Intimate Partner Aggression and Relationship Satisfaction across Attachment Styles

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Abstract

This study presents a quantitative study exploring intimate partner aggression (i.e. physical, verbal, relational) and relationship satisfaction across attachment styles (i.e. avoidant, anxious, secure, and fearful). This study analyzed 170 participants, of which 77.8% were female participants and 22.2% were male participants. The sample ranged from ages 20 to 70 and the mean age of the sample was 31.34 (*SD* = 11.73). The average relationship length of the sample was 7.76 years (*SD* = 9.18). This study found that the fearful attachment style is most at risk of engaging in verbal and relational aggression with their intimate partners. Secure attachment was found to have the highest levels of relationship satisfaction, whereas the fearful attachment style had the lowest scores of relationship satisfaction. Finally, relationship length was found to have an effect on relationship satisfaction. Overall, the current study targeted critical areas in the scientific literature and created a starting block into research focusing on intimate partner aggression and relationship satisfaction across attachment styles.

Keywords: Intimate Partner Aggression, Attachment Styles, Relationship Satisfaction

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Intimate partner aggression is a prevalent problem in our society that exists across all social, economic, religious, or cultural backgrounds (Bookwala & Zanduik, 1998; World Health Organization [WHO], 2012). Intimate partner aggression, is identified as aggressive acts exhibited between romantic partners (WHO, 2012). The prevalence of intimate partner aggression is highly variable depending on the study. WHO suggests that worldwide intimate partner aggression ranges from a few percent of the population to nearly everyone afflicted (WHO, 2012). For example, some researchers suggest that one half to two thirds of couples seeking therapy report some form of aggression within their relationship (Holtzworth-Munroe, Stuart, & Hutchinson, 1997). Similarly, approximately 1.5 million females and 800,000 men from the United States reported experiencing intimate partner aggression at some point in their lives (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Likewise, statistics gathered by the WHO (2014) state that as many as 38% of female homicides were committed by their male partners. These rates illustrate that a substantial proportion of adults are engaged in aggressive relationships, highlighting a major area of concern. Intimate partner aggression can sometimes be hard to capture because it is often under-reported (Gracia, 2004), suggesting that prevalence rates may be even higher than indicated.

Researchers generally agree that aggression is an intentional act that can be perceived as harmful by the victim (Harre & Lamb, 1983). A general definition for aggression proposed by Braun, Kirchner, Hartman, Overton, and Caldwell (1988) claimed, “Aggression is those behaviors— physical, verbal, and nonverbal—that threaten, intimidate, demean, harass, hurt, injure and/or damage, regardless of the

antecedent events and consequential events of those behaviors (p 468)." Bushman and Anderson (2001) developed a more recent definition stating that aggression is "any behavior that is directed towards another individual and is carried out with the intent to cause harm (p 274)." Bushman and Anderson (2001) also argue that the perpetrator must know the behavior will harm the victim and the victim must want to avoid the behavior. When the term aggression is used, many people assume this means physical aggression. However, research has argued that there are many different forms of aggression that can be exhibited between partners, both overt and covert. There are three main forms that have been highlighted in a handful of research studies as some of the most predominant and harmful: physical, verbal, and relational (Carroll et al., 2010; DeMaris, 2000; Stets, 1990; Stockdale, Tackett, & Coyne, 2013; Testa & Leonard, 2001; Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009). Each form of aggression is associated with different behaviours, actions, and consequences.

Intimate Partner Physical Aggression

Several studies have examined intimate partner physical aggression (DeMaris, 2000; Stets, 1990; Testa & Leonard, 2001; Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009). Physical aggression is an act that is intended to cause physical harm to another person and is perpetrated by acts such as hitting, kicking, or punching (Stets, 1990; Wang, Iannotti & Nansel, 2009). Research has found rates of physical aggression to be present in 6% to 35% of romantic relationships that have lasted a year or more in length (Statistics Canada, 2009; Testa & Leonard, 2001). More recently, research conducted by Halpern-Meekin, Manning, Giordano, and Longmore (2013) reported that 4 in 10 young adult relationships experience intimate partner physical aggression. As mentioned previously,

prevalence rates of intimate partner physical aggression can vary depending on the population examined and the measures used. Nonetheless, research demonstrates that physical aggression does exist and can be quite common in intimate relationships.

It is important to outline the detrimental effects intimate partner physical aggression can have on individual well-being and relationship quality. DeMaris (2000) performed a longitudinal study with 3,508 romantic couples analyzing physical and verbal conflict. He analyzed his data at a five and seven-year follow up wherein he had couples come into a laboratory and participate in simulated experiments, consisting of watching videos of intimate partner aggression and later completing self report questionnaires which measured participant's physical and verbal levels of aggression. DeMaris (2000) reported that physical violence between partners was associated with decreased marital quality for both partners. He also found that aggression exhibited by males caused greater disruption in the relationship (i.e. divorce) when compared to female perpetrated aggression. Additionally, Testa and Leonard (2001) reported that intimate partner physical aggression was associated with marital dissatisfaction and increased levels of stress for the female partner. Intimate partner physical aggression has also been found to be associated with heavy alcohol consumption (Testa & Leonard, 2001). Research suggests that wives are more likely than husbands to be severely impacted by intimate partner physical aggression. Cascardi, Langhinrichsen, and Vivian (1992) reported that women are more likely to sustain severe injuries such as broken bones, broken teeth, and injury to sensory organs. Dominating another person through the use of physical acts of aggression is just one form of intimate partner aggression.

Intimate Partner Verbal Aggression

Verbal aggression is another well-known form of aggression defined as a verbal act with the intent to hurt another person (Stets, 1990). Verbal aggression can be characterized by name-calling or teasing in a hurtful manner. Stockdale, Tackett, and Coyne (2013) conducted a meta-analysis to examine the relationship between gender and intimate partner verbal aggression. They included 20 studies and found that intimate partner verbal aggression was utilized by both genders but not to the same degree, since women were found to engage in verbal aggression significantly more than men (Stockdale, Tackett, & Coyne, 2013). The authors attribute this finding to the notion that women are more skilled verbally in comparison to men and thus, are at an increased risk of utilizing intimate partner verbal aggression (Stockdale, Tackett, & Coyne, 2013). According to Statistics Canada (2009) one in five Canadians reported experiencing name-calling and insults by their partners. A longitudinal study performed by Testa and Leonard (2001) examined 543 couples regarding the impact of verbal aggression. They measured marital quality, stability, and aggression through self-report and interviewer-administered questionnaires. They reported that 91.4% of couples in their sample engaged in verbal aggression, demonstrating nearly all couples in their sample reported some amount of verbal aggression. In another recent study, researchers found that five in 10 young adult couples reported verbal aggression, characterized by name calling, criticism, ridicule, and put-downs, exhibited by both males and females in their present relationship (Halpern-Meekin, Manning, Giordano & Longmore, 2013). While studies indicate that there is variance in the frequency of verbal aggression, although, nonetheless demonstrating that verbal aggression may be present in romantic relationships to one degree or another.

The utilization of words is a very powerful form of expression, which can result in detrimental consequences to both partners and the relationship. Intimate partner verbal aggression is a direct form of aggression that is confrontational and can often make the victim feel threatened and helpless (Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009). Intimate partner verbal aggression perpetration has been found to have a high correlation with depression (O'Donnell et al., 2006) and alcohol abuse (Keiley et al., 2009). According to Sabourin, Infante, and Rudd (1993) intimate partner verbal aggression is also associated with marital distress. Gavazzi, McKenry, Jacobson, Julian, and Lohman (2000) generated results that argue that intimate partner verbal aggression is associated with a decrease in marital quality. They defined martial quality as a variable encompassing communication, caring/love for one's partner, satisfaction, and connectedness. Therefore, past research has illustrated the possible negative effects of intimate partner verbal aggression affecting both individual well-being and relationship quality.

Intimate Partner Relational Aggression

The majority of research focusing on couple aggression has concentrated on physical or verbal aggression (Keiley et al., 2009; Stets, 1990; Testa & Leonard, 2001; Stockdale, Tackett, Coyne, 2013; Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009). Scientific research targeting the use of relational aggression in adult romantic relationships is relatively scant. However, relational aggression manifests itself in the context of romantic relationships as well. Relational aggression was first described by Crick and Grotpeter (1995), and has been defined generally as the manipulation of relationships to be hurtful (Burr, Ostrov, Jansen, Cullerton-Sen, & Crick, 2005). Intimate partner relational aggression has also been defined as behaviours including retaliating against one's

romantic partner by excluding the individual from activities or gatherings, intentionally withdrawing love (i.e. silent treatment), intentionally flirting with another person to illicit jealousy, and creating rumors about one's partner so that others (i.e. children, mutual friends) will reject her or him (Kolbert, Field, Crothers, & Schreiber, 2010; Seiffge-Krenke & Burk, 2015). Underwood (2004) identifies relational aggression as covert behaviours such as eye-rolling, gossiping, mean looks, spreading mean rumors, social exclusion, and the use of manipulation tactics.

Relational aggression is remarkably common in romantic relationships, highlighting the need for scientific growth and development in this area. For instance, adolescents' use of relational aggression is remarkably high, sitting at 51.4% of friend groups (Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009). Supplementary to those findings, Goldstein (2010) reports that relational aggression is used more frequently in adults' romantic relationships when compared to friendships, thus demonstrating the importance of furthering the research on intimate partner relational aggression. Carroll and colleagues (2010) completed a study focusing on the use of relational aggression in marriage. They analyzed 336 married couples utilizing a self-administered in-home questionnaire, which asked participants to report on their partner's relationally aggressive behaviours. They found that relational aggression was used in most marriages to one degree or another. The behaviours most commonly used were love withdrawal and efforts to diminish one's social status. Carroll and colleagues (2010) also found that both men and women use relationally aggressive strategies, however, women engage in more frequent relational aggression when compared to males.

According to Goldstein, Chesir-Teran, and McFaul (2008) being a victim of intimate partner relational aggression is associated with increased mental health problems, such as symptoms of depression and anxiety. According to Linder, Crick, and Collins (2002) intimate partner relational aggression was found to be associated with a decrease in relationship quality, demonstrating the impact the use of relationally aggressive acts can have on the relationship quality between partners. Consistent with this finding Carroll and colleagues (2010) found that the use of relationally aggressive tactics in marriages was found to be associated with a reduction in marital quality and stability for both partners. Specifically, the perpetrators reported feeling frustrated and jealous, and having difficulty trusting their partner. Victims in the sample reported that they were less likely to seek support from their partner, they were less secure in the relationship, and more mistrusting of their partner (Linder, Crick, & Collins, 2002). Overall, the literature argues that the use of physical, verbal, and relational aggression between romantic couples is quite common, resulting in a variety of negative consequences (Keiley et al., 2009; O'Donnell et. al., 2006, Testa & Leonard, 2001). The literature suggests that all forms of aggression will likely result in decreased relationship satisfaction (Carroll et. al., 2010; Gavazzi, McKenry, Jacobson, Julian, & Lohman, 2000). It is important to note that not all aggression is overt and clearly identifiable. Some forms of aggression disguise themselves in a covert manner making it very difficult to detect.

Given the pervasiveness of intimate partner aggression, in all of its forms, it is important to expand understanding and scientific knowledge in this area. In order to better understand the full depths of partner aggression it is beneficial to attain a basic

understanding of human behaviour and emotion. One direct pathway towards understanding human behaviour and emotions is through attachment theory. Attachment theory is a well-developed area that attempts to explain and understand behaviour and emotional reactions in any close relationship (Wilson, Gardner, Brosi, Topham, Busby, 2013). Further, attachment theory explains a broad range of human behaviour and emotions in interpersonal relationships (Bookwala, 2002), which may shed light on the complexities of intimate partner aggression.

Attachment Styles

History. The study of individual attachment styles has received long-standing scientific attention, focusing from infancy throughout adulthood (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007; Rovers, 2004). Research has discovered the way attachment develops and how it serves to meet various needs. Bowlby is considered to be one of the founders of attachment theory (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Bowlby's work began in the 1950's as he became curious about children's' connections to their mothers (Bowlby, 1969). As Bowlby furthered his work, he started to understand attachment as a manner in which a person handles stress or threat. For example, when infants feel threatened, they first look to their primary caregiver for safety and security. He believed that children have an innate need to attach to a primary caregiver (Bowlby, 1988) and he later understood this to be the way attachment forms (Mikulincer &Shaver, 2007). Bowlby (1962) described the purpose of attachment to be protection and security and believed that the way infants become attached to their primary caregiver would inform the way they understand the world in later years (Bowlby, 1969). He argued that variations in the primary caregiver's

response to the child would influence the attachment system, resulting in either a functional or dysfunctional attachment system for the child (Bowlby, 1969). He furthered his research by coining the term the internal working model, which he described as a mental framework that helps children understand their world. Bowlby (1969) believed that primary caregivers can act as an example for all further relationships because of this internal working model framework. Therefore, a child's internal working model can guide all future romantic relationships.

The notion of an individual having his or her own attachment style was first proposed by Ainsworth (1976) who generated research on children and their attachment styles to their parents. Ainsworth (1976) used this notion to describe children's reactions to separation from and reunions with their mother. Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall (1978) conducted groundbreaking research regarding child-mother interactions. The study, titled the Strange Situation, assessed child-mother attachment within the first year of life. They assessed the children by first placing them in a room full of toys, and then having the mother leave the child alone in the room for a brief moment. During the time of absence, researchers assessed the child's response. Specifically, researchers were assessing the child's response to the mother leaving and their response to the mother's return. Results demonstrated that some children were able to tolerate their mother's leaving and continued to explore the environment without extreme panic; this group was identified as securely attached. Secure children demonstrated a sense of safety and trust between the child and mother. On the other hand, children who could not tolerate their mother's departure were categorized as insecure. These children became emotional and distressed almost immediately after their mother left the room. They believed these

children experienced more distress because they did not trust their mother to be there when they needed them, when they were experiencing threat (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978).

For the insecure attachment group of children, Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall (1978) went on to discover that once the mother returned to the room, two different responses were obtained. First, some children would frantically cling to the mother, exhibiting a difficulty to be soothed. This they identified as a preoccupied attachment style. The second response they recorded was children who responded to the mothers' return with a detached behavior, suggesting they are indifferent of their mother's whereabouts. This was identified as an avoidant attachment style. This research was groundbreaking to the field of attachment styles in infancy because it provided evidence to suggest there are patterns in the ways children relate to their primary caregivers. This research also opened a gateway into the study of individual attachment styles in adulthood.

Romantic Attachment Styles. Research later argued that childhood attachment styles continue throughout a person's life into their romantic relationships (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Rovers, 2004). Hazan and Shaver (1987) argued that within the dynamics of intimate romantic relationships lies a connection or repetition with one's childhood attachment styles. Building from Bowlby and Ainsworth's ideas, Hazan and Shaver attempted to develop a self-report measure that assessed adult attachment styles. Originally, they focused on the three main attachment styles identified by Ainsworth: secure, avoidant, and anxious. Their study was in two parts. The first study examined 620 participants between the ages of 14 to 82, looking for

signs of attachment styles in their adult relationships. Their second study assessed 108 undergraduate students who were enrolled in a course titled Understanding Human Conflict. All the participants were asked to complete the questionnaire regarding the way they relate to their romantic partners as part of a class exercise. Results suggested that adult romantic attachment styles comprise different beliefs about how love, availability, trustworthiness, and one's own worthiness can be understood. Results identified four main attachment styles: secure, preoccupied/anxious, dismissive/avoidant and fearful.

Secure. Hazan and Shaver (1987) identified securely attached individuals as those who perceive romantic relationships to be friendly, happy, and trusting (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). In particular, people who are securely attached identify as being able to accept and support their partner (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Bartholomew (1990) found that securely attached individuals have an ability to become emotionally close to others and are comfortable depending on others and having others depend on them (Bartholomew, 1990). Mikulincer and Shaver (2005) later conducted research to assess the ways attachment influenced the strategies someone would use to regulate themselves and maintain safety when in attachment threat. They believed individuals react to attachment threat as a means of accessing certain resources. Mikulincer and Shaver (2005) argued that attachment strategies have a regulating goal, which is fostered from childhood attachment. They found that secure individuals react to potential attachment threats in ways that alleviate distress, maintain comfort, maintain supportive intimate relationships, and increase personal adaptability (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). The main goal of secure based strategies is to deal with attachment threats in a constructive and stable way (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005).

The vast majority of research conducted targeting attachment styles and relationship satisfaction, suggest that those individuals who identify as having a secure attachment style are more satisfied in their relationships compared to insecurely attached individuals (Egeci & Gencoz, 2006; Jones & Cunningham, 1996; Meyers & Landsberger, 2002). In particular, Meyers and Landsberger (2002) conducted a study analyzing 73 married women regarding their attachment style and martial satisfaction. The collected their data through self report questionnaires such as the Adult Attachment Style Questionnaire and the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS). They found that secure attachment is positively correlated with levels of martial satisfaction. Also, Kleeton, Dion, and Dion (1998) conducted a study whereby they analyzed 112 female participants and 53 male participants regarding their personal experiences in romantic relationships. They utilized both self-report questionnaires and audio recordings to collect their data. The attachment styles within their sample consisted of 43% secure, 40% fearful, 5% anxious, 12% avoidant. They found that those individuals who were securely attached reported more intimate levels of initiated self-disclosure, which was a direct factor in their heightened levels of relationship satisfaction. Their research suggested that one reason why those who are securely attached report high levels of relationship satisfaction is as a result of their willingness to reveal personal facts, ensuing more comfort with their partners. Overall, research demonstrates that securely attached individuals have relatively healthy and satisfactory romantic relationships and deal with relationship threat and conflict in an adaptive and constructive manner.

Anxious. Hazan and Shaver (1987) reported that individuals who have an anxious attachment style usually have more self-doubts in a relationship. They report having fears

of intimacy, jealousy, and having emotional highs and lows (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Individuals who identify with an anxious attachment style report feelings of often being misunderstood and underappreciated in their relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). They are marked by a lack of confidence and trust in one's partner and their responsiveness (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). Bartholomew (1990) defined anxious attachment as needing to be emotionally intimate with others and a fear of being alone. Mikulincer and Shaver (2007) argue that anxious attachment utilizes a hyper activating strategy when responding to threat. Specifically, they argued that anxious individuals insistently seek proximity, support, and love (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). These hyper activating strategies intensify a person's response to perceived threats whereby they tend to exaggerate the seriousness of a threat or problem, emphasize their neediness or helplessness in order to attract an attachment figure (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

The vast majority of research conducted targeting attachment styles and relationship satisfaction, suggest that those individuals who identify as having an anxious attachment style report decreased levels of relationship satisfaction (Banse, 2004; Jones & Cunningham, 1996; Meyers & Landsberger, 2002). The study previously mentioned, conducted by Meyers and Landsberger (2002), found that anxiously attached individuals usually report decreased relationship satisfaction when compared to securely attached individuals. This may be explained based on anxiously attached individuals' excessive need for attention and love from their partners, making it difficult for their partners to effectively meet their needs at all times (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Thus, when their needs are not met, they may feel dissatisfied with the course of their relationship and generally experience feelings of jealousy, lack of appreciation, and a lack of trust in one's partner.

Ultimately, when they feel this way, anxiously attached individuals tend to utilize hyper activating strategies to respond (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

This notion was supported in a study that analyzed 333 couples between the ages of 23 to 35 years old using self-administered questionnaires examining martial satisfaction and adult attachment (Banse, 2004). Banse (2004) found that an anxious attachment style was negatively related to relationship satisfaction. Another study conducted by Guerrero, Farinelli, and McEwan (2009) analyzed 581 couples regarding their attachment style, relationship satisfaction, and emotional communication. They found that participants were less satisfied in relationships that involved an anxious partner. Specifically, they found that the highest level of dissatisfaction was with participants whose partners had an anxious attachment style and who reported expressing anger in a destructive manner during times of threat. Therefore, the bulk of research suggests that an anxious attachment style is related to decreased relationship satisfaction as a result of an excessive need for attention, feelings of jealousy, anger, and lack of trust, which is often expressed in destructive ways.

Avoidant. Hazan and Shaver (1987) reported that people who identify as having an avoidant attachment style usually avoid situations that cause them relational stress. Individuals with an avoidant attachment style tend to maintain their distance in relationships, which normally could be more close and intimate (Hazan & Shaver, 1994; Bartholomew, 1990). Avoidant individuals need distance, space, and minimal intimacy making it difficult for their partners to meet those needs while also meeting their own possible needs of connection, which may potentially explain the dissatisfaction in relationships (Rovers, 2005). Thus, those who have an avoidant attachment struggle with

emotional closeness, confrontation, and longevity in relationships, which they facilitate through a deactivation of attachment needs (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). It has been argued that individuals with an avoidant attachment style have more pessimistic views on relationships and frequently end relationships (Hazan & Shaver 1987). Bartholomew (1990) found that avoidance was characterized by independence and a sense of comfort with little emotional relationship. The main goal of avoidant individuals is to avoid distress or frustration and inhibit emotional states, according to Mikulincer and Shaver (2007). Avoidant attachment can be understood as using a deactivating strategy of response to threat (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). It has been argued that when a person employs deactivating strategies, they are attempting to inhibit closeness, as it is perceived as dangerous (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). They do this by denying their attachment needs, reinforcing independence, and avoiding intimacy. According to Mikulincer and Shaver (2007) there are two main goals for avoidant individuals: gaining basic needs while maintaining distance and self-reliance, and denying attachment needs while avoiding emotional states that might trigger an attachment system activation. Therefore, avoidant individuals try to deny and deactivate any attachment related needs so as to ensure safety and protect themselves from perceived threat.

Research in the area of attachment styles and relationship satisfaction continue to focus on the notion that individuals with an avoidant attachment style experience low levels of relationship satisfaction (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Meyers & Landsberger, 2002; Towler & Stuhlmacher, 2013). A study conducted by Towler and Stuhlmacher (2013) analyzed 209 women from various United States organizations. The participants were

asked to complete an online questionnaire focusing on their attachment style and relationship satisfaction, among other variables. They found that those with an avoidant attachment style had less satisfaction within their intimate relationship. They attempted to explain this finding by suggesting that avoidant women may engage in more solitude and create distance in their relationships, which may limit relationship satisfaction. This notion was supported by Meyers and Landsberger (2002) who found that avoidant attachment was associated with decreased levels of marital satisfaction when compared to those who were securely attached. The connection between avoidant attachment and low relationship satisfaction has been replicated in various studies and illustrates the strong association between these two variables.

Fearful. Fearfully attached individuals are those who score high on anxious attachment and high on avoidant attachment resulting in insecurity within relationships (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Fearful individuals have an intense need for love and connection, comparable to individuals with an anxious attachment style. However, they also have a huge fear of emotional closeness and intimacy, similar to avoidant attachment. Individuals who are characterized as having a fearful attachment style generally have a fear of intimacy and experience emotional highs and lows (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Bartholomew (1990) defined fearful attachment as being uncomfortable getting too close to others, however wanting to be close to others, difficulty trusting others, and a fear of getting hurt. Mikulincer and Shaver (2007) identified the fearful attachment style as having a chaotic strategy of responding to threat, consisting of both deactivating and hyper activating strategies. They further went on to explain this by saying that fearful individuals withdraw and distance themselves from relationship

partners, therefore using deactivating strategies. However, they also employ hyper activating strategies, as they yearn for love, attention, and intimacy. Thus they often have a vacillating attachment style, moving from attached to avoidant reactively. Therefore, Mikulincer and Shaver (2007) argue that fearful individuals fail to achieve any goals of the secure, avoidant, or anxious strategies. Consequently, fearfully attached individuals have a fear of intimacy and dependence, yet they yearn for love and connection (Bartholomew, 1990; Hazan & Shaver, 1987). They attempt to meet their needs by using a chaotic strategy of responding to threat, resulting in an inability to effectively meet any attachment goals (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

Research that focuses on the fearful attachment style and relationship satisfaction clearly argues that these variables are negatively related (Goodboy & Bolkan, 2011; Jones & Cunningham, 2005; Meyers & Landsberger, 2002). Given fearful attachment is a combination of both anxious and avoidant attachment styles it is not surprising that it is related to decreased relationship satisfaction, given both anxious and avoidant attachment styles are related to low levels of relationship satisfaction themselves. Research reports that fearfully attached individuals experience decreased relationship satisfaction when compared to securely attached individuals (Meyers & Landsberger, 2002). A study conducted by Goodboy and Bolkan (2011) examined 232 participants who were involved in a romantic relationship. They found that a fearful attachment style was positively associated with jealousy induction, avoidance, and infidelity. Authors reported that as a result of these behaviours, fearfully attached individuals also report lower relationship satisfaction. Throughout the years research has highlighted these four main attachment

styles. In order to effectively screen for and analyze these attachment styles multiple measures have been proposed.

Attachment Style Assessment Modalities. When attempting to examine attachment styles there are different approaches that have been proposed and utilized in previous research. Some ways have been found to be more reliable than others. Some of the ways researchers have analyzed attachment styles is by asking participants to read a paragraph describing each of the four attachment styles and rate which one they believe described them the most (Mikulincer, 1998). Additionally some researchers have aimed to examine all four-attachment styles in one scale by asking participants a multi-item questionnaire and coding each response into an attachment category (Bookwala, 2002). Other researchers have chosen to examine only secure, avoidant, and anxious attachment styles and not look at fearful attachment (Feiring, Deblinger, Hoch-Espada, & Haworth, 2002). Currently however, the most researched and reliable way to assess for attachment styles is to utilize a dimensional approach (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005; Shaver & Clark, 1994; Shaver & Hazan, 1993). This notion was first identified by Bartholomew (1990) whereby he developed a measure which created a score for anxious attachment and a score for avoidant attachment, and then combined the two scores to define four attachment styles in a two dimensional space. Recent literature began to use Bartholomew's (1990) paradigm that adult attachment consists of two dimensions: anxious and avoidant (Mikulincer, Shaver, & Pereg, 2003; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Individuals who scored high on either avoidant or anxious dimensions are classified as having an insecure attachment. On the contrary, people who score low both on avoidant

and anxious dimensions are considered to have a relatively secure attachment (Wei, Russell, Mallinckrodt, & Vogel, 2007).

Utilizing a two dimensional approach has proven to be one of the most reliable ways to examine and determine individual attachment styles (Alexandrov et al., 2005). After attaining two different dimensional scores, it has been proposed that the best way to compute those scores into four attachment styles is by using the median scores for each dimension as cutoffs for the attachment quadrants (Fraley, 2012). Therefore, the most optimal way to assess attachment styles according to Fraley (2012) is to use the following equation: 1) Any participant whose anxious score is below the median for the anxious dimension and below the median for the avoidant dimension is assigned to the secure group; 2) any participant whose anxious score is above the median and whose avoidant score is below the median is assigned to anxious group; 3) Any participant whose anxious score is below the anxious median but their avoidant score is above the avoidant median, is assigned to the avoidant group; and 4) Any participant who's anxious and avoidant scores are both above the median is assigned to the fearful group. The method for examining attachment styles utilizing the dimensional measuring system, has been proven to be empirically valid (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005; Shaver & Clark, 1994; Shaver & Hazan, 1993; Wei, Russell, Mallinckrodt, & Vogel, 2007). Additionally, utilizing the median scores as cutoff points fosters relatively even grouping of attachment styles, which aids in comparisons and analyses (Fraley, 2012).

It is important to note that people do not completely fit into one category over another. People may have more resemblance to a specific category, although they usually fall somewhere on a spectrum (Alexandrov et al., 2005). This dimensional model has

good construct validity when assessed using self-report scales, indicating that it accurately measures attachment tendencies, and thus is one of the most utilized ways to determine individual attachment styles (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005; Shaver & Clark, 1994; Shaver & Hazan, 1993). The notion of applying a dimensional approach to assess attachment encompasses the majority of theoretical research to date (Wei, Russell, Mallinckrodt, & Vogel, 2007). Current research has demonstrated that a model that examines levels of anxious and avoidant tendencies in a dimensional model is the most reliable, compared to a measure that attempts to examine all four attachment styles individually (Wei, Russell, Mallinckrodt, & Vogel, 2007).

Intimate Partner Aggression and Attachment Styles

Given that research has told us that attachment is a major predictor of human behaviour and emotional reactions in close relationships (Wilson, Gardner, Brosi, Topham, & Busby, 2013), it seems logical to look to attachment theory as a way to understand intimate partner aggression. Bookwala (2002) considers this idea by explaining that adult attachment theory represents a broad theory of human behavior in close relationships and this offers a valuable psychological perspective to understanding the phenomenon of relationship aggression. Wilson, Gardner, Brosi, Topham and Busby (2013) second this notion, by arguing that attachment is an important variable to consider when attempting to understand an individual's likelihood to engage in physical and relational aggression with their partners. Specifically, research has linked the perpetration of intimate partner aggression to a multitude of psychosocial variables, including a manic love style (Bookwala, Frieze, & Grote, 1994). Further, research tells us that attachment theory is a method of attempting to understand individuals love styles and patterns

(Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Specifically, Bowlby (1969, 1973) and Ainsworth (1978), two of the main founders of attachment theory, reported that when attachment needs are not met for an extended period of time, angry behaviour was regularly observed. Attachment theory understands aggression as a natural response to threats of separation and abandonment, which may develop in romantic relationships (Bartholomew & Allison, 2006). When individuals feel distressed in response to a threat they often seek out comfort and reassurance from an attachment figure (Fourner, Brassard, Shaver, 2011). This concept is essential to attachment theory and highlights the notion that one's attachment system works to regulate negative affect during threat (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1979, 1980). If an individual's attachment style is not secure this may pose as a risk factor for intimate partner aggression, given that they cannot effectively regulate their distress (Bookwala, 2002). Thus, attachment theory is valuable in understanding intimate partner aggression, given its origins in human behaviour, emotions, and love styles.

More recently, scientific literature has begun to examine the relationship between partner aggression and attachment styles. Throughout these studies research has made some intriguing discoveries regarding particular attachment styles and aggression. A few studies have made connections between attachment insecurity (i.e. anxious and avoidance) and partner aggression. In particular, Feiring, Deblinger, Hoch-Espada, and Haworth (2002) conducted a study examining the use of aggressive behaviours in adolescent romantic relationships and the extent to which attachment styles are related. They examined 245 high school students using self-report measures of aggression, attachment, attitudes, and emotional styles. They assessed attachment styles using the Behavioural Systems Questionnaire, consisting of items that focused on secure, avoidant,

and anxious attachment styles. They found that girls were more likely to report being the perpetrators of physical aggression. They also found that girls who had an insecure attachment style with their friends were associated with high levels of physical aggression. A limitation of this study was that they did not examine the four main attachment styles: secure, anxious, avoidant, and fearful, which limits the generalizability of their results.

Similarly, Mikulincer (1998) conducted a series of three studies. The first study examined attachment styles and differences in self-reports of anger-proneness, anger expression, anger goals, and responses to anger. The second study examined attachment style, physiological signs of anger, and attribution of hostile intent. Finally, study three analyzed attachment style differences in expected anger outcomes. He utilized a variety of different methodologies and measurement techniques, which aided in the validity of his results. In all three studies attachment style was analyzed by asking participants to read a paragraph describing each of the four attachment styles and rate which one they believed described them most. He found that securely attached individuals scored lower in anger proneness, reported more adaptive responses in anger episodes, and had less hostile intent towards others; suggesting that securely attached individuals have more functional and constructive anger. He found that anxiously attached individuals experienced a lack of anger control. Finally, avoidant attached individuals experienced high hostility and lack of awareness of psychological responses to anger, given they attempted to downplay their anger and distance themselves from conflictual situations. He concluded his research by saying that attachment style is related to anger-proneness,

anger expression, anger-related goals, actions, and emotions, attributions of hostile intent, and expectations of anger-related outcomes.

Bookwala (2002) also performed a study wherein she analyzed 161 male and female undergraduate students who were involved in a romantic relationship. They were analyzed regarding their own attachment style along with their perception of their partner's attachment style and how each relates to expressed and received physical aggression within the relationship. She examined attachment using the Relationships Questionnaire, which examined all four attachment styles on a continuum. She found that 52.8% of her sample reported at least one act of aggression. She performed a regression analysis and found that reporting one's partner as anxious, self and partner as more anxious, and self as secure and partner as avoidant was predictive of the highest levels of expressed aggression. Therefore, she found that both anxious and avoidant attachment styles were predictive of relationship aggression. An important limitation to note within this study is the method of examining of attachment styles. The Relationships Questionnaire only used a single-item prototypical description of each attachment style, which limits the reliability of the attachment style analysis given that it does not utilize a multi-item scaling measure.

Finally, Grych and Kinsfogel (2010) investigated romantic attachment style as a potential moderator between family aggression and dating aggression. They examined 391 adolescents ages 14 to 18 years old using self report questionnaires such as the Experiences in Close Relationship Scale, which produces two dimensional scores for attachment. They also used the conflict in relationship scale to measure aggression. They found that attachment anxiousness was a more consistent predictor than attachment

avoidance in boys' romantic relationships. They also found that attachment anxiousness and avoidance were both moderators for girls. Their results suggest that attachment style can increase or decrease aggression in relationships. Important to note, a limitation of this study is that they utilized cross sectional data, which interferes with the ability to imply causation. Nonetheless, it is clear that research is making a connection between both anxious and avoidant attachment styles and partner aggression.

There have also been studies that identified a fearful attachment style along with an anxious attachment style, as being risk factors for intimate partner aggression. Bookwala and Zdaniuk (1998) were interested in comparing individuals who reported being involved in reciprocally physically aggressive dating relationships against individuals who reported being involved in non-aggressive relationships. They specifically wanted to understand how measures of attachment styles compared with these two groups. They sampled 85 undergraduate students using self-report questionnaires. They examined attachment styles using the Relationship Questionnaire, which examined all four-attachment styles on likert scales. They found that those participants who reported being involved in aggressive relationships scored higher on the anxious and fearful attachment styles. Also, Dutton, Saunders, Starzomski, and Bartholomew (1994) performed a study of 120 men who were in treatment for wife assault. They completed a questionnaire assessing their attachment style using the Relationship Style Questionnaire, which examined four attachment styles (secure, fearful, anxious, and avoidant) and anger using the Multidimensional Anger Inventory. Their sample consisted of 20% secure, 20% fearful, 33% anxious, and 27% avoidant attachment styles. They also found that the anxious and fearful attachment styles were related to abusiveness in romantic

relationships. They found that aggression was the most prevalent in relationships with a fearful attachment style. They conclude by arguing that anxious and fearful attachment styles manifest anger, jealousy, anxiety, and abusive behavior in intimate relationships.

Another study conducted by Hudson and Ward (1997) analyzed 85 men who were sexual offenders, 32 men who had committed violent crimes, and 30 men who were incarcerated for other offences. They were interested in examining attachment and interpersonal behaviours. They found that those participants who had a fearful attachment style had the highest levels of hostility towards women. They also found that fearfully attached men reported high suppression of anger scores. The authors explained this finding by saying that fearful individuals tend to feel angry towards others but are hesitant to express it openly. Similarly, a study conducted by Critchfield, Levy, Clarkin, and Kernberg (2008) wherein the authors examined 92 participants using self report measures and interview style questionnaires. They were interested in the relationships between attachment scores, borderline personality disorder, and aggression. They found significant associations between the fearful attachment style and reactive forms of aggression involving hostility. This suggests that those who are fearfully attached are more reactively aggressive with others. Therefore, some literature has found evidence to suggest that the fearful attachment style could be related to increased levels of aggression.

Additionally, there have been a handful of studies that have identified only attachment anxiousness as having a relationship with intimate partner aggression. Fourner, Brassard, Shaver (2011) conducted a study wherein they measured adult attachment style and men's domestic aggression. They also examined communication

and satisfaction as mediating variables. They analyzed 55 men who were in counseling for relationship difficulties, some of which being aggression. The participants completed a series of questionnaires measuring their attachment style, aggressiveness, communication style, relationship satisfaction, and social desirability. They examined attachment styles using the Experiences in Close Relationships Scale, which provided each participant with a score for anxious attachment and a score for avoidant attachment. They found an association between attachment anxiousness and psychological and physical aggression. However, they did not find any associations between avoidant attachment and psychological or physical aggression, suggesting that an anxious attachment style was found to be a risk factor of psychological and physical aggression in intimate relationships. Follingstad, Bradley, Helff, and Laughlin (2002) conducted a study testing the relationship between anxious attachment, angry temperament, and attempts to control one's partner. They sampled 412 participants, 80 of which had a history of intimate partner violence. Using a modified version of the Relationship Scale Questionnaire, which focused mainly on anxious attachment items, they found that anxious attachment was a major predictor in the use of force in relationships.

Likewise, Miga, Hare, Allen, and Manning (2010) performed a longitudinal study wherein they examined 93 adolescents who had romantic partners. They examined the participants over a 10 year time period where they would come into a laboratory to participate in video observations with their partners. They were also asked to fill out behavioural measures, which included self reported attachment styles, using the Experiences in Close Relationships Scale, and Engagement in Intimate Partner Aggression. They found that an adolescent who was anxiously attached at age 14 was

predictive of verbally aggressing towards a partner at age 18. They found that individuals with an anxious attachment style were more verbally and physically aggressive towards their partners. Ultimately, they concluded by saying that overall, higher anxious attachment increases the risk for perpetration of intimate partner aggression. A limitation to note within this study is the relatively small sample size. Peloquin, Lafontaine, and Brassard (2011) examined attachment styles and psychological partner aggression. They examined attachment styles using the Experiences in Close Relationships Scale which provided each participant with a score for anxious and avoidant attachment. They utilized these dimensional attachment scores for their analyses. They defined psychological aggression as behaviors such as name-calling, threats of physical violence, slamming doors, stonewalling etc. They sampled 193 couples and found that, in women and men, anxious attachment predicted greater psychological aggression. Therefore, multiple studies have identified anxious attachment as a clear risk factor for intimate partner aggression.

There have been some studies that have examined both partners in a relationship to understand the dyadic component to partner aggression and attachment styles. Specifically, Doumas, Pearson, Elgin, McKinley (2008) conducted a study to examine the relationship between intimate partner violence and attachment using 70 couples between the ages 16-69. Both partners were asked to complete the same questionnaire on aggression and attachment in a private room separate from their partner. They examined attachment using the Relationships Questionnaire, which examined four attachment styles (secure, fearful, anxious, and avoidant) and they later coded participant responses into two-dimensional scores on anxious and avoidance. They found that relationships with an

avoidant male partner and an anxious female partner were associated with both male and female violence. They also found that partner violence was associated with attachment closeness-distance struggles, highlighting a difference in needs within the partnership. A limitation within this study is similar to those mentioned above, wherein the questionnaire chosen to examine attachment styles was only a single-unit measure and does not directly examine the two attachment dimensions this study utilized.

Wilson, Gardner, Brosi, Topham, and Busby (2013) conducted a study where they compared individual attachment styles with dyadic attachment categorization. They analyzed 696 couples by having them complete a series of questionnaires. They utilized the Experiences in Close Relationships Scale to examine attachment styles. They attained two-dimensional scores and then utilized those scores to compute the four attachment styles. Their sample consisted of 32.76 % secure/secure dyads, 45.98% secure/insecure dyads, and 21.26 % insecure/insecure dyads. Using a one-way analysis of variance test (ANOVA), they found that relationships that consisted of one secure and one insecurely attached partner had higher levels of aggressive behaviours when compared with secure/secure dyads. Furthermore, they found that insecure/insecure dyads had the highest levels of physical, sexual, and psychological aggression among all the groups. A limitation of this study however, is the manner in which they computed the four attachment styles. They utilized a cutoff score of 3.5, which as of yet, has no validity or empirical support. A recent study conducted by Seiffge-Krenke and Burk (2015) focused on both partners' perspectives on aggression within their relationship. They sampled 194 romantic couples. This is one of the very few studies that analyzed relational aggression within couples. They utilized the Experiences in Close Relationships Scale as a measure

for attachment, generating two-dimensional scores. In their sample, 41% of couples reported below average levels of aggression, 52% reported unilateral aggression, and 7% reported reciprocal aggression. They also found that the mutually aggressive dyads reported high levels of anxious and avoidant attachment.

Research Question

Research has demonstrated associations between insecure attachment styles: anxious, avoidant, and fearful attachment and an increased risk of intimate partner aggression. This demonstrates the value in studying attachment when attempting to increase knowledge on intimate partner aggression. It is important to note that, although there are a handful of studies that have targeted attachment styles and intimate partner aggression, there still remains a gap within this area. No research to date has examined specific forms of intimate partner aggression and their relationship to specific attachment styles. Namely, are there any differences between attachment styles and intimate partner aggression forms? Additionally, no study to date has utilized the gold standard method for grouping attachment styles. Specifically, no research has examined attachment styles utilizing a dimensional measuring system and then later using the median from each dimension as cutoff scores for the attachment quadrants (Fraley, 2012). Given that this study used the most effective method for examining attachment styles, it may shed new and interesting results in the area of attachment styles and intimate partner aggression and relationship satisfaction that may be more empirically valid.

Exploring this area is paramount given previous literature has argued that the use of intimate partner physical, verbal, and relational intimate partner aggression is quite common, resulting in a variety of negative consequences (Keiley et al., 2009; O'Donnell

et. al., 2006, Testa & Leonard, 2001). According to the literature, in order to better understand intimate partner aggression, attachment theory is a valuable and fundamental variable to examine given its origins in human behaviour, emotions, and love styles (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Wilson, Gardner, Brosi, Topham, & Busby, 2013). Learning more about attachment styles and their specific forms of aggression can help identify which individuals are most at risk with each form of aggression. This can aide in therapeutic interventions and preventative measures.

Therefore, this study was interested in determining if there were differences between attachment styles (anxious, avoidant, fearful, and secure) and intimate partner aggression (physical, verbal, relational). This study was also interested in exploring any differences in attachment styles (anxious, avoidant, fearful, and secure) and relationship satisfaction. Given previous research has found an association between relationship satisfaction and attachment styles, it is important to examine the differences in relationship satisfaction and attachment styles as well (Gavazzi, McKenry, Jacobson, Julian, & Lohman, 2000; Testa & Leonard, 2001). Previous studies have found secure attachment to be associated with high relationship satisfaction (Egeci & Gencoz, 2006; Jones & Cunningham, 1996; Meyers & Landsberger, 2002), while insecure attachment (avoidant, fearful, anxious) was found to be associated with low relationship satisfaction (Banse, 2004; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Jones & Cunningham, 1996; Meyers & Landsberger, 2002; Towler & Stuhlmacher, 2013). We sought to replicate those results using a superior attachment group classification system: participants were assigned two dimensional scores and later coded into four attachment styles by using the median scores from each dimension as cutoffs for each attachment quadrant (Fraley, 2012). In addition,

rather than completing a simple correlational analysis we sought to examine group differences between the different attachment styles.

Hypotheses

Based on previous literature in this area the current study hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 1. Secure attachment style would demonstrate the lowest levels of all forms of intimate partner aggression and would have the highest relationship satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2. Fearful attachment style would demonstrate the most use of intimate partner verbal, physical, and relational aggression and would have the lowest relationship satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3. Anxious attachment style would demonstrate more use of intimate partner verbal aggression compared to avoidant and secure attachment styles and would have lower relationship satisfaction compared to secure attachment.

Hypothesis 4. Avoidant attachment style would demonstrate more use of intimate partner relational aggression compared to anxious and secure attachment styles and would have lower relationship satisfaction compared to secure attachment.

Method

Participants

Originally, 180 participants completed the study, however, only 170 completed the entire questionnaire. The 10 participants who did not complete the aggression measure were missing at random, most likely as a result of ending their participation in the study early. Therefore, the sample consisted of 170 participants of which 77.8% were female participants and 22.2% were male participants. The sample consisted of 77.6% Caucasians, 2.9 % African Americans, 4.7% Asians, 2.4% people of European descent,

and 12.4% other ethnicities. When participants were asked if they are currently in counseling 9.5% reported yes and 90.4% reported no. The sample ranged from ages 20 to 70 and the mean age of the sample was 31.34 (*SD* = 11.73). The average relationship length of the sample was 7.76 years (*SD* = 9.18) ranging anywhere from under one year to 48 years. Originally participants were asked to be in a romantic relationship of at least one year; however, some people did participate in the study that were involved in a romantic relationship under one year in length. A comparative analysis was done on those results and there were no differences between those participants, therefore, those scores were included in the sample. For the section examining relationship satisfaction only 140 participants completed this portion of the questionnaire and therefore, these analyses are based on 140 participants.

Procedure

A research proposal was approved by the Research Ethics Board at Saint Paul University (file number: 1306.1/15). Participants were recruited using emails sent to health professionals, and poster advertisements in community counseling and health centers and on social media, See Appendix D and E. A website link was provided on the advertisements to direct participants to the self-report questionnaire found on Survey Monkey, see Appendix A. Survey Monkey was chosen to host the questionnaire given that it aided in supporting many aspects of the research, such as the survey design, SPSS integration, and online support. Utilizing online surveys as a means of data collection is becoming more prominent in research (Alessi & Martin, 2010). Specifically, an online measure allowed access to more diverse populations in varying geographical areas, and was time and cost efficient (Wright, 2005). Participants completed the online study

independently. Participation from both partners was not required for the purposes of the study; however, both partners could individually participate in the study if they chose. Participants were given online consent forms prior to completing the online questionnaire.

Participation in the study was completely anonymous. Prior to beginning the self-report questionnaire, participants were asked to read the consent form. Consent was assumed when participants proceeded to do the questionnaire. Each of the participants were informed as to the purpose of the study, their task requirements, any risks/discomfort, confidentiality/anonymity, and their right to withdraw at any given time for any reason with no penalty. The consent form can be found in Appendix B. Participants completed the self-report questionnaire in the following order: Demographics, Attachment Style, Aggression Frequency and Forms, and Dyadic Adjustment Scale. The self-reported questionnaire took approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete. After participation was complete, participants were directed to a debriefing page that provided contact information from the primary researcher (i.e. email and phone number) along with local mental health centers and crisis lines in the event they found the study distressing or if they simply wanted to learn more. This can be found in Appendix C.

Measures

The self-report questionnaire comprised four sections: demographic information, attachment style, partner aggression frequency, and dyadic adjustment scale.

Demographics. Basic demographic data such as gender, age, ethnicity, previous counseling experience, and current relationship duration was collected to generate as

much information about the sample as possible (Appendix A). This information helped to contextualize the results and draw further conclusions about the findings.

Attachment Style. The Experiences in Close Relationships Test-Revised (ECR-R) was used to assess participants' attachment style (Fraley, Waller, and Brennan, 2000). The ECR-R is a revised version of Brennan, Clark, and Shaver's (1998) Experiences in Close Relationships Questionnaire. The scales internal reliability in previous studies tends to be .90 or higher (Sibley & Lui, 2004). Additionally, in a study that examined the reliability and validity of the ECR-R, they found that repeated measures of both the anxious and avoidant dimensions were stable over a 6-week assessment period, resulting in approximately 86% shared variance among each subscale (Sibley & Lui, 2004). The current study found a Cronbach's alpha value at .93 and a mean score of 2.69 (*SD* = 1.19) for the anxious attachment dimension and a Cronbach's alpha of .93 for the avoidant attachment dimension with a mean score of 2.34 (*SD* = .99). The ECR-R examined participants' level of anxious attachment and avoidant attachment. The ECR-R scale is composed of 36 items. Participants were asked to rate on a scale from 1=*"Strongly Disagree"* to 7=*"Strongly Agree"* how they felt about a given statement. Examples of questions were: "I'm afraid I will lose my partner's love" and "I prefer not to show my partner how I feel deep down." Results from this scale created a score for the anxious attachment dimension and the avoidant attachment dimension and then combined the two scores to define four possible attachment styles in a two-dimensional space, see figure 1. Individuals who scored high on either avoidant or anxious dimensions were classified as having an insecure attachment. People who scored low on avoidance and anxious dimensions were considered to have a relatively secure attachment. Next, items that were

targeting anxious attachment were combined to develop an average anxious attachment dimensional score (Fraley, 2012). Similarly, items examining avoidant attachment were combined and averaged to develop an average avoidant attachment dimensional score for each participant (Fraley, 2012). Each participant ended up with an anxious attachment dimensional score ranging from 1-7 and an avoidant attachment dimensional score, which also ranged from 1-7.

In order to code participants into their appropriate attachment style it has been proposed that the best way to compute the dimensional scores into four attachment styles is by using the median scores as cutoffs for each attachment quadrant (Fraley, 2012). The median score for the anxious attachment dimension was 2.47 and that was then the cutoff score for that group. The median score for the avoidant attachment quadrant was 2.12 and that was then the cutoff score for that group. Therefore, the best way to assess attachment styles according to Fraley (2012) is to take: 1) Any participant whose anxious score was below the anxious dimension median (2.47) and any participant whose avoidant score was below the avoidant dimension median (2.12), they were assigned to the secure group; 2) Any participant whose anxious score was above 2.47 and whose avoidant score was below 2.12, they were assigned to the anxious group; 3) Any participant whose anxious score was below the anxious median (2.47) and their avoidant score was above the avoidant median (2.12), they were assigned to the avoidant group. 4) Any participant who had anxious and avoidant scores both above the medians were assigned to the fearful group. Pairing the anxious and avoidance scales yielded a classification of the individual into one of the four adult attachment styles (secure, anxious, avoidant, and fearful) as described by Bartholomew (Bartholomew, 1990; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). This

research was administered on Survey Monkey and can be viewed in Appendix A.

Intimate Partner Aggression Frequency. The section that examined aggression was composed of two different scales to examine the three forms of aggression. The first scale used examined intimate partner relational aggression. This measure is an extended version of the measure originally used by Reynolds and Repetti (2010) developed by Quigley, Daniels, Polihronis, and Magner (2013) and was comprised of 9 items. Reynolds (personal communication, April 11, 2011) examined the internal consistency reliability of the reports of aggression for the original measure she had designed for their study and found a Cronbach's alpha of .76. The items used by these researchers have good construct validity as they were developed based on interviews conducted by Owens and colleagues (2000) and were pilot tested in the Reynolds and Repetti study (2010). This measure was originally designed to assess relational aggression between peers. Therefore, for the current study the questions have been adjusted to assess relational aggression between partners. Participants were asked to identify which types of relationally aggressive behaviours they had engaged in with their partners and how frequently they occur. Participants rated themselves on a scale from *never (1)* to *2 or more times a week (6)*. The relational aggression items had a mean score of 1.88 (*SD* = .68) and found a Cronbach's alpha value of .79. The behaviours examined included exclusion, ignoring/silent treatment, gossip/rumours, and negative non-verbal body language used to inflict harm. Examples of some questions that were asked include: "How often have you rolled your eyes at your partner" and "Have you ever talked negatively behind your partner's back?"

The second scale focused on verbal and physical aggression. The Acts of Aggressive Behaviour Scale consisted of two subscales: direct and indirect aggression. For the purposes of the current study, the direct aggression subscale was used given that it targeted physical and verbal intimate partner aggression. Therefore, 14 questions were used for the current study, 10 questions targeting physically aggressive behaviours and four questions targeting verbally aggressive behaviours (Archer & Webb, 2006). The questionnaire asked participants which physical or verbal acts they have perpetrated against their partner and how frequently the aggressive acts occur. Questions were on a likert scale ranging from: *Never* (1) to *2 or more times a week (6)*. The physical aggression items had a mean score of 1.07 (*SD* = .19) and found a Cronbach's alpha value of .73. The verbal aggression items had a mean score of 1.79 (*SD* = .83) and found a Cronbach's alpha value of .75. Examples of questions were: "How many times have you punched your partner?" and "How many times have you screamed at your partner?"

Therefore, the Relationally Aggressive Scale and the Acts of Aggressive Behaviour Scale were used together in order to create a more thorough measure assessing for all three forms of aggression. Items that were targeting relational aggression were combined and averaged to develop an average relational aggression score. Physical aggression scores were also combined to develop an average physical aggression score. Similarly, items examining verbal aggression were combined and averaged to develop an average verbal aggression score for each participant. Therefore each participant ended up with a physical, verbal, and relational aggression score ranging from 1-6. A higher aggression score represented more frequent aggressive behaviours for the respective group. These measures have been used in previous research studies to examine

aggression frequencies among varying populations (Archer & Webb, 2006; Quigley, Daniels, Polihronis, & Magner, 2013; Reynolds & Repetti, 2010). This measure can be found in Appendix A.

Dyadic Adjustment Scale. The Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) was used to assess for relationship satisfaction (Spanier, 1976). The Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) consists of 32 questions assessing relationship satisfaction between romantic partners. The DAS is used to assess and identify the quality of a dyadic relationship. The DAS includes four subscales: Dyadic Consensus (13 items; a = .86), Dyadic Satisfaction (10 items; a = .78), Dyadic Cohesion (5 items; a = .79), and Affectional Expression (4 items; a = .71). Dyadic Consensus is defined as the degree to which respondents agree with their partner (Spanier, 1976). Dyadic Satisfaction is defined as the degree to which respondents feel satisfied with their partner. Dyadic Cohesion is the degree to which the respondent and their partner participate in activities together. Affectional Expression is the degree to which the respondent agrees with their partner regarding emotional affection. Therefore, the total Dyadic adjustment score is identified based on relationship functioning, adjustment, and quality, specifically targeting adaptability, communication, and conflict within an individual's relationship (Spanier, 1976). The DAS is a self-report questionnaire, which is composed of six miniature sections each with different scoring/rating systems. The first two sections are ranged on a six-point likert scale, the third section rates questions on a five-point likert scale, and the fourth section goes back to a six-point likert scale. Next, the fifth section has two questions which are scored using a "yes/no" answer, the sixth section is one question on a seven-point likert scale, finally, the last section participants are asked to choose the option that best suit them out of six

options. The DAS scale found a Cronbach's alpha values of .89. Past research has also found high inter-rater reliability and test-retest reliability for the DAS (Spanier 2001). The DAS has been used in more than 1000 scientific studies (Spanier, 2001).

For the current study, results were calculated by reverse keying items identified by Spanier (1976). Next, as outlined by the Dyadic Adjustment Scale User's Manual (Spanier, 1976) items were coded outlining which subscale each item was examining. Therefore, items were coded into their respective subscales and added together to create a total score for each subscale and for the total Dyadic Adjustment. Each participant ended up with a Total Dyadic Adjustment Score. A lower score was indicative of more dissatisfaction and higher scores indicated more satisfaction (Spanier, 1976). Examples of questions were: "How often do you or your mate leave the house after a fight?" and " How often do you and your mate get on each other's nerves?" measure can be found in Appendix A.

Analyses

Once all data was obtained from the self-report questionnaires, the data was coded into The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. The data was then analyzed in SPSS using the following statistical tests.

Descriptive statistics assessed the number of participants, the mean, and standard deviation for each given attachment style and intimate partner aggression form. Sample characteristics such as age, gender, relationship length etc. were calculated. In this study, the independent variable was attachment style and the dependent variable was intimate partner aggression. Three one-way ANCOVA tests were used to examine all three forms of aggression (physical, verbal, relational) and the mean differences between the

attachment styles (secure, anxious, avoidant, fearful). A Bonferroni Post Hoc test was used to identify which attachment style group means were significantly different from each other when comparing them with the intimate partner aggression forms (physical, verbal, relational). A one-way ANCOVA test was used to examine mean differences between attachment styles and relationship satisfaction. In this portion, the independent variable was attachment styles and the dependent variable was relationship satisfaction. A Bonferroni Post Hoc test was used to identify which attachment style group means were significantly different from each other regarding relationship satisfaction.

Covariates used were gender and relationship length, in order to examine the effects of Gender and Relationship Length on the intimate partner aggression forms. These covariates were chosen given previous literature has found associations between gender and intimate partner aggression forms (Cascardi, Langhinrichsen, & Vivian, 1992; Stockdale, Tackett, & Coyne, 2013; Testa & Leonard, 2001). Also, literature has made connections between relationship length and the amount of trust, security, and satisfaction in intimate relationships (Kleeton, Dion, & Dion, 1998; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Specifically, given that longer relationships allow more time for intimate partners to foster healthy connections and ways of relating it is therefore understandable that relationship length may influence levels of intimate partner aggression. Therefore, gender and relationship length were examined in this study to identify any effects they may have on attachment styles, intimate partner aggression, and relationship satisfaction.

Results

The purpose of this quantitative study was to explore any mean differences in intimate partner aggression across attachment styles. Specifically, this study explored the

differences between self-reported attachment styles and particular forms of intimate partner aggression. Additionally, the current study explored any mean differences between attachment styles and relationship satisfaction. In total, 170 participants completed the study and were included in the analyses. A few data points were missing from the 170 participants, but this data was found to be missing at random. For the section examining relationship satisfaction only 140 participants completed this portion of the questionnaire and therefore, these analyses are based on 140 participants.

Intimate Partner Physical Aggression

Descriptive statistics were examined, see Table 1. The observed power was .26, which is very low suggesting that the results found in this analysis may not have had enough difference between the means making it difficult to find significance given the low observed power score. A one-way ANCOVA was conducted that examined the differences between attachment styles and intimate partner physical aggression. There were no significant differences between attachment styles in intimate partner physical aggression (F (3,164) = .87, p = .46). Taken together, this suggests that intimate partner physical aggression does not differ between attachment styles. The covariate, gender, was not significant in participant's use of intimate partner physical aggression (F (1,164) = 1.55 p = .22). The covariate, relationship length, was also not found to be significant in participant's use of physical aggression (F (1,164) = .24, p = .62), suggesting that one's gender or relationship length does not influence their engagement in intimate partner physical aggression. See Tables 2 and 3 for more details.

Intimate Partner Verbal Aggression

Descriptive statistics were examined, see Table 4. The observed power was .68, which is medium/high suggesting that the results found in this analysis would have enough power to detect a significant effect if there was one to be found. A one-way ANCOVA was conducted that examined the effect of attachment styles on intimate partner verbal aggression. There was a significant difference between attachment styles in intimate partner verbal aggression (F (3,164) = 3.27, p = .02). Bonferroni post hoc comparisons indicated that the mean score for the secure attachment style (M = 1.60, SD = .71) significantly differed from the fearful attachment style (M = 1.96, SD = .94) at a significance rate of (p = .05). These results suggest that intimate partner verbal aggression does differ between the secure attachment style and the fearful attachment style. The covariate, gender, was not significant in participant's use of intimate partner verbal aggression (F (1,164) = 3.49 p = .06). The covariate, relationship length, was also not significant in participant's use of verbal aggression (F (1,164) = 1.56, p = .21), which suggests that one's gender or relationship length does not influence their engagement in intimate partner verbal aggression. See tables 5 and 6 for more details.

Intimate Partner Relational Aggression

Descriptive statistics were examined, see Table 7. The observed power was .77, which high suggesting that the results found in this analysis would have enough power to detect a significant effect if there was one to be found. A one-way ANCOVA was conducted that examined the effect of attachment styles on intimate partner relational aggression. There was a significant difference between attachment styles in intimate partner relational aggression (F (3,164) = 3.73, p = .01). Bonferroni post hoc comparisons indicated that the secure attachment style (M = 1.67, SD = .58) significantly

differed from the fearful attachment style (M = 2.06, SD = .79) at a significance rate of (p = .006). This suggests that intimate partner relational aggression is used most by people who are fearfully attached. The covariate, gender, was not found to be significant in participant's use of intimate partner relational aggression (F (1,164) = 1.63 p = .20). The covariate, relationship length, was also not found to be significant in participant's use of relational aggression (F (1,164) = .57 p = .45), suggesting that a participant's gender or relationship length does not influence their engagement in intimate partner relational aggression. See tables 8 and 9 for more details.

Relationship Satisfaction

Descriptive statistics were examined, see Table 10. The observed power was 1.00, which is very high suggesting that the results found in this analysis would have enough power to detect a significant effect if there was one to be found. A one-way ANCOVA was conducted that examined the effect of attachment styles on relationship satisfaction. There was a significant difference between attachment styles and relationship satisfaction (F (3, 140) = 26.40, p < .001). Bonferroni post hoc comparisons indicated that the secure attachment style (M = 123.40, SD = 9.78) significantly differed from the anxious (M = 114.25, SD = 9.43, p = .01), avoidant (M = 112.00, SD = 9.71, p = .01), and fearful attachment styles (M = 102.98, SD = 16.73, p < .001). An anxious attachment style (M = 114.25, SD = 9.43) was found to differ significantly from the fearful attachment style (M = 102.98, SD = 16.73) at a significance rate of (p < .001). Finally, an avoidant attachment style (M = 112.00, SD = 9.71) was found to differ significantly from the fearful attachment style (M = 102.98, SD = 16.73) at a significance rate of (p = .01). This suggests that individuals with a secure attachment style have significantly higher

relationship satisfaction when compared to anxious, avoidant, and fearful attachment styles. The covariate, gender, was not found to be significant to relationship satisfaction (F (1,140) = .24 p = .63). However, the covariate relationship length was found to be significant in relation to relationship satisfaction (F (1,140) = 16.35, p < .001). This means that, in this sample, relationship length had an influence on relationship satisfaction. See tables 11 and 12 for more details.

Discussion

The purpose of this quantitative study was to explore the presence of intimate partner aggression across different attachment styles. Specifically, this study explored the mean differences in intimate partner aggression forms for each attachment style. This study focused on four attachment styles: secure, anxious, avoidant, and fearful. This study also focused on three main forms of aggression: physical, verbal, and relational. Exploring this area is paramount given previous literature has argued that the use of intimate partner physical, verbal, and relational aggression is quite common, resulting in a variety of negative consequences (Keiley et al., 2009; O'Donnell et. al., 2006, Testa & Leonard, 2001). According to the literature, in order to better understand intimate partner aggression, attachment theory is a valuable and fundamental variable to examine given its origins in human behaviour, emotions, and love styles (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Wilson, Gardner, Brosi, Topham, & Busby, 2013). Identifying specific attachment styles and their specific forms of aggression can help psychotherapists learn which individuals are most at risk of which forms of aggression, this can aide in therapeutic interventions and preventative measures.

Additionally, this study explored mean differences between attachment styles and relationship satisfaction. Given previous research has found an association between relationship satisfaction and attachment styles, we believed it was important to examine the differences in relationship satisfaction and attachment styles (Gavazzi, McKenry, Jacobson, Julian, & Lohman, 2000; Testa & Leonard, 2001). Previous studies have found secure attachment to be associated with high relationship satisfaction (Egeci & Gencoz, 2006; Jones & Cunningham, 1996; Meyers & Landsberger, 2002), while insecure attachment (avoidant, fearful, anxious) was found to be associated with low relationship satisfaction (Banse, 2004; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Jones & Cunningham, 1996; Meyers & Landsberger, 2002; Towler & Stuhlmacher, 2013). We sought to replicate those results using a superior attachment group classification system: participants were assigned two dimensional scores and later coded into four attachment styles by using the median scores from each dimension as cutoffs for each attachment quadrant (Fraley, 2012). In addition, rather than completing a simple correlational analysis we sought to examine group differences between the different attachment styles.

Intimate Partner Physical Aggression

When examining intimate partner physical aggression, the results illustrated no significant mean differences between attachment styles. This means that in this sample, physical aggression frequency did not significantly differ between the four different attachment styles. This result does not support the hypothesis that the fearful attachment style would use the most intimate partner physical aggression compared to the other attachment styles. This may be a result of the scarce reporting of intimate partner physical aggression. Namely, the sample population reported low overall levels of

physical aggression, which may have influenced the lack of significant findings for this form of aggression. The scarce reporting of physical aggression within this sample may be a result of the social stigma associated with intimate partner physical aggression. Particularly, intimate partner physical aggression has been found to be often underreported in the literature (Garcia, 2004). Garcia (2004) argues that often participants do not report being a victim or perpetrator of intimate partner physical aggression for both personal embarrassment and social implications. Therefore, intimate partner physical aggression may have been underreported in the current sample, and this may have influences the results found.

Also, it is important to note that the current sample population consists of mostly female participants: 77.8% female participants and 22.2% male participants. Previous literature argues that intimate partner physical aggression is predominantly used by males (Cascardi, Langhinrichsen, & Vivian, 1992; DeMaris, 2000; Testa & Leonard, 2001). Furthermore, literature tells us that physical aggression has been reported to be most detrimental for females (Cascardi, Langhinrichsen, & Vivian, 1992). Research suggests that females are more likely than males to be severely impacted by physical aggression. Cascardi, Langhinrichsen, and Vivian (1992) reported that women are more likely to sustain severe injuries such as broken bones, broken teeth, and injury to sensory organs when compared to males. Given that intimate partner physical aggression is most harmful for females, it is unsurprising that females would rarely use this form of aggression as it may backfire on them and cause them increased harm. This skewed sample population may have contributed to the lack of significance for intimate partner physical aggression found in the current sample.

Intimate Partner Verbal Aggression

When examining intimate partner verbal aggression, the results illustrated a significant mean difference between attachment styles. Specifically, there were significant differences between the fearful and secure attachment styles regarding their use of intimate partner verbal aggression. This finding supports the hypothesis that the fearful attachment style utilizes intimate partner verbal aggression more so than the secure group. This may be explained in the ways fearfully attached individuals chaotically attempt to meet their needs. Individuals who are characterized as having a fearful attachment style generally have a fear of intimacy and experience emotional highs and lows (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). These emotional highs and lows may transpire into verbally aggressive behaviours against their romantic partner in times of conflict or threat. Bartholomew (1990) defined fearful attachment as being uncomfortable getting too close to others, however wanting to be close to others, difficulty trusting others, and a fear of getting hurt. Mikulincer and Shaver (2007) identified the fearful attachment style as having a chaotic strategy of responding to threat, consisting of both deactivating and hyper activating strategies. They further went on to explain this by saying that fearful individuals withdraw and distance themselves from relationship partners, therefore using deactivating strategies. However, they also employ hyper activating strategies as they yearn for love, attention, and intimacy. Thus they often have a vacillating attachment style, moving from attached to avoidant reactively.

This notion is consistent with Doumas, Pearson, Elgin, McKinley (2008) who found that partner violence was associated with attachment closeness-distance struggles, which is characteristic of the fearful attachment style. Fearfully attached individuals often

struggle with a desire to be close to their partners, yet also have a fear of intimacy, resulting in a constant battle between their needs (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). This battle may foster internal frustration as they may experience too much closeness during times that they may want distance, similarly, they may experience too much distance in times that they desire closeness. It is unsurprising that this clash would cause continuous frustration. If these individuals are constantly feeling frustrated in their intimate relationships, they may resort to lashing out at their partner by means of verbal aggression. Additionally, given that these individuals are so erratic in their intimate needs, they may struggle to have their needs met by their partners, due to the excessive variance. Further, if intimate needs are not effectively met this may result in anger and poor conflict resolution in the relationship, creating a potential escalation to verbally aggressive behaviours. Therefore, in an attempt to meet their constantly changing needs of connection and distance, they may utilize verbally aggressive tactics as a channel for their frustration.

Results are also consistent with Dutton, Saunders, Starzomski, and Bartholomew (1994) who found that abusiveness in romantic relationships was most common in fearfully attached individuals. They conclude by arguing that the fearful attachment style manifests anger, jealousy, anxiety, and abusive behavior in intimate relationships. Given that the fearful attachment style is more likely to manifest these hostile emotions, it is plausible to assume that they would resort to intimate partner verbal aggression as an outlet for their powerful emotions. Results are also consistent with a study conducted by Critchfield, Levy, Clarkin, and Kernberg (2008) which found significant associations between the fearful attachment style and reactive forms of aggression, involving hostility.

This suggests that those who are fearfully attached are more reactively aggressive with others. Verbal aggression can be a reactive way to retaliate when an individual is feeling angry. Again, in an attempt to have their needs met, fearfully attached individuals may chaotically respond to relationship threats. They may lash out by using hurtful words, swearing, or yelling at their partners as a means of releasing immediate frustration.

Intimate Partner Relational Aggression

When examining intimate partner relational aggression results illustrated significant mean differences between attachment styles. Similar to intimate partner verbal aggression, there were significant differences between the fearful and secure attachment styles regarding their use of intimate partner relational aggression. This finding supports the hypothesis that the fearful attachment style utilizes intimate partner relational aggression more so than the secure group. This may again be explained given the chaotic nature of fearfully attached individuals. In particular, when those individuals are seeking avoidance and distance they may utilize relationally aggressive behaviours to create distance in a covert manner (Underwood, 2004). Consistent with that notion, individuals who experience avoidant tendencies may choose to express their frustrations through the use of covert aggression, such as eye-rolling, dirty looks, manipulation, and silent treatment given that this may decrease the likelihood of their partner retaliating (Underwood, 2004). Using relationally aggressive tactics may allow fearfully attached individuals who are in an avoidant state to have an outlet to express their frustrations and anger in a covert way, thus, ensuring safety from conflict or confrontation (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005).

The results are also consistent with Bookwala and Zdaniuk (1998) who found that those participants who reported being involved in aggressive relationships scored higher on the fearful attachment style when compared to securely attached individuals. Another study conducted by Hudson and Ward (1997) examined attachment and interpersonal behaviours. They found that those participants who had a fearful attachment have the highest levels of hostility towards women. They also found that fearfully attached men reported high suppression of anger scores. The authors explained this finding by saying that fearful individuals tend to feel angry towards others but are hesitant to express it openly. Given fearfully attached individuals do not feel comfortable openly expressing their anger it is understandable that they would chose a modality of expression which is covert, such as relational aggression (Underwood, 2004). These individuals are marked by insecurity both in their relationship and in themselves (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). This insecurity may cause them to feel less confident in their arguments and ability to effectively express their thoughts or feelings. They may then, be hesitant to express their frustrations and issues openly and thus, they utilize a safe, hidden outlet to release their built up anger.

Relationship Satisfaction

This study examined relationship satisfaction as it compares in different attachment styles. As hypothesized, fearfully attached participants reported the lowest levels of relationship satisfaction. Fearful attachment was found to be significantly different from the secure, anxious, and avoidant attachment styles, which is consistent with previous literature. Research reports that fearfully attached individuals experience decreased relationship satisfaction when compared to securely attached individuals (Meyers & Landsberger, 2002). A study conducted by Goodboy and Bolkan (2011) found that a

fearful attachment style was positively associated with jealousy induction, avoidance, and infidelity. Authors reported that as a result of these behaviours, fearfully attached individuals also report lower relationship satisfaction. Results from this study are unsurprising given that the fearful attachment style is marked by the most attachment insecurity among all four attachment styles (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Therefore, it was anticipated that those individuals who identify as fearfully attached will also report the lowest levels of relationship satisfaction.

The anxious attachment style was also found to be significantly different from the secure and fearful attachment styles in their reported relationship satisfaction, which supports the hypothesis. This is consistent with literature arguing that anxious attachment styles are generally associated with a decrease in relationship satisfaction (Banse, 2004; Jones & Cunningham, 1996; Meyers & Landsberger, 2002). This may be as a result of an excessive need for attention, feelings of jealousy, anger, and lack of trust, which is often expressed in destructive ways therefore creating a difficult environment for which to foster love and satisfaction (Guerrero, Farinelli, & McEwan, 2009). Individuals who identify as having an anxious attachment style often report an insistent need for connection, support, reassurance, and intimacy from their intimate partners (Mikulincer, 1998; Rovers, 2005). These steady demands can be difficult for a relationship to maintain a level of satisfaction. Therefore, an anxious attachment can foster a challenging and hostile environment, which poses as a barrier for intimate relationships to thrive and maintain satisfaction.

Avoidant attachment was also found to be significantly different from the secure and fearful attachment styles in terms of relationship satisfaction. This result supports the

hypothesis and is supported by previous literature. Previous research has found evidence that the avoidant attachment style is associated with decreased relationship satisfaction for intimate partners (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Meyers & Landsberger, 2002; Towler & Stuhlmacher, 2013). This may be a result of the distance that is created in these relationships. Individuals with an avoidant attachment style seek minimal intimacy and connection within their intimate relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1994; Bartholomew, 1990). This may make it difficult for their partners to meet those needs while also meeting their own possible needs of connection, therefore intimate relationships may involve more intimacy and connection than someone with an avoidant attachment style would want. This may potentially explain their dissatisfaction in relationships (Rovers, 2005). Also, given that intimate relationships are fostered through love, connection, intimacy, and closeness, individuals who have an avoidant attachment may simply not feel comfortable with the whole notion of relationships. This idea has been supported by Hazan and Shaver (1987), who argued that individuals with an avoidant attachment have more pessimistic views on relationships and frequently end relationships, thus, explaining the consistent findings of decreased relationship satisfaction.

Finally, as hypothesized, those who were securely attached reported the highest mean scores for relationship satisfaction and are found to be significantly different from the anxious, avoidant, and fearful attachment styles regarding relationship satisfaction. This finding supports the hypothesis that securely attached individuals report the highest levels of relationship satisfaction. This may be explained in the ways these individuals manage their relationships and deal with relationship threat. It has been argued that secure individuals react to potential attachment threats in ways that alleviate distress,

maintain comfort, maintain supportive intimate relationships, and increase personal adaptability (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). The main goal of secure based strategies is to deal with attachment threats in a constructive and stable way (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). Therefore, dealing with threat and conflict in a constructive manner can foster greater relationship adaptability and resiliency, which can directly affect satisfaction levels.

It is not surprising that this study generated these results giving the research support behind this notion. The vast majority of research conducted targeting attachment styles and relationship satisfaction, suggest that those individuals who identify as having a secure attachment style are more satisfied in their relationships compared to insecurely attached individuals (Egeci & Gencoz, 2006; Jones & Cunningham, 1996; Meyers & Landsberger, 2002). Kleeton, Dion, and Dion (1998) argue that individuals who are securely attached report more intimate levels of initiated self-disclosure, which is a direct factor in their heightened levels of relationship satisfaction. Their research suggested that one reason why those who are securely attached report high levels of relationship satisfaction is their willingness to reveal personal facts, ensuing more comfort with their partners. Therefore, results from this study have replicated the findings in previous literature demonstrating a significant difference between attachment styles and relationship satisfaction. As well, those with a secure attachment style reported the highest levels of relationship satisfaction when compared to the anxious, avoidant, and fearful attachment styles.

Finally, this study found that relationship length has an influence on relationship satisfaction. This finding may be a result of different ways of behaving in newly formed

relationships versus more long-term relationships. This was supported by Arriaga (2001) who argued that recently formed romantic relationships are more likely to engage in behaviours that create strain on the relationship, given there may be a lack of trust, comfort, and security. For example, when new relationships are forming, intimate partners are beginning to get to know the other person and learn ways to connect with each other (Arriaga, 2001). Starting new relationships can be stressful considering the instability of this process. Intimate relationships take time to develop. There is a lot of uncertainty and trial and error at the beginning of relationships (Arriaga, 2001). This uncertainty may result in less than maximal levels of relationship satisfaction. Often times at the beginning of relationships individuals engage in behaviours that seek to determine their partner's love and trustworthiness (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Individuals may be hesitant to be vulnerable and completely open with their intimate partners until they know their intentions. This process can, again, be stressful and potentially result in dissatisfaction for both partners. Further, research has illustrated that when partners are open, comfortable, and have an ability to be vulnerable they are more likely to feel satisfied in the relationship (Kleeton, Dion, & Dion, 1998).

The notion that there are different behaviours exhibited depending on the relationship length is supported by Levenson, Charstensen, and Gottman (1993). They argued that older partners reported less disagreements and better conflict resolution when compared to younger couples. This may be a result of learning how to effectively resolve conflict in a constructive and adaptive way (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). Similarly, Levenson, Charstensen, and Gottman (1993) also found that older couples experienced more pleasure in the time they spend with their partners than did younger couples. This

may be because they have had time to learn more about each other, and have eventually found ways to work in harmony and thus produce more satisfied relationships (Arriaga, 2001). Moreover, the notion that relationship satisfaction would be influenced by how long intimate partners have been together is understandable.

Findings from this study are consistent with Dolye and Molix (2013) who found that individuals involved in shorter relationship lengths reported lower relationship quality, while those involved in longer relationships reported higher relationship quality. A study conducted by Acker and Davis (1992) found that commitment was the strongest predictor for relationship satisfaction. They also found that serious long-term relationships were associated with increased intimacy. A longitudinal study conducted by Spretcher (1999) found that over the course of five years romantic partners continually reported increasing feelings of love, commitment, and satisfaction with their partners as years went on. They also explained relationship length as a representation of how invested someone is in a romantic relationship. Arguably, an individual would attain and maintain their investment in an intimate relationship when they are satisfied with the course of their relationship.

Practical Implications

Given that this study examined romantic attachment styles and intimate partner aggression, the findings generated are applicable to psychotherapists working with couples. Specifically, for each attachment style this study generated information regarding aggression forms and relationship satisfaction for that particular style. At the beginning of a therapeutic relationship, it is common for couple psychotherapists to assess attachment styles of each partner. Psychotherapists can do this by giving each partner a questionnaire to fill out, such as the ECRS-R. In doing this, psychotherapists

will know the attachment style of each partner they are working with. Thus, the results from this study can help psychotherapists prepare an appropriate treatment plan for the couple. For example, the individuals who identified as securely attached reported the lowest intimate partner verbal and relational aggression scores. This information demonstrates to psychotherapists that if they have a partner who scores in the secure attachment style in preliminary sessions they are less likely to engage in relationally or verbally aggressive behaviours with their partners during times of conflict. Also, securely attached individuals reported the highest levels of relationship satisfaction. This information can help psychotherapists develop a treatment plan best suited to meet these individuals' needs.

The fearful attachment style reported high levels of verbal and relational intimate partner aggression, when compared to the secure attachment style. This tells psychotherapists that these individuals have the potential to utilize relational or verbal aggression during times of conflict.. This is something for psychotherapists to be mindful of, as there could potentially be a need for a safety plan or immediate behavioural modifications. These individuals also reported the lowest levels of relationship satisfaction. Therefore, if an individual is characterized as having a fearful attachment style, psychotherapists should be aware of potentially aggressive behaviours as the presence of aggressiveness may direct the course of therapy. Furthermore, psychotherapists would benefit from consciously assessing individual attachment styles when first working with a couple, given the immense amount of information that can be generated from knowing their attachment style.

It is important to note that relational aggression exists between intimate partners... Thus, psychotherapists should be mindful of relationally aggressive behaviours exhibited in sessions and through client discussions, as they can often be hidden and not easily detectable. Couple psychotherapists can use the results from this study as a way to inform their clients of the risk factors of intimate partner aggression. The study can be used as a means of psycho-education. Specifically, psychotherapists can teach their clients about their aggressive behaviours and the risks of utilizing these maladaptive behaviours with their intimate partners (i.e. relationship dissatisfaction). Often times, clients are simply unaware of the extent of their aggressive behaviours or the potential repercussions of those behaviours. Psychotherapists can also use this study as a means of preventative treatment with couple clients. For instance, psychotherapists can utilize behavioural techniques or implement new interactional stances to teach intimate partners ways to express their frustrations in an adaptive and constructive manner, without resorting to aggression. Perhaps, if couple clients have alternative resources they may be less likely to resort to intimate partner aggression during times of conflict. As with all couple therapy, it is of extreme importance for the psychotherapist to work with romantic partners to create safety and security within the relationship. This study also points in the direction of the necessity of preventative couple treatment measures, which will focus on preventing the escalation to relational, verbal, or physical intimate partner aggression. Helping the couple foster healthy conflict resolution and communication skills can do this.

It may also be advantageous for psychotherapists to try and understand any potential attachment insecurities or childhood wounds between couples (Rovers, 2005). A

study by Glancy and Saini (2005) found that a client's expression of anger might be a deeper conflict with the unconscious. Therefore, by using a psychodynamic approach the underlying conflict can be brought to conscious awareness allowing the client to deal with the root of the anger (Glancy & Saini, 2005). Partners that engage in various forms of aggression would benefit immensely from exploring childhood dynamics, potential wounds, and relationship insecurities in order to attempt to get to the root of their aggressive behaviours. This will also foster exploration into each partner's unconscious unresolved conflicts, which they may be replaying in their relationship with their partner.

Similarly, Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy (EFT) is another approach that may be helpful to employ when working with intimate partner aggression. Research has suggested that perpetrators of violence may have learnt the aggressive behaviours from cruel or abusive parents (Dutton, 1995). Having been exposed to aggression at a young age could result in complex relational trauma, which can produce deficits in emotional intelligence such as the awareness, regulation, and processing of feelings (Paivio & Pascual-Leone, 2010). Therefore, exploring intimate partner's emotions and awareness is important to therapy. Specifically, it is important that the couple learn how to express their feelings and needs to their partner in a helpful way. A study conducted by Pascual-Leone, Bierman, Arnold and Stasiak (2010) assessed the treatment efficacy of EFT on partners who have been arrested for intimate partner violence. They found that participants who experienced EFT were 7 to 8 % less likely to reoffend, suggesting that emotionally focused therapy can help perpetrators understand and explore their emotions resulting in a decreased likelihood of aggression and violence. Emotionally focused therapy will also help the couple to change their interactional positions. The therapist can

do this by identifying the ways they communicate with each other, particularly any aggressive communication, followed by working collaboratively with the couple to replace aggressive tactics with more helpful and positive communication patterns, whereby emotional needs are expressed. Therefore, these findings provide some clarity and knowledge for psychotherapists regarding the forms of aggression used most often and by which individuals. Results from this study generated fascinating information that may help psychotherapists conceptualize an appropriate therapeutic approach and treatment plan that is tailored to the couple's needs. This study has demonstrated important results which have real practical implications, although, it is also important to note some of the limitations within the study.

Limitations

Overall, this study produced some intriguing results. One limitation of this study was the use of self-report data. Participants were asked to report their perceived attachment style and their aggressive engagement. Participants may have not been completely truthful in their answers given they may not want to appear in a certain negative light when describing the ways they relate to their partner. Participants may have not been truthful because of the negative connotation associated with intimate partner aggression. A study conducted by Perez-Martin, Armas-Vargas, Garcia-Medina, Sanchez-Remacho, and Padilla-Gonzalez (2014) found that when studying aggression participants tend to respond to questions in ways that emphasize social desirability by scoring highly on items that society would approve of. They also found that often participants refrain from admitting any aggressive behaviors or will underrepresent the frequency of their aggressive behaviours. Therefore, participants in this sample may

have answered each question based on the social desirability of their response. Also, it is important to consider that participants may not be completely aware of the extent of their aggression with their partner. They may feel as though their actions or behaviours were not actually considered aggression or not frequent enough to be noted. The participants may have a skewed perception of what aggression is or an unrepresentative perception of their usage. Therefore, in order to avoid this confound in the future it is recommended that individuals rate their partner's attachment style and frequency in various forms of aggression, as this may provide a more reliable and unbiased assessment.

In addition, given this study collected data using an online survey, there is no way to guarantee participants' honesty regarding their responses to various demographic questions. The use of online surveys as a means to gather data cannot always guarantee honest responses. Also, there may have been some limitations related to self-selection bias. Self-selection bias is when participants volunteer to participate in a study because they have strong opinions regarding the variables being examined (Wiederman, 1999). When participants are recruited on a volunteer basis it is often not entirely representative of the greater population. This is relatively common in scientific research when dealing with sensitive information, such as intimate partner aggression (Wiederman, 1999). Therefore, participants in this study may have volunteered to participate because they had strong opinions regarding intimate partner aggression. Finally, this study may have some limitations related to measurement error, whereby participants may have responded to questions dishonestly, carelessly, or through confusion. Measurement error may be generalized to the measures presented or the way the data was collected. In particular, the minor changes in some of the measures may have skewed some of the data.

A final limitation in this study may potentially be the small sample sizes for some of the attachment style groups. For instance, the secure attachment style had 57 participants, anxious attachment style had 25 participants, avoidant attachment style had 24 participants, and finally the fearful attachment style had 64 participants. Therefore, the anxious and avoidant groups had relatively small sample sizes. Perhaps there would have been more significant findings had the sample sizes for each group been larger. Although this study poses some limitations, it also suggests some areas for future research.

Future Directions

This study demonstrated that there are significant differences between attachment styles and intimate partner aggression. Therefore, future research would benefit from continuing in this area of research by attempting to learn more about each of these variables. Employing a longitudinal or qualitative study in order to examine these variables in greater depth might be useful. Also, future research would benefit in exploring a repetitive or reoccurring cycle of aggressive behaviours that partners play out in intimate relationships. In particular, it would be interesting to explore a potential reoccurring pattern of aggressive behaviours between intimate partners. Discovering a cycle of aggression can provide groundbreaking advances to the understanding of couple conflict and aggression. Specifically, new research can demonstrate any identifiable pattern in what triggers the initial use of aggressive tactics, the particular form of aggression used first, and which forms of aggression precede/follow each other. It is imperative that these patterns of aggression are assessed and identified to further academic and clinical awareness in the realm of intimate partner aggression.

Consistent with past research, this study has demonstrated that relational aggression between romantic partners is definitely present and is the most frequently engaged in. Further research targeting relational aggression between intimate partners is vital. Specifically, it would be important to assess the awareness that intimate partners have of their engagement in relational aggression, given its covert nature. I would hypothesize that romantic partners may not have the awareness that certain behaviors they engage in are identifiably aggression, which may explain the frequency of relationally aggressive behaviours found in this study.

Findings from this research provide advances and strategies to help psychotherapists and intimate partners prevent and understand intimate partner aggression. Given that we know which attachment styles are most likely to use which forms of intimate partner aggression we can develop strategies and resources to combat these maladaptive tactics. These resources will encourage intimate partners to manage their feelings in a healthy way without aggressively displacing them towards their intimate partners.

Conclusion

The present research was conducted to explore the presence of intimate partner aggression across different attachment styles. It is surprising that this research focuses on a gap in the current literature given its importance and value. Exploring this area is paramount given previous literature has argued that the use of physical, verbal, and/or relational aggression between intimate partners can be frighteningly common, resulting in a variety of negative consequences (Keiley et al., 2009; O'Donnell et. al., 2006, Testa & Leonard, 2001). Exploring aggression, in various forms, has clinical and practical

implications and may help to reduce the frequency of intimate partner aggression; thus, this research is both influential and meaningful as it broadens our knowledge base in this critical area.

In summary, this study has made significant advances to the area of attachment styles and intimate partner aggression. This study has found that the fearful attachment style is most at risk of engaging in verbal and relational aggression with their intimate partners. Secure attachment was found to have the highest levels of relationship satisfaction, whereas the fearful attachment style was found to have the lowest levels of relationship satisfaction. This illustrates the detrimental effects of insecure attachment styles on intimate relationships. Finally, relationship length was found to have an effect on relationship satisfaction. Overall, this study targeted critical areas in the scientific literature and created a starting block into research focusing on attachment styles and intimate partner aggression. To ensure intimate relationships are nourishing and fulfilling couples and psychotherapists must learn how to develop healthy means of expressing needs and discussing conflict. This research provides a starting point to this vital area.

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Table 1.

Intimate Partner Physical Aggression Statistics

Stubhead	N	M	SD
Secure	57	1.05	.15
Avoidant	24	1.04	.12
Anxious	25	1.09	.19
Fearful	64	1.10	.24

Note. Scores ranged from 1-6.

Table 2.

ANCOVA results for Intimate Partner Physical Aggression

Stubhead	Type 111 Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Gender	.06	1	.06	1.5	.22	.01
Relationship Length	.01	1	.01	.24	.62	.00
Attachment Style	.10	3	.03	.87	.46	.02
Total	202.53	170				
Corrected Total	6.18	169				

Note. * $p < .05$

Table 3.

Post Hoc Comparisons for Intimate Partner Physical Aggression

Stubhead	Mean Difference	Standard error	Bonferroni Adjusted 95% CI	
Secure vs. Anxious	-.03	.05	-.16	.09
Secure vs. Avoidant	.02	.05	-.16	.19
Secure vs. fearful	-.04	.04	-.14	.05
Anxious vs. avoidant	.05	.06	-.10	.20
Anxious vs. fearful	-.01	.05	-.13	.11
Avoidant vs. fearful	.06	.05	-.06	.19

Note. * $p < .05$

Table 4.

Intimate Partner Verbal Aggression Statistics

Stubhead	N	M	SD
Secure	57	1.60	.71
Avoidant	24	1.57	.78
Anxious	25	1.97	.73
Fearful	64	1.96	.94

Note. Scores ranged from 1-6.

Table 5.

ANCOVA Results for Intimate Partner Verbal Aggression

Stubhead	Type 111 Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Gender	2.28	1	2.28	3.49	.06	.02
Relationship Length	1.02	1	1.02	1.56	.21	.01
Attachment Style	6.41	3	2.14	3.27	.02*	.05
Total	661.03	170				
Corrected Total	116.21	169				

Note. * $p < .05$

Table 6.

Post Hoc Comparisons for Intimate Partner Verbal Aggression

Stubhead	Mean Difference	Standard error	Bonferroni Adjusted 95% CI	
Secure vs. Anxious	-.34	.20	-.86	.18
Secure vs. Avoidant	.04	.20	-.49	.56
Secure vs. fearful	-.40 *	.15	-.80	-.03
Anxious vs. avoidant	.38	.23	-.24	.99
Anxious vs. fearful	-.06	.19	-.57	4.6
Avoidant vs. fearful	.43	.20	-.09	.96

Note. * $p < .05$

Table 7.

Intimate Partner Relational Aggression Statistics

Stubhead	N	M	SD
Secure	57	1.67	.58
Avoidant	24	1.85	.63
Anxious	25	1.91	.51
Fearful	64	2.06	.67

Note. Scores ranged from 1-6.

Table 8.

ANCOVA Results for Intimate Partner Relational Aggression

Stubhead	Type 111 Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Gender	.72	1	.72	1.63	.20	.01
Relationship Length	.25	1	.25	.57	.45	.003
Attachment Style	4.92	3	1.64	3.72	.01*	.06
Total	676.24	170				
Corrected Total	77.75	169				

Note. * $p < .05$

Table 9.

Post Hoc Comparisons for Intimate Partner Relational Aggression

Stubhead	Mean Difference	Standard error	Bonferroni Adjusted 95% CI	
Secure vs. Anxious	-.23	.16	-.66	.20
Secure vs. Avoidant	-.18	.16	-.61	.26
Secure vs. fearful	-.41 *	.12	-.74	-.08
Anxious vs. avoidant	.05	.19	-.46	.56
Anxious vs. fearful	-.18	.15	-.60	.24
Avoidant vs. fearful	.23	.16	-.19	.66

Note. * $p < .05$

Table 10.

Relationship Satisfaction Descriptive Statistics

Stubhead	N	M	SD
Secure	47	123.4	9.78
Avoidant	18	112.00	9.71
Anxious	24	114.25	9.43
Fearful	52	102.98	16.73

Note. Scores ranged from 0-151.

Table 11.

ANCOVA Results for Relationship Satisfaction

Stubhead	Type 111 Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Gender	35.36	1	35.36	.24	.63	.00
Relationship Length	2409.52	1	2409.52	16.35	.00 *	.12
Attachment Style	11671.42	3	3890.47	26.40	.00 *	.37
Attachment Style * Relationship Length	590.13	3	196.71	1.35	.26	.03
Total	1828601.00	141				
Corrected Total	32691.16	140				

Note. * $p < .05$

Table 12.

Post Hoc Comparisons for Relationship Satisfaction

Stubhead	Mean Difference	Standard error	Bonferroni Adjusted 95% CI	
Secure vs. Anxious	9.49 *	3.06	1.30	17.68
Secure vs. Avoidant	11.20 *	3.37	2.18	20.22
Secure vs. fearful	21.94 *	2.47	15.32	28.56
Anxious vs. avoidant	1.71	3.39	-8.44	11.85
Anxious vs. fearful	12.45 *	3.03	4.34	20.55
Avoidant vs. fearful	-10.74 *	3.35	-19.72	-1. 76

Note. * $p < .05$

Appendix A
Measure

Section 1: About You (check one):

1. Sex_____ Year of birth_____ Month_____

2. People sometimes think about themselves in terms of race or the color of their skin. If you feel comfortable identifying yourself in this way, please identify your ethnic background as best you can._____.

2. How long have you been in a relationship with your partner? _____
3. Are you Currently in Counselling?_____
4. If yes, Individual Counselling _____ or Couple Counselling_____

Section 2: Attachment Style

Please rate the following:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I'm afraid that I will lose my partner's love.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I often worry that my partner will not want to stay with me.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I worry that romantic partners won't care about me as much as I care about them.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
5. I often wish that my partner's feelings for me were as strong as my feelings for him or her.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
6. I worry a lot about my relationships.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
7. When my partner is out of sight, I worry that he or she	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

might become interested in someone else.							
8. When I show my feelings for romantic partners, I'm afraid they will not feel the same about me.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
9. I rarely worry about my partner leaving me.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
10. My romantic partner makes me doubt myself.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
11. I do not often worry about being abandoned.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
12. I find that my partner(s) don't want to get as close as I would like.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
13. Sometimes romantic partners change their feelings about me for no apparent reason.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
14. My desire to be very close sometimes scares people away.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
15. I'm afraid that once a romantic partner gets to know me, he or she won't like who I really am.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
16. It makes me mad that I don't get the affection and support I need from my partner.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
17. I worry that I won't measure up to other people.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
18. My partner only seems to notice me when I’m angry.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
19. I prefer not to show a partner how I feel deep down.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
20. I feel comfortable sharing my private thoughts and feelings with my partner.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

21. I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on romantic partners.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
22. I am very comfortable being close to romantic partners.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
24. I prefer not to be too close to romantic partners.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
25. I get uncomfortable when a romantic partner wants to be very close.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
26. I find it relatively easy to get close to my partner.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
27. It's not difficult for me to get close to my partner.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
28. I usually discuss my problems and concerns with my partner.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
29. It helps to turn to my romantic partner in times of need.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
30. I tell my partner just about everything.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
31. I talk things over with my partner.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
32. I am nervous when partners get too close to me.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
33. I feel comfortable depending on romantic partners.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
34. I find it easy to depend on romantic partners.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
35. It's easy for me to be affectionate with my partner.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
36. My partner really understands me and my needs.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

Section 3: Aggression Frequency
IN THE PAST YEAR, how often have you engaged in the following behaviours with your partner:

	Never	About once a every few months	About once a month	A few times a month	About once a week	Many times a week
How often have you said bad things behind your partners back	O	O	O	O	O	O
How often have you made up lies about your partner	O	O	O	O	O	O
How often have you given your partner the "silent treatment"	O	O	O	O	O	O
How often have you made your partner feel bad about something	O	O	O	O	O	O
How often do you give your partner dirty looks	O	O	O	O	O	O
How often do you rolled your eyes at your partner	O	O	O	O	O	O
How often have you tried to make your partner look bad	O	O	O	O	O	O
How often have you made a mean face towards your partner	O	O	O	O	O	O
How often have you tried to turn others away from your partner (e.g children, friends)	O	O	O	O	O	O
How often have you punched your partner	O	O	O	O	O	O
How often have you shoved your partner	O	O	O	O	O	O
How often have thrown an object at your partner	O	O	O	O	O	O
How often have you hit your partner with an object	O	O	O	O	O	O

How often have you slapped your partner	O	O	O	O	O	O
How often have you kicked your partner	O	O	O	O	O	O
How often have you scratched your partner	O	O	O	O	O	O
How often have you screamed at your partner	O	O	O	O	O	O
How often have you cursed at your partner	O	O	O	O	O	O
How often have you pinched your partner	O	O	O	O	O	O
How often have you made an obscene gesture towards your partner	O	O	O	O	O	O
How often have you called your partner an obscene name	O	O	O	O	O	O
How often have you grabbed your partner in a rough manner	O	O	O	O	O	O
How often do you criticized your partner	O	O	O	O	O	O

Section 4: Dyadic Adjustment Scale

Most persons 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**	**Occa-sionally Disagree**	**Fre-quently Disagree**	**Almost Always Disagree**	**Always Disagree**
1. Handling family finances	O	O	O_	O	O	O
2. Matters of recreation	O	O	O_	O	O	O
3. Religious matters	O	O	O	O	O	O
4. Demonstrations of affection	O	O	O	O	O	O
5. Friends	O	O	O	O	O	O

6. Sex relations	O	O	O	O	O
O					
7. Conventionality (correct or proper behavior)	O	O	O	O	O
O					
8. Philosophy of life	O	O	O	O	O
O					
9. Ways of dealing with parents or in-laws	O	O	O	O	O
O					
10. Aims, goals, and things believed important	O	O	O	O	O
O					
11. Amount of time spent together	O	O	O	O	O
O					
12. Making major decisions	O	O	O	O	O
O					
13. Household tasks	O	O	O	O	O
O					
14. Leisure time interests and activities	O	O	O	O	O
O					
15. Career decisions	O	O	O	O	O
O					

	All the time	**Most of the time**	**More often than not**	**Occa-sionally**	**Rarely**	**Never**
16. How often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separation,	O	O	O	O	O	O
or terminating your relationship?						
17. How often do you or your mate leave the house after a fight?	O	O	O	O	O	O
18. In general, how often do you think that things between you and your	O	O	O	O	O	O
partner are going well?						
19. Do you confide in your mate?	O	O	O	O	O	O
20. Do you ever regret that you married? (*or lived together*)	O	O	O	O	O	O
21. How often do you and your partner quarrel?	O	O	O	O	O	O

22. How often do you and your mate "get on each other's nerves?"	O	O	O	O	O
O					

	Every Day	Almost Every Day	Occa-sionally	Rarely	Never
23. Do you kiss your mate?	O	O	O	O	O

	All of them	Most of them	Some of them	Very few of them	None of them
24. Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together?	O	O	O	O	O

How often would you say the following events occur between you and your mate?

	Never	Less than once a month	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Once a day	More often
25. Have a stimulating exchange of ideas	O	O	O	O	O	O
26. Laugh together	O	O	O	O	O	O
27. Calmly discuss something	O	O	O	O	O	O
28. Work together on a project	O	O	O	O	O	O

These are some things about which couples sometimes agree and sometime disagree. Indicate if either item below caused differences of opinions or were problems in your relationship during the past few weeks. (Check yes or no)

	Yes	No	
29.	O	O	Being too tired for sex.
30.	O	O	Not showing love.

31. The circles on the following line represent different degrees of happiness in your relationship. The middle point, "happy," represents the degree of happiness of most relationships. Please fill in the circle which best describes the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship.

O	O	O	O	O	O	O___
Extremely Unhappy	Fairly Unhappy	A Little Unhappy	Happy	Very Happy	Extremely Happy	Perfect

32. Which of the following statements best describes how you feel about the future of your relationship?

O I want desperately for my relationship to succeed, and *would go to almost any length* to see that it does.

O I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and *will do all I can* to see that it does.

O I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and *will do my fair share* to see that it does.

O It would be nice if my relationship succeeded, but *I can't do much more than I am doing now* to help it succeed.

O It would be nice if it succeeded, but I *refuse to do any more than I am doing now* to keep the relationship going.

O My relationship can never succeed, and *there is no more that I can do* to keep the relationship going.

Appendix B
Informed Consent

Romantic partners need to relate and work together in order to maintain a successful and satisfying relationship. A growing area of research focuses on how couples relate to each other through their attachment styles. Research has suggested that some attachment styles are associated with partner aggression. However, no research to date, has analyzed whether particular attachment styles are associated with particular types of aggression (i.e physical, verbal, relational). Therefore, the current study seeks to explore the relationship between particular attachment styles and forms of aggression. The current study will also seek to explore the relationship between spiritual affiliation and communication styles on romantic relationship satisfaction.

The primary researcher for the current study is Alyssa Bonneville, MA student, who is supervised by Dr. Martin Rovers. The current study is funded by The Society for Pastoral Care and Counselling Research

You are asked to complete this questionnaire which will assess your individual attachment style, your possible use of aggression with your partner, your communication style, your spiritual affiliation, and your level of relationship satisfaction.

As a participant, you have a choice of refusing to participate, not answering certain questions or withdrawing at any time. Participation in this research is voluntary. The research data will be kept until April 2020, and after which will be destroyed. Those who will have access to the data collected are the Principal Investigators, Alyssa Bonneville and Dr. Martin Rovers. The participants are expected to experience minimal emotional discomfort. Community resources and support information will be provided to participants at the end of the study in case they found the study to be distressing (i.e. crisis support lines, community counseling centers, and suggested readings for more information). Participants will also be provided with the researchers contact information in case they have further questions or concerns. The research has been carefully reviewed and approved by the Saint Paul University's Research Ethics Review Committee.

The benefits for participating in this study might be small; however, you will obtain a better sense of attachment styles and partner aggression, and the research will be very helpful for couple therapists in determining possible associations between attachment styles, aggression, communication styles, spirituality and relationship satisfaction. This will allow for a more effective therapeutic approach.

Participation in the study will be completely anonymous given no identifying information will be required. The study should be completed independently. Participation from both partners is not required for the purposes of the study; however, both partners can individually participate in the study if they choose. The software used by this study, Survey Monkey, is American based software so it is subject to the Patriot Act. This means that confidentiality of the data cannot be guaranteed nor the anonymity of you as a participant.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact Dr. Martin Rovers at the e-mail address below.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact:

Research Ethics Board
Saint Paul University
recherche-research@ustpaul.ca
613-236-1393 ext. 2312
Research Ethics Board File Number: 1360.1/15

I have read the above information, and am hereby giving my informed consent to participate in this research project by selecting NEXT.

Thank you for participating in this research.

Primary Researcher: Alyssa Bonneville, MA (Cand.) abonn031@uottawa.ca
Supervisor: Martin Rovers, PhD, mrovers@ustpaul.ca

Appendix C
Debriefing Page

Emergency and Crisis Support

Mental Health Crisis Line
Telephone: 613-722-6914
Website: crisisline.ca

Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region
Telephone: 613-238-3311
Website: www.dcottawa.on.ca

Youth Services Bureau of Ottawa (YSB) : 24/7 Crisis Line
Telephone: 613-260-2360
Website: www.ysb.ca/crisisline

Kids Help Phone
Telephone: 416-586-5437
Website: www.kidshelpphone.ca

Sexual Assault Support Centre of Ottawa
Telephone: 613-234-2266 x24
Website: www.sascottawa.org

Ottawa Rape Crisis Centre (ORCC)
Telephone: 613-562-2334
Website: www.orcc.net

Counselling Centres in the Ottawa Area

Saint Paul University Counselling and Psychotherapy Centre
Telephone: 613-782-3022

Ottawa Couple and Family Institute
Telephone: 613-722-5122

Catholic Family Services Ottawa
Telephone: 613-233-8478

Jewish Family Services Ottawa
Telephone: 613-722-2225

Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre
Telephone: 613-820-4922

Suggested Readings

Gottman, J. M. (2011). The science of trust: Emotional attunement for couples. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company.
Greenberg, L. S., & Goldman, R. N. (2008). Emotion-Focused Couple's Therapy. Washington: American Psychological Association.
Hendrix, H. (2007). Getting the love you want: A guide for couples.
Johnson, S.M. (2005). Becoming an emotionally focused couple therapist: The workbook. New York: Routledge.
Johnson, S. (2004). The practice of Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy: Creating connection New York: Routledge.
Mikulincer M., & Shaver, P.R. (2007) Attachment in Adulthood. New York: Guilford Press, N.Y., N.Y.
Rovers, M. (2005). Healing the wounds in couple relationships. Ottawa: Novalis.
Soloman, M. & Tatkin, S. (2011) Love and war in intimate relationships: Connection, disconnection, and mutual regulation in couple therapy. New York: Norton & Company.
Stiffelman, S. (2012). Parenting without power struggles: Raising joyful, resilient kids while staying cool, calm, and connected. New York, NY: Atria.
Stiffelman, S. (2015). Parenting with Presence: Practices for raising conscious, confident, caring kids (An Eckhart Tolle Edition). New World Library.
Tatkin, S. (2001). Wired for love: How to understand your partner's brain… Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, Inc.

Appendix D
Recruitment Letter

Intimate Partner Aggression and Relationship Satisfaction Across Attachment Styles

Dear Ottawa Therapists,

My name is Alyssa Bonneville and I am a Master student at Saint Paul University in the Counselling and Spirituality program. I am conducting research as part of my Master Thesis focusing on romantic attachment styles and aggression forms. I am contacting you today to request your support and assistance in letting your clients know about the research. Below is a brief description of the study.

The current study seeks to explore the relationship between particular attachment styles and forms of aggression. In addition, the current study seeks to clearly understand the role spiritual affiliation plays in couple aggression by assessing participants reported level of spirituality with their reported levels of aggression. Furthermore, the current study will also seek to explore the relationship between spiritual affiliation and communication styles on romantic relationship satisfaction. The results are also expected to inform counselors, therapists, and the community at large. The research will run from now until December 2015. The research has been carefully reviewed and approved by the Saint Paul University's Research Ethics Review Committee. The research ethics board file number is: 1360.1/15.

I have attached a poster for your viewing. I would kindly ask that you display the poster in your waiting room and that you let your couple clients know about this research.

I thank you for your time in reading this letter and for your support and assistance with the current study.

Sincerely,

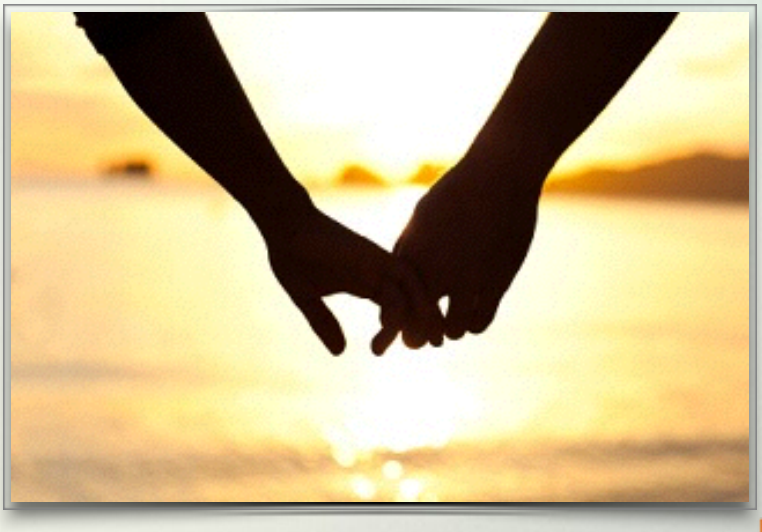
Dr. Martin Rovers, PhD,
mrovers@ustpaul.ca

Alyssa Bonneville, MA (Cand.)
abonn031@uottawa.ca

Appendix E
Poster

Attachment Styles, Aggression Forms, and Relationship Satisfaction

University Research Seeking Participants who are in a Romantic Relationship



Your involvement is completely anonymous and should not take more than 20 minutes.

If you are interested in participating please go to the link below. For more information please contact the primary researcher: Alyssa Bonneville, MA Candidate at: abonn031@uottawa.ca

UNIVERSITÉ SAINT-PAUL UNIVERSITY

Research Participation www.surveymonkey.com/r/GDTFEMFQ

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