionnaire* has a comparable reliability of about .90, and shows evidence for the convergent validity with the ECR-R (Sibley, Fischer, & Liu, 2005). Using the *Relationship Questionnaire* provides a more perception-based answer so participants can judge how they see their partner and themselves.

**Self-disclosure.** The *Self-Disclosure Index* (Miller, Berg, & Archer, 1983) measures how comfortable individuals would be disclosing certain personal information to their partner. This section consists of 10 questions, such as "What I like and dislike about myself" and "My closest relationships with other people". Self-disclosure is a good indicator of relationship satisfaction; those who disclose more to their partner should demonstrate higher levels of satisfaction (Miller et al., 1983). This survey was on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 to 5. The *Self-Disclosure Index* has a Cronbach's alpha of .88 (.90 for the current study) when thinking about a romantic partner, and has significant positive correlations with a measure of passionate love (Derlaga & Berg, 2013).

**Relationship satisfaction.** The *Relationship Assessment Scale* (S. S. Hendrick, Dicke, & C. Hendrick, 1998) is a global measure of relationship satisfaction that has been shown to be reliable and valid (Cann et al., 2008). It contains seven items, each on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 to 5. The higher the score (ranging from 7 to 35), the greater the participant feels satisfaction from the relationship. Participants answered this section based on their current relationship. The *Relationship Assessment Scale* has a Cronbach's alpha of .86 (same for the current study; Vaughn & Baier, 1999). To measure satisfaction, it was compared to the valid measurement of the *Dyadic Adjustment Scale* and had a correlation

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of .80, showing convergent validity (Hendrick et al., 1998).

### Results

Using SPSS for our analysis, there were varying lengths of relationships (Table 1). The mean length of time was 2 years, ranging from 0.25 to 5 years. About one-third of the participants considered themselves to have a secure attachment style (Table 2). More than 50% of the participants perceived their partner as insecure, especially those who were insecure themselves (Table 3).

To test H1, we ran a bivariate correlation test and found a strong positive correlation between relationship satisfaction and self-disclosure,  $r = .45$ ,  $p < .001$ . These results supported our first hypothesis that more self-disclosure was associated with a higher sense of satisfaction within a relationship.

To investigate the relation between individuals' four-category attachment styles (independent variable) and relationship satisfaction (dependent variable), we conducted a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and found significant differences on relationship satisfaction,  $F(3, 259) = 9.02$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .09$ . Follow-up tests were conducted to evaluate differences among the means (Table 4), and it was found that secure individuals ( $M = 31.03$ ,  $SD = 3.46$ ) experienced higher levels of satisfaction within their relationship than fearful individuals ( $M = 27.53$ ,  $SD = 5.86$ ),  $d = 0.76$ ,  $p < .001$ , and dismissive individuals ( $M = 28.83$ ,  $SD = 4.59$ ),  $d = 0.57$ ,  $p = .006$ , but there was no statistically significant difference between secure and preoccupied individuals ( $M = 30.13$ ,  $SD = 3.86$ ),  $p = .256$ . Preoccupied

Table 1

*Duration of Participants' Current Relationship*

Time frames	<i>n</i>	%
3-5 Months	33	11.2
6-8 Months	29	9.8
9-11 Months	23	7.8
1 Year	23	7.8
1.5 Years	24	8.1
2 Years	20	6.8
2.5 Years	23	7.8
3 Years	23	7.8
3.5 Years	17	5.8
4 Years	13	4.4
4.5 Years	12	4.1
5+ Years	53	18.0
Missing	2	0.7

*Note.*  $N = 295$ .

Table 2

*Participants' Attachment Style as Measured by the Relationship Questionnaire*

Attachment Styles	<i>n</i>	%
Secure	105	35.6
Preoccupied	74	25.1
Fearful	48	16.3
Dismissive	50	16.9
Missing	18	6.1

*Note.*  $N = 295$ .

Table 3

*Paired Responses of Participants and Their Partner's Perceived Attachment Style as Measured by the Relationship Questionnaire*

Attachment Style Pairings	<i>n</i>	%
Secure-Secure	65	22.0
Secure-Insecure	40	13.6
Insecure-Secure	58	19.7
Insecure-Insecure	144	38.6
Missing	18	6.1

*Note.*  $N = 295$ .

individuals reported more satisfaction than fearful individuals,  $d = 0.50$ ,  $p = .002$ , but there was no statistically significant difference between preoccupied and dismissive individuals,  $p = .161$ . In addition, there was no statistically significant difference between fearful and dismissive individuals,  $p = .125$ . The results partially supported our second hypothesis (H2) that secure individuals would be more likely to be satisfied within their relationship. Unlike hypothesized, secure and preoccupied individuals did not have a statistically significant difference in their reported relationship satisfaction.

To investigate if the couple's attachment styles pairing impacted relationship satisfaction beyond self-disclosure and each individual's attachment style, we conducted an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA). The two independent variables were participants' self-reported attachment style (e.g., secure/insecure) and Table 4

*Means of Relationship Satisfaction as Measured by the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS)*

Attachment Styles	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Secure	99	31.03	3.46
Preoccupied	47	30.13	3.86
Fearful	70	27.53	5.86
Dismissive	47	28.83	4.59

participants' perception of their partner's attachment style (e.g., secure/insecure); the control variable was self-disclosure and the dependent variable was relationship satisfaction. Based on the analysis, we found significant difference on relationship satisfaction based on the participant's attachment style,  $F(1, 257) = 11.70, p < .001, \eta^2 = .04$ , and there was significant difference on relationship satisfaction based on the participant's perception of their partner's attachment style,  $F(1, 257) = 7.66, p = .006, \eta^2 = .03$  (secure:  $M = 30.58$ ; insecure:  $M = 29.11$ ). However, there was no significant interaction between participant's attachment style and their perception of their partner's attachment style,  $F(1, 257) = 0.09, p = .771$ . The results failed to support our hypotheses (H3A, H3B, and H3C) due to the lack of interaction between participants' attachment style and their perception of their partner's attachment style.

### Discussion

The goal of this study was to examine the association between relationship satisfaction and couple's attachment styles pairing. It also aimed to assess the association between self-disclosure and relationship satisfaction, as well as the association between individual's attachment style and relationship satisfaction. We hypothesized that secure individuals would demonstrate the greatest relationship satisfaction. Although significant differences exist regarding dismissive and fearful individuals, we found a non-significant difference between secure and preoccupied individuals in terms of their relationship satisfaction. Hazan and Shaver (1987) concluded that there is a positive correlation between individuals' anxiety levels and how supportive they are towards their partner in a romantic relationship. Preoccupied individuals may make their partners feel more validated and appreciated in the relationship, as would secure individuals (Strauss et al., 2012). Making their partner feel good may contribute to their own well-being because their presence is being appreciated through the satisfaction of their partner. Preoccupied attachment is associated with stronger feelings during romantic relationships (Couperthwaite, 2014). The love that a preoccupied individual feels may be more intimate and passionate than what is truly being portrayed. The constant need of acceptance and approval may motivate these individuals to comply with the wishes of their partner (Holmes & Johnson, 2009). Consistent with findings from previous research, we found that the more the self-disclosure, the more satisfied individuals are in the relationship; we also found that secure individuals rated their relationship satisfaction levels higher than dismissive and fearful individuals. These findings are consistent with results from previous research, which reported that dismissive and fearful individuals might have the

greatest relationship dissatisfaction (Molero, Shaver, Fernández, Alonso-Arbiol, & Recio, 2016).

More importantly, the current research examined the relationship between couples' attachment styles pairing (one partner self-rated their own attachment style and reported their partner's attachment style based on their perception) and romantic relationship satisfaction, beyond the impact of self-disclosure and each individual's attachment style. Even though there were significant differences in relationship satisfaction based on the participant's attachment style as well as their perception of their partner's attachment style, there was no significant difference in the relationship satisfaction based on the couple's attachment styles pairing, beyond the impact of self-disclosure and each individual's attachment style.

According to the similarity hypothesis (Strauss et al., 2012), insecure-insecure couples would report higher levels of satisfaction than mixed attachment styles couples (e.g., secure-insecure, insecure-secure). Having a partner who has the same thought pattern and same attachment style seemed to be a good mental match. However, we found that a good mental match (e.g., insecure-insecure) did not seem to contribute to relationship satisfaction. According to the complementary hypothesis (Strauss et al., 2012), secure-insecure or insecure-secure couples would report more satisfaction than similar attachment style couples (e.g., secure-secure, insecure-insecure). However, the results failed to support this hypothesis. According to the security hypothesis (Strauss et al., 2012), couples with at least one secure partner (e.g., secure-secure, secure-insecure, insecure-secure) would have higher levels of relationship satisfaction than couples with insecure-insecure attachment styles. Secure individuals take more of a communal approach to their relationship, worrying less about the possible problems that could be encountered in the relationship and focusing more on supporting and monitoring the needs of their partner (Couperthwaite, 2014; Holmes & Johnson, 2009).

The results of our study show that a secure individual that has a partner who is also secure, meaning that the partner would also be supporting and encouraging, promoted satisfaction (Couperthwaite, 2014). One interpretation of these results is that there are fewer reasons to be worried about the problems that could be encountered in the relationship when both partners are focused on the positives. With a secure partner, there is more stability in the relationship due to lower levels of anxiety and avoidance compared with an insecure partner (Holmes & Johnson, 2009). This would promote a greater focus on how the relationship is progressing rather than on flaws and detriments in the relationship. A second

interpretation is that the way a partner is perceived is mainly a projection of themselves (Strauss et al., 2012). Secure individuals who reported their partner as insecure may not see their partner as a severely insecure individual due to their positive outlook on others. Insecure individuals may have someone to lean on when they feel that their relationship is in distress, while the secure partner may have a more level head to support the insecure individual. Even though the insecure-insecure couple had the lowest mean in this study, it did not achieve statistical significance.

### Strengths & Limitations

For the current study, we collected data from one person out of the couple unit. Although this may seem a limitation because we do not know the partner's self-rating of their own attachment style nor their satisfaction levels within the relationship, perception is a strong tool when looking at romantic relationship satisfaction. In many cases, perception is very accurate to the actual dynamic of the relationship (Kenny & Acitelli, 2001; Molero et al., 2016). On the other hand, individuals may perceive their partner to be similar to themselves, which provided only the perceived attachment style, and not the partner's actual attachment style (Strauss et al., 2012). The *Relationship Questionnaire* (Hendrick et al., 1998) is a common scale used to measure relationship satisfaction. However, this scale has some limitations. For example, participants selected the attachment style based on how they see themselves. Participants were not able to indicate how much they identify with a certain attachment style. In other words, there may be different degrees of attachment styles. One secure person may not be as secure as someone else due to differences in levels of anxiety or avoidance. Using a Likert scale for future studies may be beneficial so participants can rate their anxious/avoidant tendencies. This would provide a more accurate assessment of the degree of their attachment style, compared to only selecting which paragraph best fits.

A large majority of participants in this study were women, which limits the generalization to the general public. At the university, a majority of undergraduate students are women, which is representative of the population of the campus (60%). Gender may play a role in perceived relationship satisfaction in interaction with other variables, which can be assessed in future studies.

When studying individuals and couples, both subjective feelings and objective behaviors can be used to assess relationship satisfaction. What is important to realize though, according to S. S. Hendrick and C. Hendrick (1998), is that adjustment to a relationship and relationship satisfaction are not the same thing (as cited in Couperthwaite, 2014).

Couples may be able to adjust to their current relationship and function well, but their subjective feelings may not reflect how the relationship appears to be. Individuals could experience dissatisfaction and regret from being in their relationship. Therefore, it might be beneficial to measure subjective feelings of how individuals perceive their relationship to function rather than rely solely on objective behaviors of how they function in a relationship. Behaviors may express how individuals perceive their relationship, but it would be equally important to assess their thought processes. Although relationships are dynamic, satisfaction has the greatest impact on well-being (Couperthwaite, 2014).

### Future Research

This project has mainly focused on the association between the relationship satisfaction and the couple's attachment styles pairing. We only used self-disclosure as an indicator of emotional communication to assess relationship satisfaction. Other factors such as trust, commitment, and intimacy can be paired with attachment style to better assess relationship satisfaction in future research. Looking at past relationships may also provide more insight in terms of current relationship satisfaction. In addition, surveying participants in terms of what kind of attachment style they prefer their partner possess may provide additional evidence for the similarity, complementary and security hypotheses. If a participant's relationship satisfaction improves with another partner with a different attachment style, there will be more evidence to support one of those hypotheses. Although previous research has not found much difference in relationship satisfaction experienced by heterosexual couples compared to same sex couples, this may be another question to consider when assessing relationship satisfaction.

It may also be beneficial to compare participants' perception of their partner's attachment style to their partner's actual attachment style. Learning what the partner's attachment style would be, compared to their original perception, may change the way the individual perceives his or her relationship. For example, participants seemed to be most satisfied with secure individuals. If they realize that their partner perceived himself or herself to be secure, they may sense more satisfaction in the relationship than actually exists. Researching relationship satisfaction in this way may provide a unique view of how an individual sees a relationship, as well as reinforce the powerful impact that perception has on a relationship.

Studying romantic relationships is important to understand the social and emotional aspects of human behavior. As social creatures, people are constantly motivated to create bond with others to improve

physical and mental well-being. We can expect more information about how to create and maintain well-being by continuing research on close relationships.

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