

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: *THE MODERATING EFFECT OF AN INDIVIDUAL'S ROMANTIC ATTACHMENT STYLE ON INTENT TO LEAVE A HETEROSEXUAL CLINICAL COUPLE RELATIONSHIP IN WHICH HE OR SHE IS THE VICTIM OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE*

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This study examined the impact of emotional abuse on an individual's steps taken toward leaving a relationship and how individuals with different styles of attachment to a romantic partner differed with regard to taking such steps. Analyses of participant responses on the Multi-dimensional Emotional Abuse Scale (MDEAS), the Relationship Questionnaire (RQ), and the Marital Status Inventory-Revised (MSI-R) were conducted using analysis of variance. It was determined that abuse and being female were significantly associated with taking greater steps toward relationship dissolution. Finally, the interaction between abuse and attachment in steps taken toward leaving was significant among women, but not among men. Although attachment was associated with steps taken toward leaving an abusive relationship was significant for women, differences between attachment styles were not consistent with the hypotheses.

THE MODERATING EFFECT OF AN INDIVIDUAL'S ROMANTIC
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HE OR SHE IS THE VICTIM OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE IN HETEROSEXUAL
CLINICAL COUPLES

By

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Why do some abused individuals remain in an abusive relationship and others leave? Answering this question would not only be of interest to researchers but would also be helpful for clinical professionals. In particular, what are the characteristics of individuals or circumstances under which a relationship will survive or a relationship will fail when one partner becomes abusive to the other? Understanding these circumstances will help clinicians better counsel their clients in such relationships. In addition, in many abusive relationships, emotional abuse is a precursor to physical abuse (Murphy & O'Leary, 1989; Russell & Hulson, 1992). The study of emotional abuse as an area of research may further the treatment and prevention of physical abuse (O'Leary, 1999).

Recent research suggests that an individual's personal or temperamental characteristics, romantic attachment styles in particular, impact couple relationships and may affect whether that individual remains in or leaves an abusive relationship. It has been established that within intimate relationships, attachment styles are linked to the perpetration of physical and emotional abuse (Dutton, Saunders, Starzomski, & Bartholomew, 1994), but little research has been conducted in order to examine how attachment styles affect the experience of abuse. Adult attachment styles play an important role with regard to how both positive and negative behaviors are perceived and reacted to by partners (Gallo & Smith, 2001). As defined by Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991), there are four types of adult attachment: secure, dismissing, preoccupied, and fearful. Research suggests that there is a strong link between

attachment and the types of attributions individuals make about their partners (Collins, Ford, Guichard, & Allard, 2006).

Purpose

This study used data collected from couples who have participated in the Couples Abuse Prevention Program, a study presently being conducted at the University of Maryland's Family Service Center. This current study examined whether individuals' intentions to leave their abusive relationships are moderated by those individuals' attachment styles. In order to conduct this study, data that were collected from both members of a couple during an initial assessment at the Family Service Center were utilized. This assessment is conducted before the couple is invited to participate in the Couples Abuse Prevention Program as well as prior to the beginning of therapy. These data were derived from the Multi Dimensional Emotional Abuse Scale (MDEAS), the Relationship Questionnaire (RQ), and the Marital Status Inventory Revised (MSI-R) which are filled out separately and individually by both members of the couples seen at the Family Service Center. Specifically, through the use of secondary data analysis, this study examined whether the steps taken toward leaving a relationship in the presence of emotional abuse are affected by the attachment style of the individual who is abused.

This study fits within the current literature as well as addresses gaps in the research on couples, attachment, and abusive relationships. First, it furthers the work of Henderson, Bartholomew, and Dutton (1997) who established that attachment styles impact how individuals determine whether or not to leave physically abusive relationships. This study examined the moderating effect of attachment styles on

determining to leave emotionally abusive relationships. Second, a significant amount of the current research on couple abuse focuses on physical abuse. This current study extended the current research on emotional abuse, which has been shown to have a powerful impact on those receiving it (Herbert, Silver, & Ellard, 1991). Third, this study will also address the dearth of clinical literature identified by Wampler, Riggs, and Kimball (2004) on how attachment plays a role within relationships.

Additionally, this study examined both members of couples, thus addressing a neglected area, namely the impact of abuse on men (Hines & Malley-Morrison, 2001). The results of this study not only contribute to research, but also ideally are beneficial to clinicians. The members of the study's sample are all individuals who have at least completed an assessment in a clinical setting. Determining how attachment styles moderate emotional abuse's impact on potential relationship dissolution, clinicians could better evaluate the likelihood that their clients may break up and thus better determine an appropriate treatment plan. With the proper research on which to base their claims, clinicians could better educate their clients on how emotionally abusive behaviors may impact their relationship. Primarily they would be able to explain to clients who are emotionally abusive toward their partners the likelihood that their relationships will fail if they choose to continue to engage in these behaviors.

Review of Literature

Relationship Dissolution

More than half of all first marriages end in either separation or divorce (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002). Numerous studies have been conducted in order to

examine what factors contribute to relationship dissolution, primarily in the realm of divorce. Research has been conducted to examine whether demographics play a role in explaining divorce and a number of conclusions have been realized (Booth, Johnson, White, & Edwards, 1986; Burns, 1984; Kitson & Sussman, 1982; South & Spitze, 1986). In recently married couples, factors such as low family income, young age at the time of marriage, and a wife's unemployment have been found to be important (Booth et al., 1986). In addition, the duration of the marriage, socioeconomic status, religion, parental approval, and number of children (Burns, 1984) have been found to contribute to the likelihood of divorce. Low family income/socioeconomic status and lack of employment contribute to the likelihood of divorce in that the marriage does not provide financial security for the partners. Longer marriages and children can have a negative impact on the likelihood of divorce in that the couple has more invested in the relationship and are thus more likely to work toward saving their relationship. Another study with similar findings has also determined that marital partners' education impacts the likelihood of divorce. Specifically, higher levels of education have been shown to have a positive impact on marital quality, thus reducing the potential of divorce (South & Spitze, 1986).

Studies have also investigated whether beliefs about marriage can serve as a predictor of divorce, and indeed, husbands' and wives' attitudes and beliefs have been shown to be a means of predicting marital dissolution. When wives have more traditional attitudes toward marriage than their husbands; i.e., expectations that the wife will act more as a mother than a financial provider, there is a lesser likelihood of divorce. The authors speculate that in such situations, the wives may be more likely

to accept inequalities in the distribution of housework and other responsibilities. In contrast, when husbands have more traditional attitudes toward marriage than their wives, the likelihood of divorce is increased. The authors suggest that the wives in these situations may be unlikely to accept pressure to fulfill a single role as homemaker or accept an unequal distribution of household responsibilities which the husbands in these situations are likely to expect. Additionally, more traditional husbands are considered less likely to share financial responsibilities with their wives (Sanchez & Gager, 2000).

Gender differences in expectations have also been examined as a factor in divorce. Studies have demonstrated that men and women differ on the factors they cite as the reasons why they divorced. In their longitudinal study of divorced couples, Amato and Previti (2003) found that women were far more likely to cite specific behavioral problems on the part of their husbands as the reasons why they desired divorce. These negative behaviors included physical and emotional abuse, both of which women were far more likely than men to report as a reason for divorce. In contrast, they found men were more likely to cite “communication problems” as the primary reason for divorce. The authors believed this was the result of men being less likely to discuss specifically why their marriages failed, thus they would cite a general reason. Additionally, Amato and Previti found that the majority of men and women reported that it was the wife who wanted the divorce more than the husband.

Numerous studies have examined whether specific marital problems provide insight into why certain relationships end. These problems typically vary depending upon the demographic traits of the complainant (Kitson & Sussman, 1982). The most

significant problems leading to relationship dissolution were extramarital affairs, poor financial management, substance abuse, jealousy, irritability, and irritating habits. Among those problems, actions categorized as jealous, domineering, and critical were found to be the strongest predictors of divorce (Amato & Rogers, 1997). Amato and Rogers found that wives were more likely to report negative aspects of their husbands' behavior than husbands were to make complaints about their wives' behavior.

Amato and Rogers' finding regarding behaviors understood as being jealous, domineering, and critical being strong predictors of divorce is consistent with research on hostility and aggression's impact on marital dissolution potential (Newton & Kiecolt-Glaser, 1995; Rogge & Bradbury, 1996; Rogge, Bradbury, Hahlweg, Engl, & Thurmaier, 2006). Marital aggression has been shown to be a stronger predictor of marital dissolution than positive communication as a predictor of marital stability (Rogge & Bradbury, 1996). Over a five year period, hostility (volatile temper, destruction of property, threats of harm) has been shown to be the primary difference between couples that remained married and those that either separated or divorced, suggesting that it has a powerful impact on marital stability (Rogge et al., 2006). Furthermore, these types of behaviors, often classified as emotionally abusive, have been cited in not only quantitative studies, but in qualitative studies as being a primary factor in a spouse's decision to leave a relationship. In cases where physical abuse was also present, the emotional abuse was cited as having a greater impact on the decision to leave the relationship than the physical abuse (Ulrich, 1991).

Gender and Relationship Dissolution

Gager and Sanchez (2003) examined the role gender played in the dissolution of couple relationships. Specifically, through the study of couples' responses to their measures they examined the level of agreement between husbands and wives as to the reasons why their relationships ended. In order to conduct their study, Gager and Sanchez utilized data from the 1987-1988 National Survey of Families and Households to find potential study participants. They then contacted potential participants by phone and interviewed them and their partners. In all their sample consisted of 2,035 respondents. They interviewed the participants on topics of marital dissolution, time spent together, and perceptions of household work fairness, marital happiness, marital trouble in the past year, current marital trouble, and perceived chances of divorce. They ultimately found that there were significant gender differences in the relationship between the evaluations of the marriage and the potential for marital dissolution. They found that women had a higher likelihood of reporting marital dissatisfaction as well as were more likely to cite specific reasons for marital dissatisfaction.

What is Emotional Abuse?

Although the term "emotional abuse," is used in this thesis, it is important to keep in mind when discussing emotional abuse that there are elements that target the victim's thoughts, not just emotions. Within the literature focused upon emotional abuse, the problem of definition typically lies within whether or not to treat the term as synonymous with psychological abuse (O'Hagan, 1995). O'Hagan states that it does not make sense to define emotional and psychological abuse in the same ways, as the two words have entirely separate meanings. In O'Hagan's explanation, if one

were to make a statement using the word “emotional,” the word “psychological” could not be used instead without changing the meaning of the statement. However, O’Hagan also concedes that, “[e]motionally abusive behavior is nearly always psychologically abusive and vice versa,” (pg. 451). This is clear when comparing definitions of emotional and psychological abuse provided by different sources.

One definition of emotional abuse explains it as any behaviors that, without the use of physical violence, “reduce the victim’s status and render the victim more easily controlled by the abuser” (O’Hearn & Davis, 1997, p.376). Psychological abuse can be conceptualized as, “any behavior that is harmful or intended to be harmful to the well-being of a spouse [in a non-physical way]” (Tolman, 1992, p. 292). Murphy and Hoover (2001) make little distinction between psychological abuse and emotional abuse as they state, “psychologically abusive behaviors are directed at the target’s emotional well-being and sense of self” (p. 30).

However, regardless of the term being used, the specific behaviors cited by authors writing about emotional or psychological abuse are typically the same. O’Hearn and Davis (1997) write that emotionally abusive behaviors include, “humiliation, degradation, threats of abandonment, persistent ridicule, and threats of physical harm,” (p. 376). Behaviors that are considered psychologically abusive include any that intimidate the victim, isolate the victim, cause him or her to feel guilty or to blame him or herself for relationship problems, instill fear in the victim, or cause the victim to feel powerless or helpless (Andersen, Boulette, & Schwartz, 1991). Murphy and Hoover (2001) point out that psychological abuse is directed at the victim’s “emotional well-being or sense of self,” and that they “produce fear,

increase dependency, or damage the self-concept of the recipient,” (p. 30).

Additionally, all of the authors agree that in most relationships there may be occurrences of behaviors that on their own could be classified as abusive. As such, these behaviors must not be unique occurrences but rather must be part of a larger pattern of behaviors. Unfortunately, there is little consensus on where the line is between a unique occurrence and an abusive pattern of behavior when discussing psychological abuse (Follingstad, Helff, Binford, Runge, & White, 2004).

Emotional Abuse and Potential for Relationship Dissolution

Researchers point to a myriad of reasons to explain why individuals remain in abusive relationships. Cavanagh (1996) determined that there are six reasons that can serve as explanations for why an individual would remain in an abusive relationship. These reasons typically stem from a variety of cognitions. The first reason Cavanagh provides is that individuals do not perceive the abuse as abusive, instead attributing the behavior to other factors. Cavanagh’s second reason is that individuals only consider physical abuse under the definition of abuse. As a result of this, in the presence of solely psychologically abusive behaviors, these individuals do not consider abuse as an issue within their relationships. Third, individuals may rationalize the presence of abusive behaviors in order to protect themselves and their relationships. In such cases, the victim of abuse concludes that the partner’s behaviors are the result of some outside influence that is not his or her fault. Fourth, individuals may have unconscious motives that keep them in abusive relationships. Cavanagh writes that these motives include the belief that one deserves to be unhappy, comfort with dysfunction due to being raised in an abusive home, an

unconscious association of pain and love, a desire to mute their own inadequacies through the presence of a significant other with greater inadequacies, the belief that a partner's inability to control him or herself reduces or negates blame for abusive behaviors, and a fear of closeness. Cavanagh's fifth reason is that remaining in an abusive relationship is considered to be a better alternative than being alone. In such cases, an individual may fear being alone, consider him or herself a failure when not in a relationship, believe that not raising children in a two-parent home would be detrimental to their development, fear financial insecurity or believe that leaving the relationship would be the equivalent of admitting he or she had made a mistake in choosing a partner. Finally, Cavanagh suggests that an individual may remain in an abusive relationship because he or she has developed a tolerance for the abuse.

Other research supports Cavanagh's examples of how individuals' cognitions play a major role in remaining in an abusive relationship. It has been determined that physically abused women often underestimate the level of risk of abuse within their relationships, as well as overestimate the level of difficulty they may face if they choose to leave their relationships (Martin, Berenson, Griffing, Sage, Madry, Bingham, & Primm, 2000). Herbert, Silver, and Ellard (1991) conducted a study of abused women from the area around Ontario, Canada in order to examine why they remained in their relationship. These women were recruited through announcements on television, the radio, and in newspapers. They found among the respondents in their study that these women remained in abusive relationships through the engagement of a number of cognitive strategies that assisted them in perceiving their relationship in a positive manner. However, Herbert et al. noted that an exception to

their findings was the case of verbal abuse. The presence of verbal abuse tended to mitigate the ability of the women in their study to perceive their relationships in a positive light and minimize the impact of abuse. They concluded that it was likely that the greater frequency of verbal abuse may lead to it having a greater impact than physical abuse on the women they studied.

Furthermore, research has demonstrated that psychological abuse is incredibly damaging to the recipient in several ways (Lewis, Griffing, Chu, Jospitre, Sage, Madry, & Primm, 2006; Straight, Harper, & Arias, 2003). Straight et al. found that individuals who were the victims of psychological abuse experienced poorer physical health and were more likely to engage in illegal drug use as a coping strategy. In their study, Lewis et al. found that victims of psychological abuse often demonstrate depression and greater vulnerability to further psychological abuse. Lewis et al. also found that in relationships in which physical violence was present in addition to psychological abuse, the frequency of physical violence was not related to the victims' distress. This finding is supported by qualitative research involving victims of abuse in which physical and emotional abuse was present. The victims described emotional abuse as the worse form of abuse (Follingstad, Rutledge, Berg, Hause, & Polek, 1990).

Under these circumstances, one would expect the relationship to end. However, this may take a long time. Findings presently suggest that leaving an abusive relationship is part of a process rather than a sudden decision. Typically, an abused woman must reassess her situation as abusive before this process can begin. It has been found that this often occurs after a "turning point" that changes the way the

relationship is perceived. Ultimately, once a decision has been reached to leave an abusive relationship, women are effective at taking the necessary measures to leave (Rosen & Stith, 1997).

Studies have been conducted in which emotional abuse has been examined as a determinant of divorce. More than one study has found that emotional abuse is often a major cause of marital failure (Rokach, Cohen, & Dreman, 2004; Kincaid & Caldwell, 1995). However, it does not always end a relationship. In order to understand to understand this process we turn to symbolic interaction theory.

Symbolic Interaction Theory

This study was examined through the lens provided by symbolic interaction theory. Ingoldsby, Smith and Miller (2004) identify three major themes within symbolic interactionism theory.

The first theme is that how humans behave is related to the meaning they posit in every facet of the world around them with which they interact. Within this theme, Ingoldsby et al. include the assumption that the meaning individuals have for things directly influences how they will react to them. Additionally, meaning is learned through how individuals relate with other individuals. Based on these assumptions, different individuals may perceive the same behaviors in completely different ways. For example, two women are married to men who ask for detailed accounts of their whereabouts when they are apart. To the first woman, this may mean that her husband does not trust her and is a jealous individual. To the second woman, however, this may mean that her husband is concerned about her welfare, likes to make sure that she has been safe, and is quite attentive. The implication for this study

is that the meaning individuals attach to behavior and circumstances varies across individuals.

The second theme is that individual self-concept plays a large role in how each individual reacts to his or her experiences. Within this theme, Ingoldsby et al. places the assumption that an individual's sense of who he or she is will dictate his or her behaviors. Ingoldsby et al. posits that all individuals develop their sense of self through their experiences. This theme can be linked to a primary dimension of Bowlby's theory of attachment. Bowlby (1973) explains that an individual's attachment style is strongly linked to his or her sense of self. This is the first dimension of attachment used in my thesis. Based on the idea that self concept is a primary aspect of attachment, it would follow that an individual's self-concept could be linked to whether or not he or she looks to others as a means of validation. As such, this would be a primary determinant as to whether an individual would be comfortable in or out of emotionally close relationships. In comparison to individuals with strong self concepts, individuals with weaker self concepts who look to intimate relationships as a means of validation may thus be less likely to leave a relationship in which emotional abuse is present. This ties to one of the primary concepts of attachment theory, discussed later in this thesis, that how an individual perceives him or herself is connected to his or her style of attachment.

Symbolic interaction theory's third theme is that society plays a role in how individuals determine the meaning of what they experience. The assumption placed by Ingoldsby et al. within this theme is that society influences the meaning individuals place upon their experiences. As such, individuals will internalize the

values and norms of their society. The couples that will be evaluated in this study are members of American society, and thus it follows that they will have internalized the values and norms of the United States. One of those norms is that individuals work toward marriage and raising a family. The value placed by society on this norm is that it is good to be in an intimate relationship in order to work toward the goal of marriage and child rearing. As such, individuals who have completely internalized this value may be less likely to feel comfortable outside of a couple relationship. In the case of couple relationships in which abuse is present, the meaning an individual places not only upon his or her partner's behaviors, but also on the meaning he or she places upon relationships themselves, will have powerful influences over his or her desire to remain in the relationship. This is the second dimension of attachment used in this thesis.

Attachment Theory

Attachment theory was first conceptualized by John Bowlby as he sought to explain infants' reactions when separated from their primary caregivers. Bowlby theorized that the infants' negative reactions, typically crying or screaming, that resulted from this separation were due to an attachment bond they had with their primary caregiver, or attachment figure (Bowlby, 1969). Bowlby also theorized that the attachment bond children formed with their primary caregivers would determine how these children conceptualized future relationships (1973). Furthermore, Bowlby (1973) also theorized that an individual's confidence in an attachment figure hinged upon both, "(a) whether or not the attachment figure is judged to be the sort of person who in general responds to calls for support and protection; [and] (b) whether or not

the self is judged to be the sort of person toward whom anyone, and the attachment figure in particular, is likely to respond in a helpful way,” (p. 204).

Later studies would support Bowlby’s theory as it applied to how children behaved in relationships with primary caregivers in their pre-school years (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). Furthermore, Ainsworth et al. determined that three types of attachment existed. These three types are typically identified as secure, anxious/ambivalent, and avoidant. Based on which type of attachment a child exhibited, reactions to a primary caregiver could be predicted. According to Ainsworth et al., the secure type was typified by the welcoming of a caregiver’s affection after his or her absence, anxious/ambivalent types were difficult to comfort when reunited with an absent caregiver, and avoidant types avoided interaction with a previously absent caregiver

Hazan and Shaver (1987) took the work of Bowlby as well as Ainsworth et al. a step further, theorizing that adult romantic relationships could be understood within the same context as the attachment bonds between children and parents. Basing their study on Bowlby’s theory of attachment and using the framework of definitions provided by Ainsworth et al., Hazan and Shaver found strong evidence to support their belief that attachment theory could be applied to adult romantic relationships. Through the use of two questionnaire studies conducted with two separate samples, the first a sample of 620 respondents to a newspaper ad, and the second a sample of 108 college students, they determined that the type of attachment an individual demonstrated would impact upon their experiences of romantic relationships, individuals’ attachment styles stemmed from mental models of self as well as of

social relationships and relationships with parents, and that individuals with different attachment styles had different beliefs about romantic love.

The work of Bowlby, Ainsworth et al. and Hazan and Shaver was furthered by Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991). They conceptualized a model of attachment styles that included four groups, expanding upon the three group model that had been the standard up to that point. Bartholomew and Horowitz based their four types on Bowlby's (1973) explanation of how an individual's view of self and view of an attachment figure determined how a relationship was perceived. They identified that an individual believes he or she is worthy of love and affection, which coincides with high sense of self and low levels of dependency, or believes he or she is not worthy of love and affection, which coincides with low sense of self and high levels of dependency. They also identified that an individual either expects others to be trustworthy and available to care for him or her, which coincides with low levels of avoidance or an individual does not expect others to be trustworthy and available to care for him or her, which coincides with high levels of avoidance. Through different combinations of the models of self and models of others Bartholomew and Horowitz identified four different types of attachment styles which they labeled as secure, preoccupied, dismissing, and fearful. This expanded on the previous three category model in that the avoidant style of attachment was split into two styles that Bartholomew and Horowitz identified as dismissing and fearful.

The secure style of attachment results from a combination of the belief that one is worthy of love and affection and the belief that others are trustworthy and available to care. This attachment style is characterized by comfort with intimate

relationships as well as personal independence. The preoccupied style of attachment results from a combination of the belief that one is not worthy of love and affection and the belief that others are trustworthy and available to care. This attachment style is characterized by, “an overinvolvement in close relationships, a dependence on other people’s acceptance for a sense of personal well-being, a tendency to idealize other people, and incoherence and exaggerated emotionality in discussing relationships” (p. 228). The dismissing style of attachment results from the belief that one is worthy of love and affection and the belief that others are not trustworthy and available to care. This attachment style is characterized by, “a downplaying of the importance of close relationships, restricted emotionality, an emphasis on independence and self-reliance, and a lack of clarity or credibility in discussing relationships,” (p. 228). The fearful style of attachment results from the belief that one is not worthy of love and affection and the belief that others are not trustworthy or available to care. This attachment style is characterized by, “avoidance of close relationships because of a fear of rejection, a sense of personal insecurity, and a distrust of others,” (p. 228). Figure 1 demonstrates how an individual’s sense of self and sense of others intersect to form his or her attachment style.

Model of Self
(Dependence)

Positive
(Low)

Negative
(High)

Model of Other (Avoidance)	Positive (Low)	SECURE Comfortable with intimacy and autonomy CELL I	PREOCCUPIED Preoccupied with relationships CELL II
	Negative (High)	DISMISSING Dismissing of intimacy Counter-dependent CELL III	FEARFUL Fearful of intimacy Socially avoidant CELL IV

Figure 1. Model of Adult Attachment, (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991)

Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) conducted a pair of studies in order to determine whether or not the beliefs of individuals categorized by each of their four styles of attachment were consistent with their definitions. In their first study they utilized a sample of forty female and thirty-seven male college students participating in an introduction to psychology course. These students answered two sets of questionnaires about themselves as well as their partners in order to investigate their friendships and romantic relationships. Their second study was designed to replicate the first study as well as include information about the subjects' families of origin. For the second study they utilized a sample of 33 female college students and 36 male college students from an introduction to psychology course. These subjects were each interviewed twice. During the first interview they discussed their relationships with family and friends. During the second interview they completed a questionnaire about their relationships. Bartholomew and Horowitz found strong evidence that these attachment styles were, indeed, separate categories and the beliefs and behaviors of these individuals fit within those they associated with each style of attachment.

Different Attachment Styles and Relationship Dissolution Potential

Only one study was discovered that evaluated how attachment affected an abused woman's decision to leave a physically abusive relationship (Henderson, Bartholomew, & Dutton, 1997). This study was conducted over the course of six months using a sample of 59 women who had recently left an abusive relationship. The women initially answered questions through a semi-structured interview as well as completed measures that tested received and inflicted physical and psychological abuse. The women then completed questionnaires about their separation after two months and six months. The research found that attachment security was associated with neither receiving less abuse within relationships nor greater success in leaving an abusive relationship. The authors did find limited evidence that individuals who can be classified as having a preoccupied style of attachment were less likely to resolve to leave an abusive relationship as well as less successful in leaving once they had made the resolution to leave. The authors suggest that this may be accounted for by other environmental factors that they did not examine. Their study is limited in a few areas. First, the study, though it included a measure of emotional abuse, primarily focused on physical abuse or the combination of abuse, but not solely on the emotional abuse. Second, the sample contained an overrepresentation of the preoccupied and fearful attachment styles. Third, the authors themselves report that their research was limited by the fact that it only focused on the female partners and had no information on the male partners in abusive relationships. The present study was able to look at both males and females and at emotional abuse rather than physical abuse.

*Implications of Attachment Theory for Whether Individuals
Will Leave Abusive Relationships*

Several studies to be described below have examined an individual's attachment style and how he or she operates within a relationship. Specifically, these studies all demonstrate that an individual's perceptions of his or her relationship as well as how he or she reacts to these perceptions are affected by his or her attachment style. Based on the findings of these studies, it stands to reason that an individual's attachment style will affect how he or she experiences emotional abuse, and that experience or interpretation should affect his or her desire to leave an abusive relationship.

Research supports that there is a strong link between attachment and the types of attributions (meaning placed upon behaviors) individuals make about their partners (Collins, Ford, Guichard, & Allard, 2006). Collins et al. concluded that individuals with a preoccupied style of attachment felt greater anxiety as a result of perceived partner transgressions as well as made more attributions that their relationship was threatened by partner behaviors and engaged in more conflict-inducing behaviors than individuals with other styles of attachment. Attachment styles have a profound impact on marital quality. A secure style of attachment is associated with the development of a strong marriage with resilient qualities that allow for managing life stressors. Conversely, individuals with any of the three insecure attachment styles- preoccupied, dismissing, or fearful- typically find themselves in unstable relationships that have greater vulnerability to stress (Hollist & Miller, 2005). Within the context of intimate relationships, attachment styles also play a role in how

partners perceive levels of equity (Grau & Doll, 2003). Grau and Doll found that securely attached individuals primarily described their relationships as equitable, meaning that they gave and took equally in comparison to their partners. In comparison, anxiously (preoccupied) attached individuals indicated that they gave more and took less than their partners. Avoidant (dismissing and fearful) individuals tended to perceive equity in their relationships, but in comparison to secure individuals, indicated that they gave and took less. Furthermore, it has been determined that perceptions of and beliefs about relationships are a primary determinant of whether an individual will entertain leaving an abusive relationship (Byrne & Arias, 2004). As prior research has shown, attachment styles are closely linked with individuals' perceptions concerning their partners' behaviors and their relationships as well as how they react to these perceptions. Therefore, attachment styles may be linked to whether an individual responds to partner abuse by making moves toward leaving the relationship.

How individuals perceive their partners' actions as well as their beliefs about their partners and how they believe they should respond to these actions with regards to their relationship differs depending on an individual's attachment style (Fincham, 2001). A preoccupied attachment style has also been demonstrated as having an impact on an individual's perception of the level of conflict experienced in his or her relationship, how that conflict is responded to, and perceptions of support within the relationship (Campbell, Simpson, Boldry, & Kashy, 2005). Campbell et al. found that such individuals were more likely than others to perceive greater conflict within their relationships as well as greater conflict escalation. Additionally, these

individuals showed a greater range of perceptions of their relationship stability. Specifically, in the presence of conflict, preoccupied individuals perceived their relationships in a more negative light than others. In the presence of positive behaviors these individuals made more positive appraisals of their relationship stability and the future of their relationship than others.

Fishtein, Pietromonaco, and Barrett (1999) determined that attachment style plays a role in how an individual perceives conflict within his or her relationship. They found that individuals identified as having a preoccupied style of attachment were significantly more likely to perceive positive outcomes due to conflict whereas individuals identified with the other three styles of attachment did not. Specifically, preoccupied individuals believed that conflict brought them closer to their partners. This is consistent with such individuals' preoccupation with closeness. As such, they perceived conflict as positive in that it increased intimacy due to conflict forcing their partners to engage them.

Guerrero (1998) found several differences in how individual attachment styles affected the experience and expression of jealousy caused by perceived threats to their romantic relationships. Findings were consistent with the author's expectations based on how each attachment style is composed. Individuals with attachment styles that include negative self-models, preoccupied and fearful, were more likely to experience jealousy than those who were identified as secure or dismissing. Those with negative models of others, dismissing and fearful, were less likely to attempt to maintain their relationships or engage in jealous behaviors. Preoccupied individuals were more likely to engage in surveillance behaviors as well as relationship

maintaining behaviors than individuals identifying with the other three models. Finally, Guerrero found that individuals with the dismissing attachment style were the least likely to experience fear or sadness along with the experience of jealousy in comparison to individuals with the other three attachment styles.

Davis, Shaver, and Vernon (2003) found that attachment style affects how an individual reacts to relationship dissolution. The behaviors engaged in by individuals identifying with each attachment style were consistent with their types of attachment. Secure individuals were most likely to engage in coping strategies by engaging friends and family for support. Dismissing and fearful individuals' behaviors were weakly or negatively associated with relationship maintaining behaviors and positively associated with both avoidant and self-reliant coping behaviors. Preoccupied individuals experienced the greatest levels of physical and emotional distress due to the loss of their relationships. Additionally, preoccupied individuals were most likely to engage in behaviors directed toward saving their relationships as well as negative coping strategies such as drug and alcohol use.

Hypotheses

Based on prior research, it was expected that the degree of experience of emotional abuse would be associated with an individual's intent to leave an abusive relationship. It was expected that in the presence of equal levels of emotional abuse, women would take greater steps toward leaving a relationship than men. It was expected that independent of abuse, individuals with different attachment styles would take different steps toward leaving a relationship. Finally, it was expected that an individual's style of romantic attachment will determine how powerful the effect

of emotional abuse is on that individual's intent to leave an abusive relationship. This study has four major hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: Positive Association between Psychological Abuse and Steps Taken Toward Leaving a Relationship

It was hypothesized that there would be a positive association between emotional abuse and intent to leave a relationship. Specifically, as abuse increased, steps taken toward leaving a relationship would increase as well. Figure 2 demonstrates the expected outcome for individuals' desire to leave in the presence of emotional abuse.

		Steps Taken to Leave		
		Low	Medium	High
Level of Abuse	Low	X		
	Medium		X	
	High			X

Figure 2. Expected results among individuals' intent to leave in the presence of emotional abuse

Hypothesis 2: At Each Level of Emotional Abuse Women will Take Greater Steps toward Relationship Dissolution than Men

It was hypothesized that at each level of emotional abuse, women would be more likely to have taken further steps toward marital dissolution than men. This is based on recent research that has determined that wives' negative evaluations of a relationship, in the presence of specific examples, are a stronger predictor of divorce than men's (Gager, C.T. & Sanchez, L., 2003).

*Hypothesis 3: Different Individual Attachment Styles Will be Linked
Differently to Steps Taken to Leave a Relationship*

It was hypothesized that attachment styles would be differentially associated with steps taken to leave a relationship. Specifically, a secure style of attachment would show no correlation with steps taken to leave a relationship, dismissing and fearful styles of attachment will show a positive correlation with steps taken to leave a relationship, and a preoccupied style of attachment would show a negative correlation with steps taken to leave a relationship.

Hypothesis 4: The Relationship Between Steps Taken Toward Leaving a Relationship and Abuse will Differ Depending on an Individual's Attachment Style

It was hypothesized that an individual's romantic attachment style would have a moderating effect on his or her desire to leave an emotionally abusive relationship. Depending on the attachment style of the abused individual, it was expected that he or she would be more or less likely to have intent toward leaving an abusive relationship. Specifically, an individual who identifies him or herself as having a secure, dismissing, or fearful style of attachment have greater intent toward leaving his or her relationship when emotional abuse is present, while an individual who identifies him or herself as having a preoccupied style of attachment demonstrate less intent toward leaving his or her relationship when emotional abuse is present.

Hypothesis 4.1: Individuals with a Secure Style of Attachment Demonstrate a Positive Association Between Experienced Emotional Abuse and Steps Taken Toward Leaving the Relationship

It was hypothesized that, for individuals with a secure romantic attachment style, emotional abuse would be positively associated with intent to leave a relationship. This is because individuals who identify themselves as having a secure style of attachment perceive both themselves and others in a positive manner and demonstrate a low level of dependence on relationships (see Figure 1, Cell I). Due to this, secure individuals would not likely to tolerate being treated in an emotionally abusive manner.

Hypothesis 4.2: Individuals with a Dismissing Style of Attachment Demonstrate a Positive Association Between Experienced Emotional Abuse and Steps Taken Toward Leaving the Relationship.

It was hypothesized that, for individuals who identify themselves as having a dismissing style of attachment, emotional abuse would be positively associated with intent to leave a relationship. This is because individuals who identify themselves as having a dismissing style of attachment place a high level of value upon themselves but low value on others (see Figure 1, Cell III). Dismissing individuals are fiercely independent to a degree that they place greater worth on independence over intimacy. As such, they are likely to be less tolerant of emotionally abusive behaviors. The principal difference between these two styles of attachment and the preoccupied style is that individuals with a preoccupied style of attachment value others more than they value themselves.

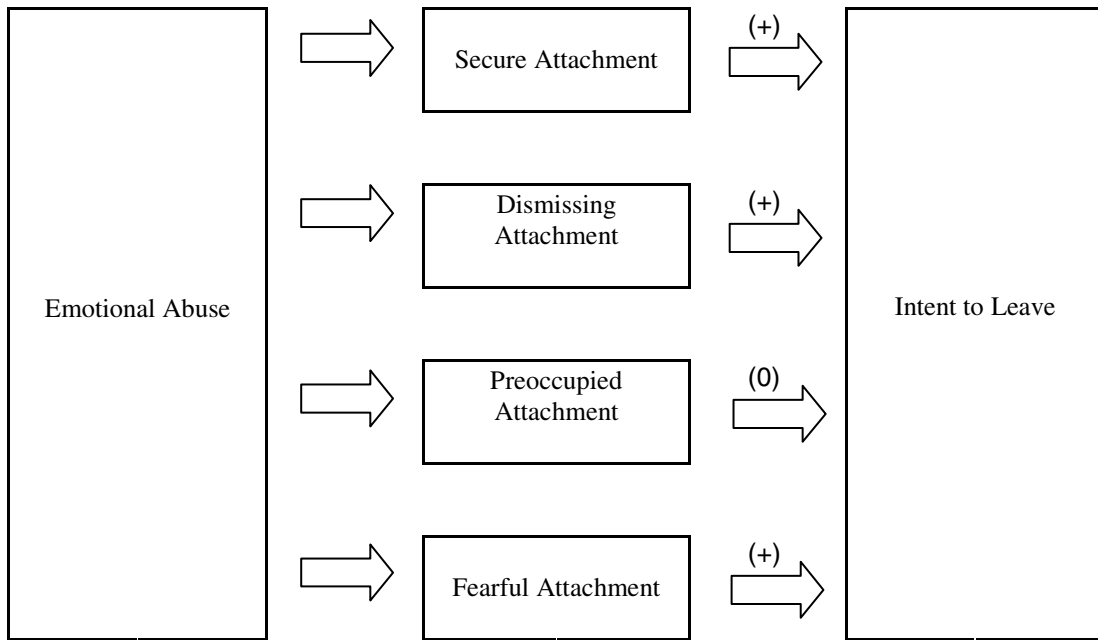
Hypothesis 4.3: Individuals with a Preoccupied Style of Attachment would Not Demonstrate any Correlation Between Experienced Emotional Abuse and Steps Taken Toward Leaving the Relationship.

It was hypothesized that individuals with a preoccupied style of attachment would not demonstrate a strong desire to leave their relationships regardless of the level of emotional abuse present. Preoccupied individuals place a higher value on others than they do on themselves as well as a high level of dependence on relationships (see Figure 1, Cell II). A preoccupied individual may remain in an abusive relationship for a variety of reasons. Such an individual may believe that he or she is better off in an abusive relationship rather than alone. It is also possible that, because he or she does not value him or herself as much as the partner, he or she may be more vulnerable to internalizing the emotional abuse. Consequently, his or her self-worth would continue to decline, further reinforcing the belief that the partner is superior in the relationship.

Hypothesis 4.4: Individuals with a Fearful Style of Attachment would Demonstrate a Strong Positive Association Between Experienced Emotional Abuse and Steps Taken Toward Leaving the Relationship.

It was hypothesized that for individuals who identify themselves as having a fearful style of attachment, emotional abuse would be associated with greater intent to leave a relationship. Although a fearful individual also does not value him or herself, he or she also does not value others, and as such avoids close relationships (see Figure 1, Cell IV). Due to this, a fearful individual would be likely to seize upon abuse as a reason to get out of a close relationship.

Figure 3: The Moderating Effect of Romantic Attachment Styles on Steps Taken to Leave an Abusive Relationship



Definition of Variables

Independent Variables

Emotional Abuse

Any non-physically injurious behavior that may intimidate the victim, isolate the victim, cause him or her to feel guilty or to blame him or herself for relationship problems, instill fear in the victim, or cause the victim to feel powerless or helpless (Andersen et al., 1991).

Romantic Attachment Style

An individual's identified style of attachment. Based on Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) there are four specific attachment styles.

Secure:

An individual with a secure style of attachment values intimacy, is capable of preserving independence although at the same time maintaining an intimate relationship, and demonstrates logic in handling relationship issues.

Dismissing:

An individual with a dismissing style of attachment places a higher value upon independence over intimate relationships, minimizes the importance of close relationships, demonstrates a limited range of emotions, and has difficulty discussing relationships in a cogent manner.

Preoccupied:

An individual with a preoccupied style of attachment demonstrates excessive involvement in intimate relationships, and a need for the acceptance of others as a means of determining his or her own self-worth, puts others on a pedestal, has difficulty discussing relationships in a cogent manner and displays exaggerated emotionality.

Fearful:

An individual with a fearful style of attachment avoids intimate relationships due to a fear of rejection, distrusts others, and is generally insecure.

Gender

An individual's identified sex, either male or female.

Dependent Variable

Steps Taken Toward Leaving a Relationship

This variable is defined as the number of actions taken by an individual in order to end his or her intimate relationship. These actions range from thoughts of separation to actually filing for divorce.

Control Variables

Because it was learned from the review of previous research that certain other variables are strongly linked to with an individual's intent to leave a relationship, they were included as controls within this study. Specifically in this study, socioeconomic status and length of relationship will be used as controls.

Socioeconomic Status

Respondents' socioeconomic status was controlled due to the fact that a higher socioeconomic status can reduce the likelihood of divorce (Booth et al., 1986). As such, it stands to reason that it may also negatively impact an individual's desire to leave a relationship. This variable will be measured by an individual's self-reported gross income.

Length of Relationship

Individuals who have been in longer relationships have more invested in their relationship, thus they will be less likely to desire terminating their relationship (Burns, 1984). This factor was also controlled within the present study.

CHAPTER 2: METHODS

Participants

For the study, secondary analyses were used to examine data collected by an ongoing study focusing on the treatment of abuse in couple relationships being conducted at the Family Service Center located on the campus of the University of Maryland, College Park. Participants for the larger study were couples who voluntarily contacted the Family Service Center in order to receive couple therapy. Prior to the onset of therapy services, all couples completed a set of self-report and behavioral measures. The sole requirement for participating in the first stage of the study was to contact the Family Service Center and set up an appointment for assessment prior to being seen by a therapist for couple therapy.

Procedures

The data used by this study were collected between November, 2001 and February, 2005 as part of an ongoing study of couple abuse by Dr. Norman Epstein and Dr. Carol Werlinich through the Family Service Center at the University of Maryland, College Park. Data were collected by the therapist interns who staff the Family Service Center. The couples from whom the data were collected voluntarily contacted the Family Service Center seeking treatment. After completing an intake over the phone, each couple would be contacted by a pair of therapist interns who would serve as their therapists. An initial appointment to complete the assessment instruments would be set up prior to the implementation of therapeutic services. Prior to beginning work on the assessment instruments, the couple is informed that the Family Service Center is a research facility and the measures they are completing

would assist the therapists in their work with the couple. The couple is then separated into two rooms so they can complete their individual sets of measures privately. The therapist interns check on each member of the couple approximately every twenty minutes in order to make sure they are not having difficulty completing the measures as well as to answer any questions they may have regarding the instruments. Additionally, the instruments are checked for completeness prior to ending the assessment appointment.

Measures

Emotional Abuse

Experienced emotional abuse within the relationship was measured using the Multi-Dimensional Emotional Abuse Scale (MDEAS; Murphy, Hoover, & Taft, 1999). This 28 item self-report tool, presented in Appendix A, has an overall score on emotional abuse as well as scores on four subscales. These four subscales include: Restrictive Engulfment, measured by items 1-7 (e.g., “Tried to stop the other person from seeing certain friends or family members”); Denigration, measured by items 8-14 (e.g., “Said or implied that the other person was stupid”); Hostile Withdrawal, items 15-21 (e.g., “Refused to have any discussion of a problem”); and Dominance/Intimidation, items 22-28 (e.g., “Stood or hovered over the other person during a conflict or disagreement”).

Each of the 28 items asks the individual to rate how often he or she as well as his or her partner engaged in a specific behavior on a scale from 0 (never) to 6 (more than 20 times in the past 4 months). For the purposes of this study, only the individual’s rating of his or her partner’s behaviors was used for scoring whether he

or she experienced emotional abuse. Subscales are scored from a minimum of 0 to a maximum of 42. An overall score ranges from a minimum of 0 to a maximum of 168. Low scores indicate low levels of emotional abuse experienced by an individual while higher scores indicate higher levels of experienced emotional abuse.

The MDEAS was created as a means of assessing emotional abuse as a multifactorial construct based on prior definitions of different types of emotional abuse. Based on the literature, the authors of the MDEAS decided upon a 4-factor model of emotional abuse which became the four subscales on the MDEAS. Preliminary research on the scale was conducted by administering a 34-item set to 160 students in dating relationships. Items with low response rates, low item-scale correlations, or poor differential correlation were removed from the measure. Other items were added to the scale based on the clinical experience of the authors. This resulted in a 54-item measure that was given to a second sample of college students in dating relationships. Further analysis of this scale supported the authors' four factor model of emotional abuse. Based on factor analysis, items were removed from the 54-item measure, resulting in the present 28-item, four subscale measure (Murphy & Hoover, 2001).

For the purposes of this study participants' total score on the MDEAS was utilized. This score was determined by totaling each participant's responses regarding his or her partner's behaviors. In order to use this score with analysis of variance tests the MDEAS scores were divided into three equal groups representing low, moderate, and high levels of emotional abuse.

Attachment Style

An individual's identified attachment style was measured using the Relationship Questionnaire (RQ, Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Based on prior attachment research on children, the authors determined that four specific types of adult attachment exist: secure, dismissing, preoccupied, and fearful.

The RQ, presented in Appendix B, includes four paragraphs, each of which illustrates one of the four attachment styles: secure (e.g., "It is relatively easy for me to be emotionally close to others. I am comfortable depending on others and having others depend on me. I don't worry about being alone or having others accept me"); dismissing (e.g., "I am somewhat uncomfortable getting close to others. I want emotionally close relationships, but I find it difficult to trust others completely, or to depend on them. I sometimes worry that I will be hurt if I allow myself to become too close to others"); preoccupied (e.g., "I want to be completely emotionally intimate with others, but I often find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I am uncomfortable being without close relationships, and I sometimes worry that others don't value me as I value them"); and fearful (e.g., "I am comfortable without close relationships. It is very important to me to feel independent and self-sufficient, and I prefer not to depend on others or have others depend on me). Individuals score each paragraph as it relates to themselves on a scale of 0 (Not at all like me) to 7 (Very much like me). Additionally, participants are asked to select which of the four paragraphs describes them best overall. In the event of a tie score between items, this selection is used to determine the individual's attachment style. For the purpose of this study, each participant's identified attachment style was determined based upon

which of the four paragraphs he or she selected as being most representative of him or herself. This was determined based on the paragraph being used as a tie breaker, and as such, could be considered most representative regardless of scores as this study is not examining how strongly individual's identify with their attachment styles.

This measure has demonstrated criterion validity as each of the four types of attachment style were associated with different variables. Furthermore, this measure demonstrates construct validity through its association with a semi-structured interview utilizing the same four-category model of attachment (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991).

Steps Taken Toward Relationship Dissolution

Actions taken by an individual toward ending his or her relationship were measured using the Marital Status Inventory-Revised (MSI-R, Epstein & Werlinich, 2001). This measure, presented in Appendix C, includes 18 items that are responded to in a "yes" or "no" format. Questions range from, "Had frequent thoughts about separating from your partner, as much as once a week or so," to "Filed for divorce or ended the relationship." The measure is scored from 0 to 18 based on the number of "yes" responses given. A lower score indicates low fewer steps taken toward leaving a relationship while a higher score indicates greater greater steps taken toward relationship dissolution. Epstein and Werlinich modified the original MSI to include neutral language that would apply to all intimate couples rather than only legally married heterosexual couples, resulting in the MSI-R. This study will determine participants' total MSI-R scores based on the total number of "yes" responses submitted on the MSI-R.

The original MSI was a 14 item self-report measure designed to determine the level of intent an individual shows toward leaving a relationship (Weiss & Cerreto, 1980). As the MSI-R has been used in little research up to this point, normative data are not yet available on mean scores in clinical or community samples.

CHAPTER 3: RESULTS

Study Participants

The sample for the study consisted of 288 heterosexual couples who completed the first portion of measures associated with the study. Slightly greater than half (55.2%) of the sample couples were currently married and living together and nearly three quarters (70.9%) of the sample couples were living together at the time they began therapy (please see Table 1 for demographic information of the sample). The mean length of relationship across the sample was 7.08 years. The mean age of participants was 32.86 years. Among women the mean age was 32.09 years and among men the mean age was 33.63 years. The mean annual income of the sample was \$29,583. Among women the mean annual income was \$24,886. Among men the mean annual income was \$34,352.

Table 1

Demographics by Gender (in means or percentages)

Variable	Females	Males
Total	288	288
Mean Age (in years) ^a	32.09 (8.99)	33.63 (9.32)
Minimum to Maximum Age (in years) ^b	17 – 65 (48)	19 – 82 (63)
Mean Length of Relationship (in years) ^a	7.14 (6.826)	7.01 (6.814)
Minimum to Maximum Length of Relationship (in years) ^b	0 – 41 (41)	0 – 41 (41)
Mean Income (in dollars) ^a	24,886 (19,225)	34,352 (28,597)
Attachment Style		
Secure	100	118
Fearful	107	72
Preoccupied	29	40
Dismissing	27	35
Mean MDEAS Score ^a	40.13 (30.59)	36.38 (29.82)
Mean MSI-R Score ^a	7.08 (4.20)	5.44 (4.20)

^a Standard Deviations Listed in Parentheses; ^b Range Listed in Parentheses

Univariate and Bivariate Analyses

Prior to hypothesis testing correlations between the continuous variables were run in order to examine basic relationships. This was of particular interest for initially determining the relationship between the planned control variables, length of relationship and socioeconomic status, and the continuous independent and dependent variables, the total abuse score determined by the MDEAS and the total score determining steps taken toward leaving as determined by the MSI-R, respectively.

Table 2 shows the correlation matrix.

Table 2

Correlation Matrix

Variables	Income	Length of Relationship	MDEAS Score	MSI-R Score
Income				
Length of Relationship	.207**			
MDEAS Score	-.066	.049		
MSI-R Score	-.032	.042	.428**	

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

As shown by the table, the only significant relationships were between income and length of relationship and between the MDEAS score of total experienced emotional abuse and the MSI-R score of steps taken toward leaving the relationship. Counter to initial predictions, there was no significant relationship between the control variables and the dependent variable. The correlation between income and length of relationship, though significant, is only weakly positive. Based on these findings it was determined that there was no need to control for these factors during

further hypothesis testing. There is, however, a moderate to moderately strong positive correlation between the level of experienced emotional abuse and the steps taken to leave the relationship. This supports the first hypothesis of this paper, that as experienced abuse increases an individual will take greater steps toward leaving the relationship.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1: Positive Correlation between Psychological Abuse and Steps Taken Toward Leaving a Relationship

In order to examine the relationship between emotional abuse and leaving a relationship, an analysis of variance was conducted. In order to run an ANOVA, the abuse scores had to be broken down into three proportional groups. Through the use of the SPSS program the MDEAS scores were broken into three equal groups, signifying low, moderate, and high levels of experienced emotional abuse. Total scores of 21 or less were considered to be low levels of emotional abuse. Total scores from 22 to 46 were considered to be moderate levels of emotional abuse. Scores of 47 or greater were considered to be high levels of emotional abuse. These levels were determined by dividing the sample into three separate groups with each group representing a third of the sample. Table 3 shows the mean MSI-R scores associated with each of these groups as well as the number of women and men that fell within each group. Additionally, post hoc comparisons were conducted using Bonferroni's comparison test in order to reduce the likelihood of a Type I error occurring. The results of this test confirmed that there were strong significant differences ($p < .000$) in MSI-R scores between each group across the entire sample. The results of the

Bonferroni comparison are shown in Table 4. Based on the ANOVA test we can conclude that steps taken to leave a relationship do increase as abuse increases. The mean MSI-R score for the sample at low levels of abuse was 4.41, at moderate levels of abuse the mean MSI-R score for the sample was 6.07, and at high levels of abuse the mean MSI-R score for the sample was 8.47. Furthermore, the Bonferroni comparison confirms that the number of steps taken to leave between increasing abuse levels are significantly different.

Table 3

Mean MSI-R Scores by Abuse Level – Women and Men

Variable	Abuse Level	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Female	Low <= 21	5.50	4.26	89
	Moderate 22 – 46	6.37	3.68	96
	High 47+	9.24	3.73	93
Male	Low <= 21	3.46	3.74	103
	Moderate 22 – 46	5.72	3.76	83
	High 47+	7.62	4.04	85
Total	Low <= 21	4.41	4.11	192
	Moderate 22 – 46	6.07	3.72	179
	High 47+	8.47	3.95	178

Dependent Variable: MSI-R

Table 4

Bonferroni Comparison – Total for Women and Men

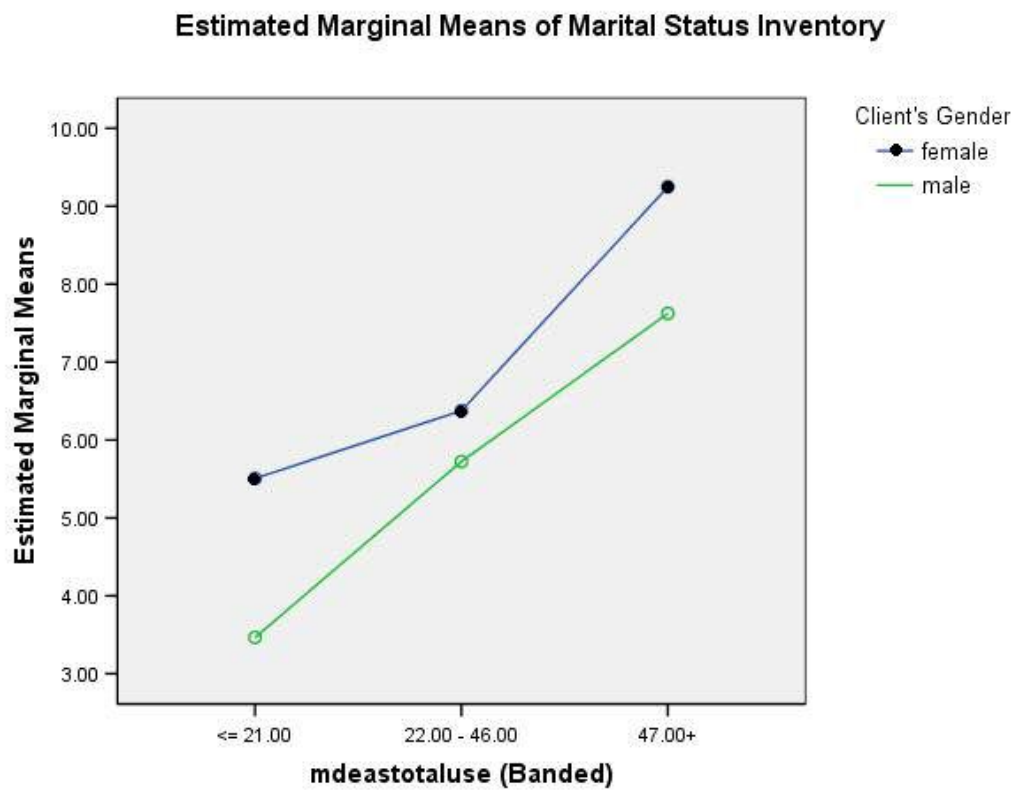
Variable	(I) Abuse	(J) Abuse	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Bonferroni	Low <=21	Moderate 22 – 46	-1.66*	.409	.000
		High 47+	-4.06*	.410	.000
	Moderate 22 – 46	Low <= 21	1.66*	.409	.000
		High 47+	-2.40*	.417	.000
	High 47+	Low <= 21	4.06*	.410	.000
		Moderate 22 - 46	2.40*	.417	.000

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Hypothesis 2: In the Presence of Abuse, women will Take Greater Steps Toward Leaving an Intimate Relationship than men

As experienced abuse increases, steps taken toward leaving a relationship increase for both men and women. Figure 4 shows the plots of mean MSI-R scores for both genders and demonstrates graphically the difference in mean scores shown in Table 3.

Figure 4: Plot: Difference between Men and Women's Mean MSI-R Scores at Each Level of Abuse



At each level of abuse women had a higher mean MSI-R score than men. At low levels of abuse women's mean scores were 2.04 higher than men's. At moderate levels of abuse the mean scores between gender were somewhat closer with women's mean scores 0.65 higher than men's. At high levels of abuse, the difference between mean scores became greater again, with women's mean MSI-R scores 1.6238 higher than men's. It is interesting to note, however, that although tests of between-subjects effects demonstrated that gender has a significant effect upon steps taken to leave a relationship ($p < .000$) and that experienced abuse has a significant effect upon steps taken to leave a relationship ($p < .000$), the interaction of gender and abuse were not demonstrated as having a significant effect upon steps taken toward leaving a relationship ($p = .215$). Table 5 shows the results of tests of between-subjects effects.

Table 5

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	1867.832 ^a	5	373.57	24.89	.000	.186
Intercept	21834.345	1	21834.34	1455.04	.000	.728
Gender	282.486	1	282.49	18.83	.000	.034
Abuse	1449.571	2	724.79	48.30	.000	.151
Gender*Abuse	46.277	2	23.14	1.54	.215	.006

a. R Squared = .186 (Adjusted R Squared = .179)

Additionally, though gender is shown to have a statistically significant effect, based on the partial eta squared for gender, its effect only accounts for 3.4% of the variance in the total model. Based on the differences of mean scores, there is support for the hypothesis that women will take greater steps toward leaving a relationship

than men; however, based on the interaction effect ($p = .215$) women are not any more likely than men to leave an abusive relationship.

Hypothesis 3: Depending on Attachment Style, Individuals Will Take Different Degrees of Steps Toward Leaving a Relationship

It was hypothesized that individuals with different attachment styles (secure, dismissing, preoccupied, and fearful) would take different steps toward leaving a relationship, independent of abuse. Specifically, it was expected that a secure attachment would demonstrate no effect upon steps taken to leave a relationship, dismissing and fearful attachment would have a strong positive effect on steps taken to leave a relationship, and that a preoccupied attachment style would have a negative effect on steps taken to leave a relationship. Table 6 shows the mean MSI-R scores for each attachment group.

Table 6

Mean MSI-R Scores by Attachment Style

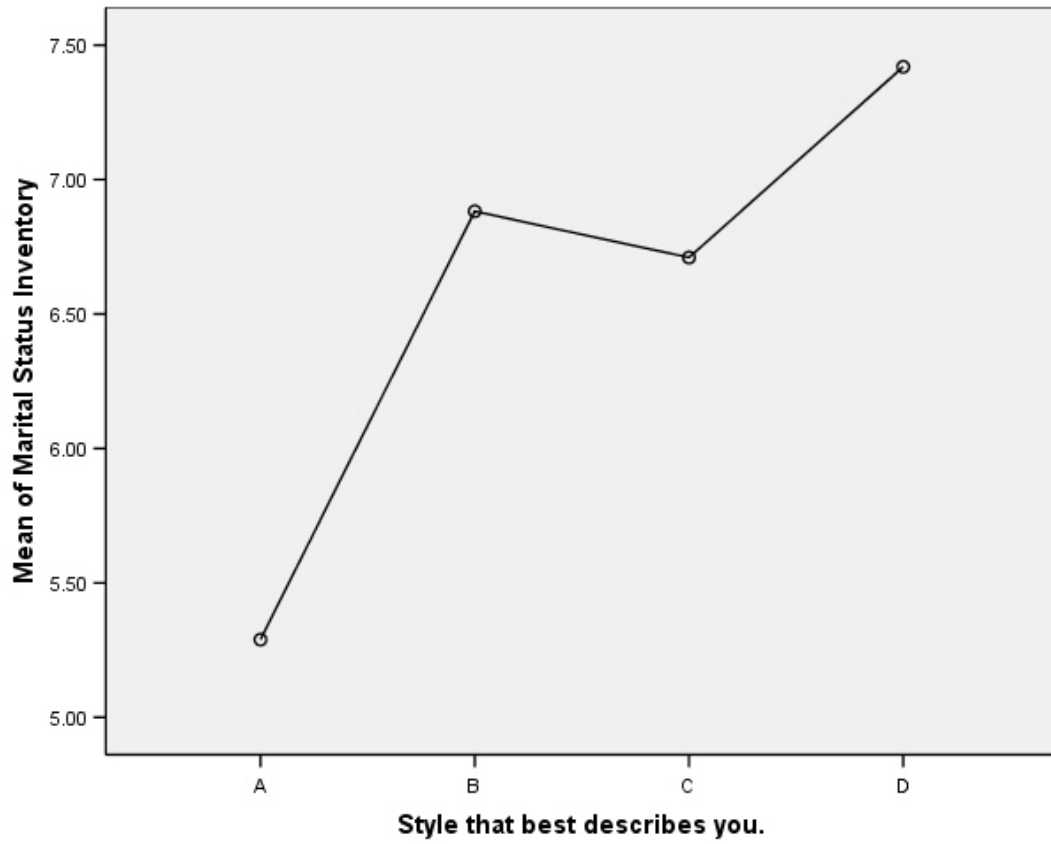
Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Secure	218	5.29	4.30	.291
Fearful	178	6.88	4.13	.310
Preoccupied	69	6.71	3.80	.457
Dismissing	62	7.42	4.43	.563

Dependent Variable: MSI-R

As shown in Table 6, the sample size is not equally distributed across the four attachment styles. Based on the fact that this sample was comprised of couples who had sought therapy it was expected that there would be greater numbers of secure and preoccupied individuals based on their higher expectations of others. It was thus expected that there would be fewer dismissing and fearful individuals based on their

lower interest in others. This, however, was not the case. Most individuals identified themselves as secure (N = 218), which was within expectations. Additionally, the fewest individuals identified themselves as dismissing (N = 62), which was also within expectations. What was not expected was the large number of individuals who identified themselves as fearful (N = 178) as well as the low number of individuals who identified themselves as preoccupied (N = 69). Although there were differences in the mean scores between the groups (see figure 5 for plots of mean scores by attachment style), further examination of post hoc testing revealed that the differences between groups were not always significant. A Bonferroni comparison was conducted (please see Table 7 for results) and revealed that for the entire sample the only group that differed significantly from the others was the secure group. That group only differed significantly from the fearful and dismissing groups. Furthermore, post hoc testing revealed that the preoccupied group did not differ significantly from the other three groups with regards to steps taken toward leaving a relationship. This was also counter to expectations as it was hypothesized that preoccupied individuals would take significantly fewer steps toward leaving a relationship than individuals identified with any of the other three styles of attachment. It should be noted here that although the Bonferroni comparison is less powerful than other tests, it was chosen due to its conservative nature in order to protect against Type I errors from occurring because there were fewer than 100 individuals within the preoccupied and dismissing groups.

Figure 5: Plot: Mean MSI-R Scores by Attachment Style



(A = Secure; B = Fearful; C = Preoccupied; D = Dismissing)

Table 7

Bonferroni Comparison – Attachment Style

Variable	(I) Attachment Style	(J) Attachment Style	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Bonferroni	Secure	Fearful	-1.59*	.42	.001
		Preoccupied	-1.42	.58	.087
		Dismissing	-2.13*	.60	.003
	Fearful	Secure	1.59*	.42	.001
		Preoccupied	.172	.60	1.00
		Dismissing	-.537	.62	1.00
	Preoccupied	Secure	1.42	.58	.087
		Fearful	-.17	.60	1.00
		Dismissing	-.71	.73	1.00
	Dismissing	Secure	2.13*	.60	.003
		Fearful	.54	.62	1.00
		Preoccupied	.71	.73	1.00

*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Gender differences within this hypothesis were examined through the use of ANOVA as well. Women’s mean MSI-R scores within each attachment group were higher than men’s with the exception of the preoccupied group. Table 8 shows the mean scores for women and men within each attachment style. There was a difference of 2.13 between secure women’s mean MSI-R scores (6.44) and men’s (4.31). There was a difference of 1.01 between fearful women’s mean MSI-R scores (7.29) and men’s (6.28). There was a difference of 2.87 between dismissing women’s mean MSI-R scores (9.04) and men’s (6.17). Preoccupied men, however, did have slightly higher mean MSI-R scores (6.95) than women (6.38) for a difference of .57 between them. Tests of between-subjects effects (please see Table 9 for test results) revealed that both gender ($p = .001$) and attachment style ($p < .001$) had a significant effect upon steps taken to leave a relationship. In addition, there was a nearly significant ($p = .052$) interaction effect between gender and attachment style when

explaining steps taken to leave a relationship. Therefore, separate ANOVAs were conducted for each gender in order to further examine this interaction.

Table 8

Mean MSI-R Scores by Attachment Style by Gender

Variable	Attachment Style	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Female	Secure	6.44	4.20	100
	Fearful	7.29	4.30	106
	Preoccupied	6.38	3.48	29
	Dismissing	9.04	4.20	27
Male	Secure	4.31	4.15	118
	Fearful	6.28	3.82	72
	Preoccupied	6.95	4.04	40
	Dismissing	6.17	4.25	35

Dependent Variable: MSI-R

Table 9

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

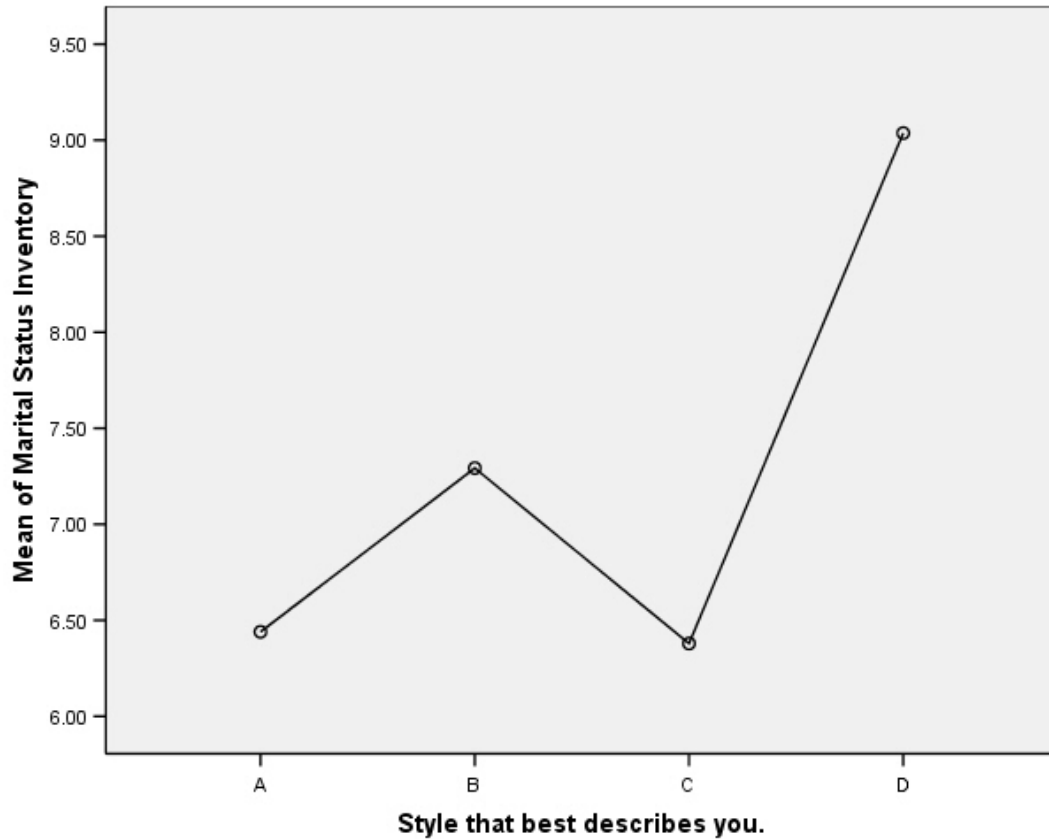
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	791.259 ^a	7	113.04	6.68	< .001	.083
Intercept	16743.770	1	16743.77	988.73	< .001	.656
Gender	177.067	1	177.08	10.46	.001	.020
Attachment	337.243	3	112.41	6.64	< .001	.037
Gender*Attachment	131.843	3	43.95	2.50	.052	.015

a. R Squared = .083 (Adjusted R Squared = .070)

Separate ANOVAs were run to test the difference between attachment groups on steps taken to leave a relationship by gender (please see Figure 6 for plotted MSI-R scores of women by attachment style, Figure 7 for plotted MSI-R scores of men by attachment style, and Figure 8 for plotted MSI-R scores of men and women by attachment style). Post hoc testing using Bonferroni's comparison revealed a significant difference ($p = .026$) between the mean scores of secure women (6.44) and

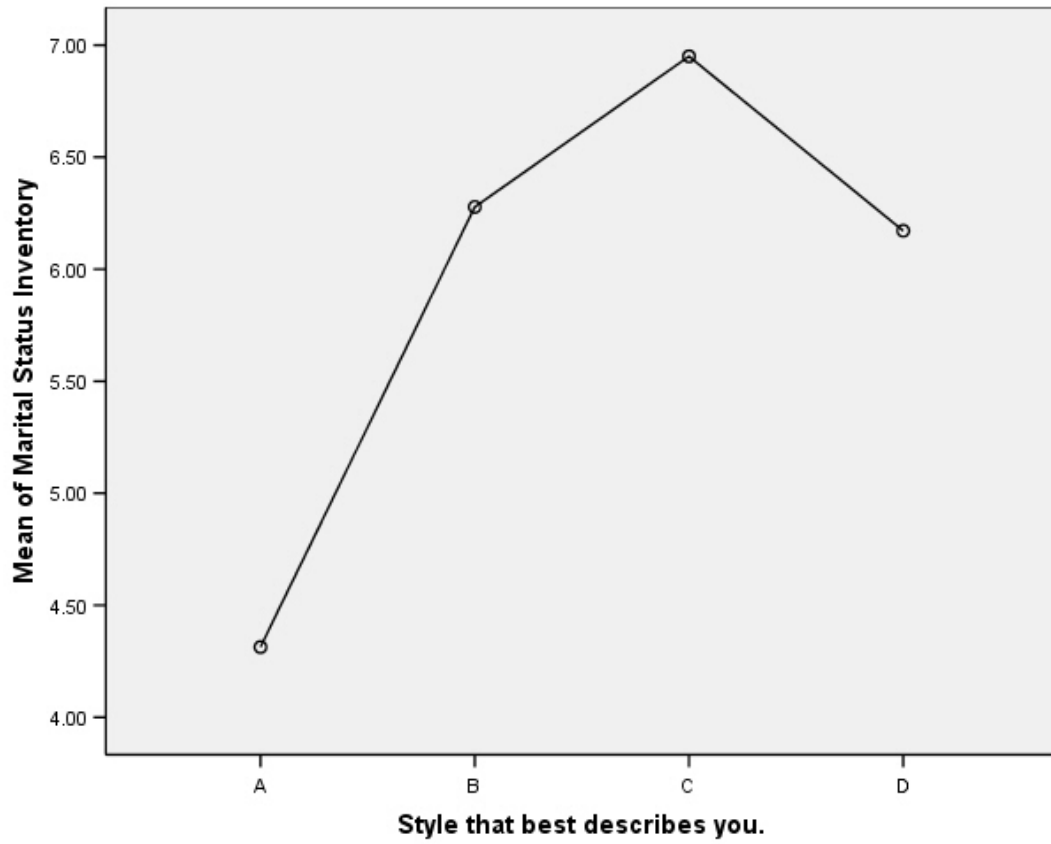
dismissing women (9.04) (please see Table 10) whereas secure men (4.31) differed significantly ($p = .008$) from fearful men (6.28) and from ($p = .003$) preoccupied men (6.95) (please see Table 11).

Figure 6: Plot: Women's Mean MSI-R Scores by Attachment Style



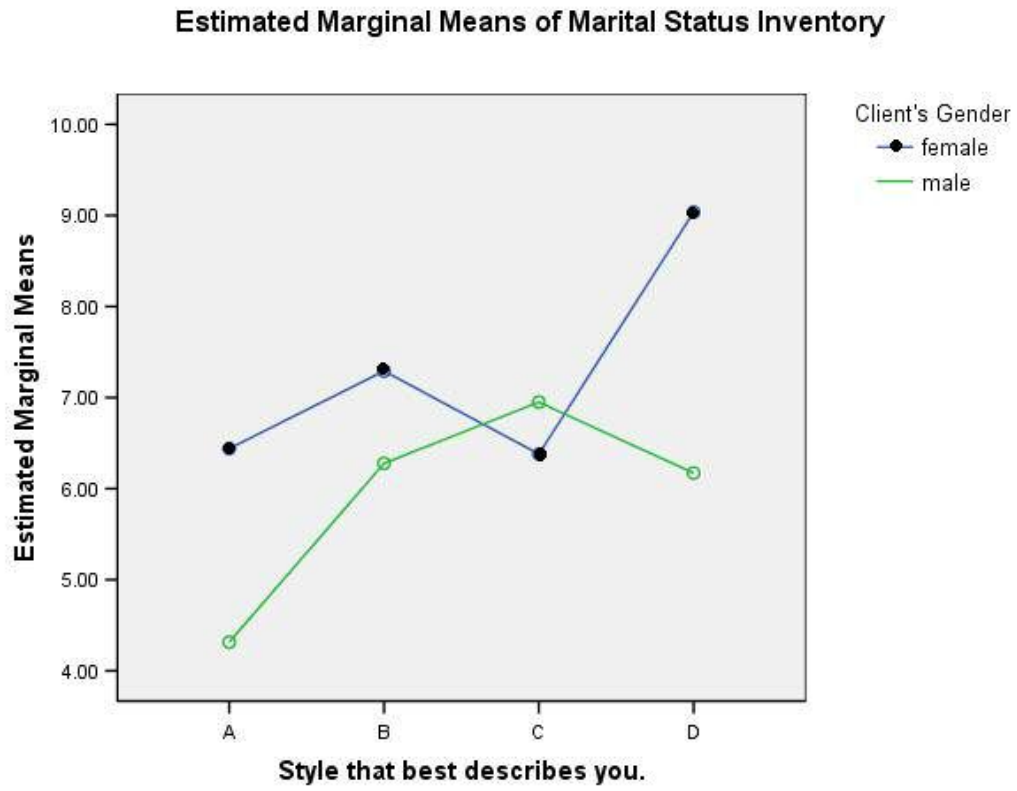
A = Secure; B = Fearful; C = Preoccupied; D = Dismissing

Figure 7: Plot: Men's Mean MSI-R Scores by Attachment Style



A = Secure; B = Fearful; C = Preoccupied; D = Dismissing

Figure 8: Plot: Women's and Men's Mean MSI-R Scores by Attachment Style



A = Secure; B = Fearful; C = Preoccupied; D = Dismissing

Table 10

Bonferroni Comparison (Women)

Variable	(I) Attachment Style	(J) Attachment Style	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Bonferroni	Secure	Fearful	-.85	.58	.861
		Preoccupied	-.06	.88	1.00
		Dismissing	-2.60*	.90	.026
	Fearful	Secure	.85	.58	.861
		Preoccupied	.91	.87	1.00
		Dismissing	-1.74	.90	.320
	Preoccupied	Secure	-.06	.88	1.00
		Fearful	-.91	.87	1.00
		Dismissing	-2.66	1.11	.107
	Dismissing	Secure	2.60*	.90	.026
		Fearful	1.74	.90	.320
		Preoccupied	2.66	1.11	.107

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Table 11

Bonferroni Comparison (Men)

Variable	(I) Attachment Style	(J) Attachment Style	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Bonferroni	Secure	Fearful	-1.96*	.61	.008
		Preoccupied	-2.64*	.74	.003
		Dismissing	-1.86	.78	.109
	Fearful	Secure	1.96*	.61	.008
		Preoccupied	-.67	.80	1.00
		Dismissing	.11	.84	1.00
	Preoccupied	Secure	2.64*	.74	.003
		Fearful	.67	.80	1.00
		Dismissing	.78	.94	1.00
	Dismissing	Secure	1.86	.78	.109
		Fearful	-.11	.84	1.00
		Preoccupied	-.78	.94	1.00

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Hypothesis 4: The Relationship Between Steps Taken Toward Leaving a Relationship and Abuse will Differ Depending on an Individual's Attachment Style

It was hypothesized that, in the presence of abuse, secure and dismissing individuals would take steps toward leaving a relationship and fearful individuals would take the greatest number of steps toward leaving a relationship whereas preoccupied individuals would take the fewest steps toward leaving a relationship among the four styles of attachment. While it was initially planned to control for income and length of relationship, due to the findings during correlation testing that there was no significant relationship between steps taken to leave a relationship and income or length of relationship it was determined that it was unnecessary to control for these factors. An ANOVA was conducted in order to examine mean MSI-R scores of individuals as a function of abuse levels and different attachment styles. As demonstrated by previous univariate analyses, tests of between-subjects effects confirmed that the effects of emotional abuse ($p < .001$) and attachment ($p < .001$) were significantly related to steps taken toward leaving a relationship. The interaction effect of attachment and abuse was near the trend level ($p = .066$). However, the interaction effect of attachment, abuse, and gender was found to be significant ($p = .029$). Table 12 shows the results of the tests of between-subjects effects.

Table 12

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: MSI-R Marital Status Inventory

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	2364.372 ^a	23	102.80	7.17	< .001	.249
Intercept	16320.172	1	16320.17	1137.59	.000	.696
Attachment	274.918	3	91.64	6.39	.000	.037
Abuse	550.754	2	275.38	19.20	.000	.072
Gender	169.158	1	169.16	11.79	.001	.023
Attachment * Abuse	170.893	6	28.48	1.99	.066	.023
Attachment * Gender	84.634	3	28.21	1.97	.118	.012
Abuse * Gender	61.709	2	30.85	2.15	.117	.009
Attachment * Abuse * Gender	203.501	6	33.92	2.36	.029	.028

a. R Squared = .249 (Adjusted R Squared = .214)

Based upon the presence of significance when examining the interaction between attachment, abuse, and gender, it was determined that separate analyses should be conducted for each gender in order to determine whether men or women were responsible for the lack of significant interaction effect. This proved to be important as tests of between-subjects effects for women showed a highly significant association ($p = .003$) for steps taken to leave a relationship as a function of the interaction between attachment styles and abuse levels. In contrast, for men there was no significant relationship ($p = .434$) for steps taken to leave a relationship as a function of the interaction of attachment and abuse. Furthermore, when testing the differences in mean MSI-R scores among men based upon attachment style and level of emotional abuse, a Levene's test of equality of error variances resulted in a high level of significance ($p = .016$), indicating that equal variances among the different

groups of men cannot be assumed, thus violating one of the primary assumptions necessary for conducting analysis of variance. Tables 13 and 14 demonstrate the results of the tests of between-subjects effects for women and men.

Table 13

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects (Women)

Dependent Variable: MSI-R Marital Status Inventory

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	1065.002 ^a	11	96.89	6.78	.000	.230
Intercept	9090.039	1	9090.04	636.54	.000	.719
Attachment	194.231	3	64.74	4.53	.004	.052
Abuse	228.776	2	114.39	9.01	.000	.060
Attachment * Abuse	296.691	6	49.23	3.46	.003	.077

a. R Squared = .230 (Adjusted R Squared = .196)

Table 14

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects (Men)

Dependent Variable: MSI-R Marital Status Inventory

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	992.668 ^a	11	90.24	6.26	.000	.217
Intercept	7232.511	1	7232.51	501.82	.000	.669
Attachment	155.839	3	51.95	3.60	.014	.042
Abuse	400.653	2	200.33	13.90	.000	.101
Attachment * Abuse	85.386	6	14.23	.99	.434	.023

a. R Squared = .249 (Adjusted R Squared = .214)

In support of the initial hypothesis, among secure women there was a positive trend between abuse and steps taken to leave a relationship, with mean MSI-R scores increasing as the level of abuse increased. Fearful women's mean MSI-R scores partially supported the initial hypothesis. Fearful women had the lowest overall mean MSI-R score (4.81) at the low level of abuse among the four attachment types, which does not support the initial hypothesis. However, fearful women had the highest mean MSI-R score (10.73) at the high level of abuse among the four attachment types. However, in contrast to this, dismissing women had the highest of all mean MSI-R scores at the low level of abuse (11.00), whereas it was expected that fearful individuals would have the highest mean scores at each level of abuse. Counter to what was initially hypothesized; dismissing women had a higher mean MSI-R score at the low level of abuse (11.00) than at the moderate (7.57) and high (8.77) levels of abuse. The mean MSI-R scores of preoccupied women appear to only partially support the initial hypothesis. Preoccupied women had the lowest mean MSI-R score at the moderate level of abuse (4.82) of all the mean MSI-R scores at any level of abuse. Preoccupied women also had the lowest mean MSI-R score at the high level of abuse (7.88) among the four attachment types at that level of abuse. However, preoccupied women had a higher mean score (6.90) at the low level of abuse than both secure women (4.94) and fearful women (4.81). Table 15 demonstrates the mean MSI-R for each attachment style at each level of abuse. Figure 9 shows the plotted women's mean MSI-R scores at each level of abuse by attachment style.

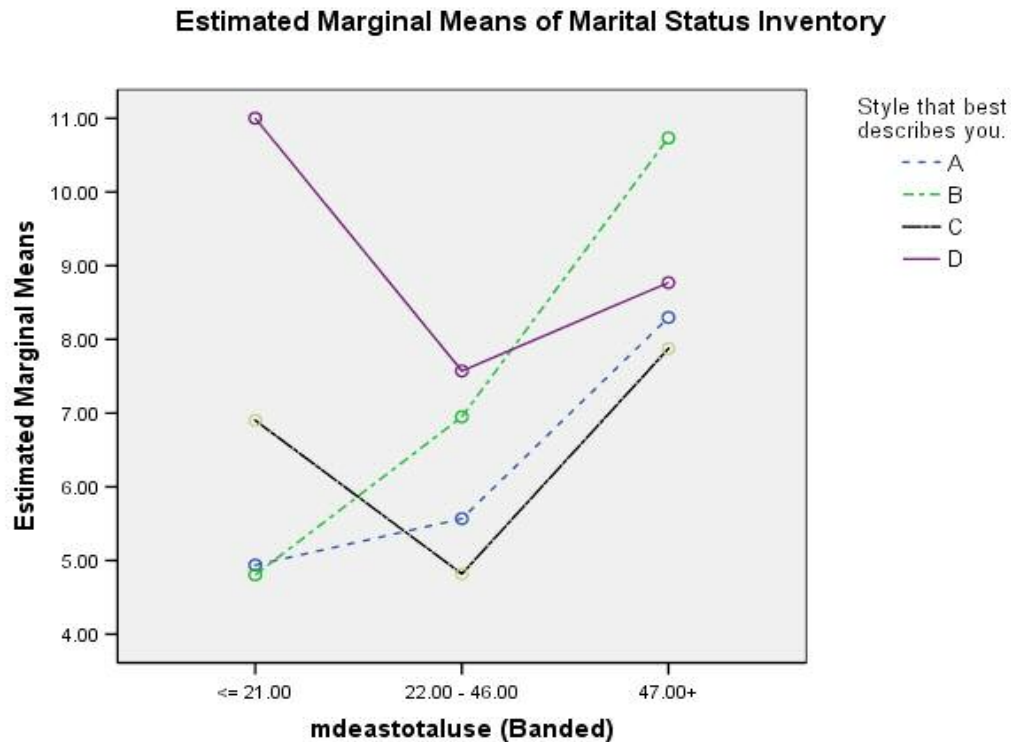
Table 15

Women's Mean MSI-R Scores at Different Levels of Abuse by Attachment Style

Dependent Variable: MSI-R Marital Status Inventory

Attachment Style	Level of Abuse	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Secure	Low <= 21.00	4.94	4.22693	32
	Mod. 22.00 - 46.00	5.57	3.69233	30
	High 47.00+	8.30	3.87918	37
	Total	6.38	4.18137	99
Fearful	Low <= 21.00	4.81	4.03428	36
	Mod. 22.00 - 46.00	6.95	3.55867	40
	High 47.00+	10.73	3.18329	30
	Total	7.29	4.29832	106
Preoccupied	Low <= 21.00	6.90	3.24722	10
	Mod. 22.00 - 46.00	4.82	3.81623	11
	High 47.00+	7.88	2.69590	8
	Total	6.38	3.47865	29
Dismissing	Low <= 21.00	11.00	3.87298	7
	Mod. 22.00 - 46.00	7.57	3.64496	7
	High 47.00+	8.77	4.53052	13
	Total	9.04	4.20148	27
Total	Low <= 21.00	5.61	4.31800	85
	Mod. 22.00 - 46.00	6.26	3.68749	88
	High 47.00+	9.16	3.79015	88
	Total	7.03	4.21573	261

Figure 9: Plot: Women's Mean MSI-R Scores by Attachment Style



A = Secure; B = Fearful; C = Preoccupied; D = Dismissing

A post hoc pairwise comparison of women's mean MSI-R scores at the three levels of abuse was conducted through the use of a Bonferroni comparison. Within attachment styles, only the secure and fearful styles of attachment showed any significant difference between scores at each level of abuse. At low levels of abuse, secure women's mean MSI-R score differed significantly ($p = .019$) from their mean MSI-R score at a high level of abuse. Fearful women's mean MSI-R scores differed in the same fashion as secure women's, with a significant difference ($p < .001$) between mean MSI-R scores at low and high levels of abuse, but also with a significant difference ($p = .003$) between mean MSI-R scores at moderate and high

levels of abuse as well. Table 16 demonstrates the differences in mean MSI-R scores at each level of abuse within each attachment style.

Table 16

Bonferroni Comparison (Women)

Dependent Variable: MSI-R Marital Status Inventory

Variable	(I) Attachment Style and Abuse Level	(J) Attachment Style and Abuse Level	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Bonferroni	Secure and Low Abuse	Secure & Mod.	-.63	.96	1.00
		Secure & High	-3.36*	.91	.019
	Secure and Moderate Abuse	Secure & Low	.629	.96	1.00
		Secure & High	-2.73	.93	.236
	Secure and High Abuse	Secure & Low	3.37*	.91	.019
		Secure & Mod.	2.73	.93	.236
	Fearful and Low Abuse	Fearful & Mod.	-2.14	.87	.936
		Fearful & High	-5.93*	.93	.000
	Fearful and Moderate Abuse	Fearful & Low	2.14	.87	.936
		Fearful & High	-3.78*	.91	.003
	Fearful and High Abuse	Fearful & Low	5.93*	.93	.000
		Fearful & Mod.	3.78	.91	.003
	Preoccupied and Low Abuse	Preocc. & Mod.	2.08	1.65	1.00
		Preocc. & High	-.98	.79	1.00
	Preoccupied and Moderate Abuse	Preocc. & Low	-2.08	1.65	1.00
		Preocc. & High	-3.06	1.76	1.00
	Preoccupied and High Abuse	Preocc. & Low	.98	1.79	1.00
		Preocc. & Mod.	3.06	1.76	1.00
	Dismissing and Low Abuse	Dismiss & Mod.	3.43	2.02	1.00
		Dismiss & High	2.23	1.77	1.00
Dismissing and Moderate Abuse	Dismiss & Low	-3.43	2.02	1.00	
	Dismiss & High	-1.20	1.77	1.00	
Dismissing and High Abuse	Dismiss & Low	-2.23	1.77	1.00	
	Dismiss & Mod.	1.20	1.77	1.00	

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Further examination of the post hoc analysis shows that at each level of abuse mean scores do not necessarily differ significantly among the different attachment styles. At low levels of abuse, securely attached women's mean MSI-R scores only differed significantly ($p = .01$) from women with a dismissing style of attachment.

The same was true of fearfully attached women's mean MSI-R scores at the low level of abuse. They only differed significantly ($p = .006$) from dismissing women.

Preoccupied women's mean MSI-R scores at the low level of abuse did not differ significantly from any of the other three attachment types' mean MSI-R scores. At the moderate and high levels of abuse there were no significant differences among the mean MSI-R scores among the four styles of attachment. Table 17 demonstrates the Bonferroni comparisons among attachment styles at the three levels of abuse.

Table 17

Bonferroni Comparison

Dependent Variable: MSI-R Marital Status Inventory

(I) Attachment*Abuse	(J) Attachment*Abuse	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Secure at Low Abuse	Fearful at Low Abuse	.13	.92	1.000
	Preoccupied at Low Abuse	-1.96	1.37	1.000
	Dismissing at Low Abuse	-6.06(*)	1.58	.010
Secure at Moderate Abuse	Fearful at Moderate Abuse	-1.38	.91	1.000
	Preoccupied at Moderate Abuse	.75	1.33	1.000
	Dismissing at Moderate Abuse	-2.00	1.59	1.000
Secure at High Abuse	Fearful at High Abuse	-2.44	.93	.609
	Fearful at High Abuse	-2.44	.93	.609
	Dismissing at High Abuse	-.47	1.22	1.000
Fearful at Low Abuse	Secure at Low Abuse	-.13	.92	1.000
	Preoccupied at Low Abuse	-2.09	1.35	1.000
	Dismissing at Low Abuse	-6.19*	1.56	.006
Fearful at Moderate Abuse	Secure at Moderate Abuse	1.38	.91	1.000

	Preoccupied at Moderate Abuse	2.13	1.29	1.000
	Dismissing at Moderate Abuse	-.62	1.55	1.000
Fearful at High Abuse	Secure at High Abuse	2.43	.93	.609
	Preoccupied at High Abuse	2.86	1.50	1.000
	Dismissing at High Abuse	1.96	1.25	1.000
Preoccupied at Low Abuse	Secure at Low Abuse	1.96	1.37	1.000
	Fearful at Low Abuse	2.09	1.35	1.000
	Dismissing at Low Abuse	-4.10	1.86	1.000
Preoccupied at Moderate Abuse	Secure at Moderate Abuse	-.75	1.33	1.000
	Fearful at Moderate Abuse	-2.13	1.29	1.000
	Dismissing at Moderate Abuse	-2.75	1.83	1.000
Preoccupied at High Abuse	Secure at High Abuse	-.42	1.47	1.000
	Fearful at High Abuse	-2.86	1.50	1.000
	Dismissing at High Abuse	-.89	1.70	1.000
Dismissing at Low Abuse	Secure at Low Abuse	6.06*	1.58	.010
	Fearful at Low Abuse	6.19*	1.56	.006
	Preoccupied at Low Abuse	4.10	1.86	1.000
Dismissing at Moderate Abuse	Secure at Moderate Abuse	2.00	1.59	1.000
	Fearful at Moderate Abuse	.62	1.55	1.000
	Preoccupied at Moderate Abuse	2.75	1.83	1.000
Dismissing at High Abuse	Secure at High Abuse	.47	1.22	1.000
	Fearful at High Abuse	-1.96	1.25	1.000
	Preoccupied at High Abuse	.89	1.70	1.000

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

The primary goal of this study was to examine whether or not an individual's attachment style moderated the impact of emotional abuse on his or her intent to leave the relationship in which the abuse occurred. In doing so, the main effect of emotional abuse on steps taken to leave a relationship and the main effect of attachment style on steps taken to leave the relationship and their interaction were examined, as well as whether gender differences existed in these effects. The following table (Table 18) summarizes the four main hypotheses of this study as well as whether or not the findings of the study supported these hypotheses.

Table 18

Hypotheses and Results

Hypothesis	Supported?
1 – There will be a positive association between the level of experienced emotional abuse and steps taken toward leaving an intimate relationship.	Yes. Tests demonstrated a moderately positive association between experienced emotional abuse and steps taken toward leaving a relationship.
2 – In the presence of abuse women will take greater steps toward leaving a relationship than men.	Yes. Tests demonstrated that women had higher mean MSI-R scores than men at each level of abuse.
3 – Depending on attachment style, individuals will take different degrees of steps toward leaving a relationship.	Partially. Only secure individuals differed significantly from the other styles of attachment insofar as secure individuals took fewer steps toward leaving their relationships than fearful and dismissing individuals. Additionally, expectations for how attachment would specifically affect steps taken toward leaving a relationship were not met.
4 – Depending on attachment style, individuals will take different degrees of steps toward leaving a relationship at low, moderate, and high levels of abuse.	Partially. The actual interaction effect of attachment style and abuse was only significant among the study’s female participants. Scores within each attachment style did not always differ significantly. Scores also did not always differ significantly between each style of attachment at the same level of abuse and differences were not as expected.

There Will be a Positive Association Between Experienced Emotional Abuse and
Steps Taken to Leave a Relationship

As expected, a correlation test demonstrated a moderate to moderately-strong positive relationship between experienced emotional abuse and steps taken toward leaving a relationship. This was further supported by the results of an analysis of variance that demonstrated an increase of mean MSI-R scores at each higher level of abuse. Additionally, a post hoc analysis demonstrated significant differences between

mean MSI-R scores at each level of abuse. At its most basic level, this study would seem to support prior research that has demonstrated the effects of emotional abuse on individuals' desire to leave their relationships.

In the Presence of Abuse, Women will Take Greater Steps Toward Leaving a Relationship than Men

As hypothesized, women had higher mean MSI-R scores at each level of abuse than men. However, upon closer examination of tests of between-subjects effects, it became apparent that steps taken toward leaving a relationship were not significantly affected by the interaction of gender and abuse. Ultimately, women were not significantly more likely to leave an abusive relationship than men.

Depending on Attachment Style, Individuals will Take Different Steps Toward Leaving a Relationship

This hypothesis was only partially supported by this study's findings. Foremost, it was expected that preoccupied individuals would demonstrate the lowest mean MSI-R scores among all four of the attachment groups. This did not prove to be the case as members of the secure group had significantly lower mean MSI-R scores than members of the fearful and dismissing groups whereas the preoccupied group not only scored higher than the secure group (though not significantly so), but it was not significantly lower than the mean scores of the fearful and dismissing groups. There are a few possible explanations for this result. The first is that securely attached individuals may be more likely to have higher levels of social support available from friends and family. This would make sense when one considers that attachment does not only affect romantic relationships, but all intimate

relationships. As such, a secure individual would likely have more secure relationships to rely on when facing relationship distress. With greater outside support secure individuals may be able to take a more measured pace toward exiting a relationship. Furthermore, this sample is drawn from couples who have entered therapy with the goal of improving their relationships. Based on the theory that secure individuals are able to evaluate their relationships from a more rational standpoint than otherwise attached individuals, another possible explanation is that secure individuals may be waiting to determine whether therapy has been effective before moving toward ending a relationship.

The size of the sample may also have affected the results in testing this hypothesis. Whereas there were 218 secure individuals included in this study, there were only 69 preoccupied individuals. Prior to running frequency tests on the sample, it was initially expected that there would be greater numbers of secure and preoccupied individuals within the sample. This did not turn out to be the case. Initial expectations were correct that the greatest number of participants identified themselves as secure. This would seem to make sense in light of the assumption that secure individuals are able to take a more rational approach toward their relationship difficulties, and as such, would likely consider therapy a viable option for working on their relationship problems. Perhaps the lack of preoccupied individuals could be explained as the result of these individuals easily feeling threatened in their relationships. As such, they may consider entering therapy as an admission that something is wrong with their relationships that could lead to those relationships ending.

Along with the low number of preoccupied participants, the high numbers of fearful participants were also unexpected. Prior to examining the group frequencies within the study it was assumed that there would be few fearful individuals as they would most likely seize upon any relationship problem as a reason to leave. This was due to fearful individuals' belief that they will likely be hurt in an intimate relationship, thus when this fear is proven true, they would exit the relationship rather than work to improve it. However, after secure individuals, the next highest number of individuals (178) identified themselves as fearful. This led to having to reconsider what the fearful style of attachment meant. Perhaps the high number of fearful individuals could be explained by their fear of being hurt. As such, they may be willing to turn to therapy as a means of potentially preventing any further pain that would result from intimacy figuring if they do not improve on the current relationship they are just as likely to be hurt in any subsequent relationship.

The low number of dismissing participants was within expectations. This was due to their identified independent nature. It was expected that due to this, dismissing individuals would not likely pursue couples therapy on their own. Additionally, dismissing individuals would probably not consent to entering therapy either, even if suggested by his or her significant other.

Individuals with Different Attachment Styles will Take Different Steps Toward Leaving a Relationship in the Presence of Emotional Abuse

This hypothesis was only partially supported. Based on tests of between-subjects effects, among men the interaction of attachment style and abuse was not

demonstrated as significantly affecting the steps they take toward leaving a relationship. Each of these variables on its own was demonstrated to have a significant effect upon steps men take toward leaving a relationship. As such it could possibly be concluded that while men's attachment style does significantly affect how they determine to leave their relationship, and while this is also true of emotional abuse, among men, attachment style does not affect how they perceive emotional abuse when considering whether or not to leave a relationship. At this point it can only be concluded that if something does moderate the impact of emotional abuse upon the steps taken to leave a relationship, it is not attachment style.

Among women, however, the interaction of attachment and abuse was significant with regards to their steps taken toward leaving a relationship. The more specific findings, however, only partially support the initial hypothesis. As abuse increased, secure women's mean MSI-R scores did indeed increase, which was initially hypothesized. However, secure women's scores did not increase significantly between the low and moderate as well as the moderate and high levels of abuse. Only between low and high levels of abuse were women's mean MSI-R scores significantly different. Fearful women's scores also increased as abuse increased, and their mean MSI-R scores at low and moderate levels of abuse both differed significantly from their mean MSI-R scores at a high level of emotional abuse. There was not, however, a significant difference between their mean MSI-R scores at low and moderate levels of abuse. From this, we may be able to conclude that among secure and fearful women, the steps taken toward leaving a relationship do not actually begin in earnest until emotional abuse has reached a high level.

Among preoccupied and dismissing women there was no significant difference among MSI-R scores at each level of abuse. Interestingly though, among preoccupied women the mean scores actually decreased between low and moderate levels of abuse before peaking at the high level of abuse. Similar to preoccupied women, dismissing women's mean MSI-R scores decreased between the low and moderate levels of abuse and then increased between the moderate and high levels of abuse. In contrast to all the groups, however, dismissing women's highest mean MSI-R score was at the low level of abuse. It is difficult, however, to consider these results significant at all when one considers that in the study sample only 29 women identified themselves as preoccupied and 27 women identified themselves as dismissing. With such small samples of preoccupied and dismissing within the study it can only be concluded that results are inconclusive.

At each level of abuse, there were few differences among the mean MSI-R scores for each attachment type. Securely attached women's mean MSI-R scores only differed significantly from dismissing women at a low level of abuse. This may be explained by secure individuals' comfort within relationships versus dismissing individuals' insistence upon independence. This also may be the result of a small sample of dismissing women being tested. At a low level of abuse, fearful women also differed from dismissing women, but not from the other two attachment types. This may be the result of fearful individuals not identifying strongly with a need for independence as dismissing individuals do. This also may be the result of a small sample of dismissing women.

Preoccupied women did not differ from any other attachment types at low levels of abuse. In fact, they did not differ from the other attachment styles at any level of abuse. This is difficult to explain in light of preoccupied individuals' identified reliance on intimate relationships as well as their link between intimate relationships and sense of self. Based on this it was hypothesized that not only would preoccupied individuals have significantly different MSI-R scores at each level of abuse, but that they would be significantly lower. Results of this study demonstrate this is not the case. One possible conclusion is that with regards to taking steps toward leaving a relationship, preoccupied individuals do not experience emotional abuse any differently than individuals with other styles of attachment. Another possible explanation is that whereas the MSI-R tests steps taken toward leaving an intimate relationship, this study does not have information on how many of these individuals ultimately left their intimate relationships, and furthermore, whether or not they returned to these relationships later on. These results also may be due to the small sample of preoccupied women within the overall study sample.

As mentioned earlier, dismissing women's mean MSI-R scores differed significantly from the mean MSI-R scores of secure and women at the low abuse level. Otherwise, there were no significant differences at the other levels of abuse or between each level of abuse within the dismissing group. Although it was not deemed significantly different through the data analysis process, it was interesting that of the three groups only dismissing women had the highest mean MSI-R score at the low level of abuse as opposed to at the high level of abuse. Among the four attachment types, dismissing women also had the highest overall score at the

moderate level of abuse. Again, this was not deemed a statistically significant difference by the data analysis. That aside however, it would seem to make sense that dismissing women would score higher in general at each level of abuse due to the fiercely independent nature of individuals identified as dismissing. As such, it would fit that they would be less tolerant of emotionally abusive behaviors which often target an individual's sense of worth and independence. It is important to again note that the sample size of dismissing women was quite small and as such this may have also profoundly impacted how reliable these findings can be considered to be.

Limitations of Current Study

There were several limitations to the current study that must be considered when evaluating its findings. The actual sample must be considered as a limitation for two reasons. First, this study aimed to examine the differences between individuals who identify with different types of attachment styles. However, within the actual sample, there were significantly fewer preoccupied and dismissing individuals in comparison to the number of secure and fearful participants. Additionally, the attachment styles were distributed differently by each gender as well. This could have possibly led to incorrect conclusions regarding how individuals with different attachment types differ from each other in the face of emotional abuse with regards to leaving a relationship as well as the conclusions regarding gender. Second, this sample was drawn from individuals who have sought out couple therapy. As a result, it makes sense to conclude that they will on a whole have taken fewer steps toward leaving their relationships as they are entering therapy in a likely attempt

to improve upon or save their relationships. As a result, overall MSI-R scores from this sample may not necessarily generalize to the population.

The MSI-R measures steps taken toward leaving a relationship but does not necessarily reflect whether or not it has been completely terminated (only a score of 18 can mean certain termination; however, some earlier steps may not be acknowledged while still having filed for divorce, thus a low score could be attained from an individual who has ended his or her relationship). As such, it only measures steps taken toward leaving a relationship and not whether or not a relationship has absolutely ended. Having follow up information about which individuals did end their relationships would likely provide greater insight into how attachment may moderate emotional abuse's impact on whether a relationship ends.

Finally, this study did not include how strongly an individual identifies with his or her style of attachment. The RQ includes a scale on which the user rates how well he or she is identified by each paragraph. As such, an individual who strongly identifies with the preoccupied style of attachment may demonstrate greater differences from other strongly identified styles of attachment. This study did not allow for the nuances inherent to attachment style as well as how it can be measured. Future studies may address this by dividing the sample by not only attachment style but how strongly an individual identifies with an attachment style as well.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings and limitations of the current study there are several recommendations for future research projects. First, it would be of interest to conduct

this study again with a sample that included sufficiently large numbers of individuals who identify with each style of attachment. Furthermore, this study should be conducted with a sample that has not volunteered for therapy and which may be more representative of the general population. This would correct two of the major limitations of the current study.

To build upon the current study further, it would also be of interest to conduct a longitudinal study in order to determine in the long term whether individuals with different attachment styles are more or less likely to end an intimate relationship, and under what conditions the relationships ended. This would be of interest with regards to better understanding intimate relationships in general as well as what factors are important with regards to why intimate relationships end.

This study demonstrated that attachment is significantly associated with steps taken toward leaving a relationship among men, but not how it was significant. Future research should attempt to address how attachment is significant among men as well as whether it is different from how it is significant among women. This could likely be best addressed through some form of qualitative study as this does not appear to be something that can be captured by quantitative measures.

It is also important that further research on abuse focus on men. As demonstrated by this study, emotional abuse plays a significant role in the steps taken by men toward leaving an intimate relationship; however, research on abused men remains far behind research on abused women. It will be important for future researchers to address this.

The final recommendation would likely be mostly of interest to clinicians. It would be interesting to examine the attachment styles of both members of couples in order to determine whether one style of individual is more or less likely to enter into a relationship with another type of attached individual. This could then be carried further in order to investigate dyadic satisfaction, prevalence of abuse, or any number of other factors. Armed with this information, clinicians may be able to better predict the behaviors of the couples they work with and tailor clinical interventions specifically for them based on this information.

Clinical Implications

The first clinical implication that can be drawn from this study is knowledge about the lack of preoccupied and dismissing individuals who are engaging in couple therapy. It remains unknown as to whether on a whole there are fewer such individuals among the entire population. It is important to consider this in light of the fact that these types of attachment do not necessarily lend themselves to healthy relationship functioning. At this juncture, it may be that these individuals are less likely to trust the process of therapy. If this is true, then clinicians must consider how to reach out to these individuals, as they cannot be helped if they do not engage in therapy. Furthermore, clinicians must consider that if such individuals do engage in therapy, they may not demonstrate much patience with therapy's often lengthy nature. As such, these clients may be best served by the clinician making great efforts to specifically engage them early in therapy or by the clinician engaging in brief therapy strategies in order to provide these individuals with positive results early in the therapeutic process until they feel thoroughly invested.

Second, based on this study's findings, it is important for clinicians to note that attachment style appears to apply differently to men and women. At least on a basic level it can be concluded that attachment plays a role in how women perceive emotional abuse within their intimate relationships whereas this is not the case with men. However, attachment plays some role among men as they determine whether or not to leave their relationships. It remains unclear at this juncture how men's attachment style affects their relationships as well as what else it may affect among women. This speaks to not assuming that client behaviors can be easily predicted by their style of attachment. This is especially true in the case of abused clients. Although it would be easy to assume (as this study hypothesized) that certain types of attached individuals would be more likely to accept being abused by an intimate partner, that does not appear to be the case based on the study's conclusions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study demonstrated that among men and women, emotional abuse plays a crucial role in moving toward leaving an intimate relationship. Furthermore, although women had higher mean scores on a measure of leaving a relationship, abuse was demonstrated as being a more important factor than gender in taking steps toward leaving an intimate relationship. This study also demonstrated that individual attachment style has a significant effect upon the steps an individual takes toward leaving a relationship. It also raised a number of important questions regarding what role attachment style plays in the decisions individuals make regarding leaving a relationship in which emotional abuse is present. Ideally future researchers will further examine this important aspect of how individuals experience

intimate relationships.

APPENDICES: MEASURES

Appendix A

MDEAS (ASSESSMENT)

No matter how well a couple gets along, there are times when they disagree, get annoyed with the other person, want different things from each other, or just have spats or fights because they are in a bad mood, are tired, or for some other reason. Couples also have many different ways of trying to settle their differences. This is a list of things that might happen when you have differences. Please circle how many times you did each of these things **IN THE PAST 4 MONTHS**, and how many times your partner did them in the **IN THE PAST 4 MONTHS**. If you or your partner did not do one of these things in the past 4 months, but it happened before that, circle 0.

(0) Not in the past four months, but it did happen before (3) 3-5 times (6) More than 20 times
 (1) Once (4) 6-10 times (9) This has never happened
 (2) Twice (5) 11-20 times

	How Often in the last 4 months?								
1. Asked the other person where s/he had been or who s/he was with in a suspicious manner.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
2. Secretly searched through the other person's belongings.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
3. Tried to stop the other person from seeing certain friends or family members.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
4. Complained that the other person spends too much time with friends.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
5. Got angry because the other person went somewhere without telling him/her.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
6. Tried to make the other person feel guilty for not spending enough time together.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
7. Checked up on the other person by asking friends where s/he was or who s/he was with.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
8. Said or implied that the other person was stupid.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
9. Called the other person worthless.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
10. Called the other person ugly.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
11. Criticized the other person's appearance.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
12. Called the other person a loser, failure, or similar term.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9

How Often in the last 4 months?

13. Belittled the other person in front of other people.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
14. Said that someone else would be a better girlfriend or boyfriend.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
15. Became so angry that s/he was unable or unwilling To talk.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
16. Acted cold or distant when angry.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
17. Refused to have any discussion of a problem.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
18. Changed the subject on purpose when the other person was trying to discuss a problem.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
19. Refused to acknowledge a problem that the other felt was important.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
20. Sulked or refused to talk about an issue.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
21. Intentionally avoided the other person during a conflict or disagreement.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
22. Became angry enough to frighten the other person.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
23. Put her/his face right in front of the other person's face to make a point more forcefully.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
24. Threatened to hit the other person.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
25. Threaten to throw something at the other person.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
26. Threw, smashed, hit, or kicked something in front of the other person.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
27. Drove recklessly to frighten the other person.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
28. Stood or hovered over the other person during a conflict or disagreement.	You:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9
	Your partner:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9

RQ (Assessment)

1. The following are descriptions of four general relationship styles that people often report. Please circle the letter corresponding to the style that best describes you or is closest to the way you are in your relationships with **PEOPLE IN GENERAL**.
 - A. It is relatively easy for me to be emotionally close to others. I am comfortable depending on others and having others depend on me. I don't worry about being alone or having others not accept me.
 - B. I am somewhat uncomfortable getting close to others. I want emotionally close relationships, but I find it difficult to trust others completely, or to depend on them. I sometimes worry that I will be hurt if I allow myself to become too close to others.
 - C. I want to be completely emotionally intimate with others, but I often find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I am uncomfortable being without close relationships, and I sometimes worry that others don't value me as I value them.
 - D. I am comfortable without close relationships. It is very important to me to feel independent and self-sufficient, and I prefer not to depend on others or have others depend on me.
2. Now please rate each of the relationship styles above according to the extent to which you think each description corresponds to your general relationship styles.

	Very Much like me			Somewhat like me		Not at All like me	
Style A.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Style B.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Style C.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Style D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

MSI-R (assessment)

We would like to get an idea of how your relationship stands right now. Within the past four months have you...

Yes ___ No___ 1. Had frequent thoughts about separating from your partner, as much as once a week or so.

Yes ___ No___ 2. Occasionally thought about separation or divorce, usually after an argument.

Yes ___ No___ 3. Thought specifically about separation, for example how to divide belongings, where to live, or who would get the children.

Yes ___ No___ 4. Seriously thought about the costs and benefits of ending the relationship.

Yes ___ No___ 5. Considered a divorce or separation a few times other than during or shortly after a fight, but only in general terms.

Yes ___ No___ 6. Made specific plans to discuss separation with your partner, for example what you would say.

Yes ___ No___ 7. Discussed separation (or divorce) with someone other than your partner (trusted friend, minister, counselor, relative).

Yes ___ No___ 8. Discussed plans for moving out with friends or relatives.

Yes ___ No___ 9. As a preparation for living on your own, set up an independent bank account in your own name to protect your interest.

Yes ___ No___ 10. Suggested to your partner that you wish to have a separation.

Yes ___ No___ 11. Discussed separation (or divorce) seriously with your partner.

Yes ___ No___ 12. Your partner moved furniture or belongings to another residence.

Yes ___ No___ 13. Consulted an attorney about legal separation, a stay away order, or divorce.

Yes ___ No___ 14. Separated from your partner with plans to end the relationship.

Yes ___ No___ 15. Separated from your partner, but with plans to get back together.

Yes ___ No___ 16. File for a legal separation.

Yes ___ No___ 17. Reached final decision on child custody, visitation, and division of property.

Yes ___ No___ 18. Filed for divorce or ended the relationship.

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