CONTEXTUALIZING ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN CHILDHOOD EMOTIONAL NEGLECT AND LATER ADULT INTERPERSONAL FUNCTIONING: EVIDENCE FROM TWO STUDIES

by

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(Under the Direction of Anne Shaffer)

ABSTRACT

Childhood emotional neglect has been consistently understudied and requires empirical research to better understand how this form of maltreatment may impact, and impede, later interpersonal functioning in adulthood. While emotional maltreatment, including emotional abuse, has been linked to a variety of difficulties in adulthood, childhood emotional neglect has not been given the same attention. Thus, the purpose of the current studies was to elucidate associations between childhood emotional neglect and later relationship functioning. Associations were also contextualized to better understand if and how a history of emotional neglect predicted later relationship behaviors. Study one explored the association between childhood emotional neglect and young adult dating violence in a sample of 58 college students in a dating relationship. Partners' adult attachment was used as a moderator to contextualize the influence of childhood emotional neglect on later dating aggression and victimization. Study two aimed to investigate the potential association between a maternal history of childhood emotional neglect on later parent-child dysfunction, while also considering how child negativity affectivity, both reported by mothers and via observational ratings, interacted with mothers' emotional

neglect history to influence perceived and observed parent-child dysfunction in a sample of 96 mother-child dyads. Clinical implications of the current findings are discussed.

INDEX WORDS: Emotional neglect, dating violence, parenting, adult attachment

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DEDICATION

To my parents, Patrick and Rhona Madden, for their unconditional love and support. Whose shoulders boosted, propelled, and at times, carried me. All towards opening an opportunity for me to choose a different path – a career of meaning, not one of necessity. To the strong, courageous, and intelligent women in my life – thank you. You all have taught and inspired me, laughed and cried along side of me, and will always be beacons of love and hope. To those I have worked with along the way, who put their trust in an anxious graduate student to understand and gently hold their pain, vulnerability, and resilience - I am forever honored. And to the little girl, who dared to dream.

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CHAPTER 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The study of emotional maltreatment has consistently, and unequivocally, demonstrated the pervasiveness of this form of trauma on deleterious outcomes throughout the lifespan (Hart, Binggeli, & Brassard, 1997; Mullen, Martin, Anderson, Romans, & Herbison, 1996). Substantiated incidence rates of emotional maltreatment has tripled between 1998 and 2003 (Chamberland, Fallon, Black, & Trocmé, 2011), with community studies suggesting that between 10 to 45 percent of adults have experienced childhood emotional maltreatment (Edwards, Holden, Felitti, & Anda, 2003; Scher, Forde, McQuaid, & Stein, 2004). However, emotional maltreatment is the least studied and under-reported form of childhood maltreatment (Barnet, Miller-Perrin, &Perrin, 2005).

From the literature that does exist, emotional maltreatment has been linked to structural and functional brain differences (van Harmelen et al., 2010; van Harmelen et al., 2012), psychopathology (Gibb et al., 2001; Mills, Newman, Cossar, & Murray, 2015; Tyrka, Wyche, Kelly, Price, & Carpenter, 2009), physiological dysregulation (Bruce, Fisher, Pears, & Levine, 2009; Cicchetti & Rogosch, 2001), as well as relationship difficulties (Messman-Moore & Coates, 2007; Reyome, 2010). However, childhood emotional abuse and emotional neglect, the two forms of emotional maltreatment that comprise the construct, are not typically differentiated in the literature; and when they are examined separately, emotional neglect is not as thoroughly studied as its counterpart. Given high endorsement rates and the widespread maladaptive outcomes proceeding emotional maltreatment, in conjunction with the paucity of research on

childhood emotional neglect, it seems that this invisible form of childhood maltreatment warrants further study. Thus, the goal of this dissertation was to examine associations between experiences of childhood emotional neglect and later adult interpersonal outcomes as well as to investigate contextual factors that may shed light on how emotional neglect predicts maladaptive long-term interpersonal functioning.

Emotional Maltreatment Overview

Research on childhood emotional abuse and emotional neglect has been widely entwined throughout the extant literature via terms such as psychological maltreatment and emotional maltreatment. According to the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (APSAC), emotional maltreatment is defined as, "the communication to a child that he or she is worthless, flawed, unloved, endangered, or only valuable in meeting someone else's needs" (APSAC, 2010, p. 127). This definition also includes six categories that characterize how a caregiver perpetrates emotional maltreatment, including terrorizing (e.g., behavior that threatens the physical safety of the child and/or loved ones), isolating (e.g., the denial of opportunities for the child to communicate and express themselves with others), denying emotional responsiveness (e.g., failing to express positive affect to the child, showing no emotional responses towards the child), spurning (e.g., hostile communications, denigration, rejection of the child's needs), neglect (e.g., failing to provide for, or ignoring, the child's emotional needs), and exploiting/corrupting (e.g., the encouragement of inappropriate behaviors including engaging in illegal activities).

While this definition is widely used throughout the current literature, other researchers have attempted to define and provide insight into the parenting relationship and associated behaviors that comprise emotional maltreatment. As defined by Glaser (2002), emotional abuse

and neglect characterize a parent-child relationship in which harmful, nonphysical interactions are present that can cause difficulties for the child. However, motivation to harm the child is not a prerequisite. Glaser (1993) also proposes five categories of emotional abuse and emotional neglect. The first includes emotional unavailability, unresponsiveness, and neglect by the parental figure. Similar to the category of neglect and denial of emotional responsiveness put forth by APSAC (2010), this includes caregivers that are preoccupied with life stressors (e.g., overwhelming work duties) and/or psychiatric illnesses (e.g., substance abuse, depression) that then lead to unavailability to the child and the child's emotional needs. The second category includes negative attributions and misattributions to the child, which is characterized by parental hostility, denigration, and rejection towards the child. Again, this class has substantial overlap with APSAC's (2010) definition of spurning. The third category includes developmentally inappropriate or inconsistent interactions with the child, which can include parentification (e.g., expecting the child to fulfill instrumental or emotion needs of the parent that are beyond the child's developmental capabilities) as well as the disregard for a child's need to explore and learn within their environment. Also present within this category is child exposure to trauma and domestic violence. While this class includes parentification not mentioned in the APSAC (2010) definition, it is similar to terrorizing (e.g., threatening or physically harming a child's loved one) and isolation (e.g., overprotection could lead to feelings of isolation and limited interactions with others). The fourth category is defined by the failure of parental figures to recognize or acknowledge the child's individuality and psychological boundaries. Consistent with boundary dissolution (see Shaffer & Sroufe, 2005), this category includes the parental figure using the child to fulfill the parent's needs and parental difficulties distinguishing boundaries between self and child. Examples of this then include spousification, enmeshment, role-reversals, and

intrusive behaviors. Of note, these relationship patterns are not mentioned in the APSAC (2010) definition of emotional maltreatment. Finally, category five involves a failure to promote successful social adaptation for the child. This can include corrupting the child as well as providing insufficient opportunities for learning and exploring, which is similar to the exploitation category in the APSAC definition (2010).

Interestingly, many of the categories set forth by Glaser (1993, 2002) have overlapping features. For example, categories three and four both include boundary dissolution and parentification, and categories three and five both include a failure by the parent to provide opportunities for the child to learn and explore the environment. This seems to create difficulties distinguishing the dimensions of emotional abuse and neglect set forth by Glaser (1993, 2002). Further, while overlap exists between the APSAC (2010) and Glaser's (1993, 2002) definition of emotional maltreatment, there are also differences between the definitions, including boundary dissolution, that cause difficulties in operationally defining what constitutes as emotional maltreatment.

Although research on the topic of emotional maltreatment has begun to grow, differences in definition can impact how we understand the sequelae of emotional maltreatment, emotional abuse, as well as emotional neglect. However, prior to forming a universal definition of emotional maltreatment, it seems advantageous and worthwhile to consider, examine, and define the two forms of abuse and neglect that comprise emotional maltreatment. While research has started to accumulate in the field of emotional abuse, this trend does not appear to be taking place in the study of emotional neglect. This gap in the literature severely impedes our ability to understand, prevent, and intervene upon parenting behaviors that can have lasting consequences into adulthood.

Childhood Emotional Neglect

Childhood neglect has been broadly defined as behaviors or interactions within the parent-child relationship that do not meet the basic needs of the child, including emotional support and nurturance (Dubowitz, Black, Starr, & Zuravin, 1993). Wolfe (1985) further expanded on this by indicating that neglectful parents do not respond to child-rearing demands, and instead avoid or disengage from parental responsibilities. Throughout the literature, emotional neglect has been defined as "inadequate nurturing or affection" (Chamberland, Fallon, Black, & Trocmé, 2011), the harm of a child "through lack of care" (Burgess & Conger, 1978), "the failure to connect emotionally" (Crittenden, 1999), and as the "complete disengagement between parents and their children" (Gauthier, Stollak, Messe, & Aronoff, 1996). Thus, while there are some differences in the operational definition of emotional neglect, it seems apparent that the construct includes parental unavailability, via avoidance and/or disengagement, to their child's emotional needs. This is an important distinction, as emotional neglect then is the *lack of engagement* in meeting a child's basic emotional needs whereas emotional abuse is the *active engagement* in behaviors that hinder and deteriorate the child's sense of worth and safety (e.g., rejecting behaviors, isolating behaviors, verbal insults, humiliating punishments, exploitation, corruption or encouragement to engage in deviant or delinquent activities, threats of abandonment or physical harm; Garbarino, Guttmann, & Seeley, 1986; Hart, Binggeli, & Brassard, 1997; Brodeur, 1998).

While research supports that childhood emotional abuse and emotional neglect frequently co-occur (Dong et al., 2004; Wright, Crawford, & Del Castillo, 2009), these two forms of emotional maltreatment are different in definition and conceptualization. A child who experiences emotional abuse is interacting with a parent who is *actively* participating in the

parent-child relationship, while a child who experiences emotional neglect has a parent who is *disengaged* from the parent-child relationship. Thus, the messages sent to children who experience emotional abuse are likely different from the messages a child receives from a parent who is unavailable, and largely emotionally absent from, the parent-child relationship, which in turn might lead to different maladaptive schemas as well as long-term outcomes. In order to gain a better understanding of how emotional maltreatment influences and predicts later deleterious outcomes, it is important to first look at these constructs separately, as lumping them together does not provide insight into possible unique outcome differences between the two. Examining emotional maltreatment as a whole might also create untested assumptions about stand-alone influences of emotional abuse and emotional neglect. Although less research has been conducted specifically examining childhood emotional neglect, extant literature suggests that emotional neglect has serious, widespread consequences. Specifically, experiences of childhood emotional neglect has been linked to child adjustment difficulties (Sturge-Apple, Davies, & Cummings, 2006), differences in brain functioning (Maheu et al., 2010; White et al., 2012), suicidal ideation, self-injury, and psychopathology in adolescence (Lipschitz et al., 1999; Young, Lennie, & Minnis, 2011), increased loneliness and social isolation in young adulthood (Loos & Alexander, 1997), general psychological distress and familial adaptability in young adulthood (Wark, Kruczek, & Boley, 2003), and adult psychopathology (Lang, Stein, Kennedy, & Foy, 2004; Spertus, Yehuda, Wong, Halligan, & Seremetis, 2003).

Research on maternal psychological unavailability seems to overlap with the construct of emotional neglect, and thus is also important to consider. Psychological unavailability is a dimensional construct that, at the extreme end, is used to describe mothers who are emotionally distant, uninvolved, detached, and unresponsive to a child's bid for comfort, support, or help

(Egeland & Erickson, 1987). Psychological unavailability is derived from observational methods that analyze the interactions between mothers and their children during play and feeding tasks, and has been used to describe emotional neglect (see Egeland, Yates, Appleyard, & Van Dulmen, 2002). From this branch of literature, maternal psychological unavailability has been associated with a broad range of negative child outcomes, including antisocial behaviors, dissociation, insecure attachment, and stress reactivity (Egeland & Sroufe, 1981; Egeland, Yates, Appleyard, & Van Dulmen, 2002; Ogawa, Sroufe, Weinfield, Carlson, & Egeland, 1997; Sturge-Apple, Davies, Cicchetti, & Manning, 2012). Thus, taken together with research on childhood emotional neglect, it appears that parental disengagement and lack of responsiveness with a child can influence pervasive, and long-lasting, consequences.

Emotional Neglect and Later Interpersonal Functioning: Theoretical Framework

Several different theoretical perspectives can be used to understand how experiences of childhood emotional neglect can predict later interpersonal difficulties. Attachment theory posits that internal working models of the primary caregiver, self, and the relation between self and others are created during early caregiver-child interactions that then influence perception and responses to others throughout childhood and adulthood (Bowlby, 1982). As an example, attachment theory, by invoking internal working models of relationships, has been widely used to explain adult romantic relationship patterns (Hazen & Shaver, 1987, 1994). Attachment theory emphasizes the importance of parental sensitivity for the development, and maintenance of, a secure attachment (Ainsworth, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1982). In a secure attachment, the parent provides a secure base, by which the child can confidently explore their surroundings as well as successfully reconnect with their parent. Thus, the parent's availability, accurate perception of the child's needs, and response to the child are paramount. Experiences of

childhood maltreatment are believed to hinder secure attachment to the primary caregiver due to difficulties in these domains. When the parent is unavailable and unresponsive to their child's needs, higher levels of negative emotionality, later difficulties in romantic relationships, as well as intergenerational parenting difficulties can emerge (McCarthy and Taylor, 1999; Serbin & Karp, 2003; Styron & Janoff-Bulman, 1997). Specifically, a history of emotional neglect might instill negative beliefs about self (e.g., "I am worthless," "I am unlovable") which might then result in ineffective and maladaptive long-term working models of self, others, and self-in-relation to others (Riso et al., 2006; Rogosch, Cicchetti, Shields, & Toth, 1995; Waldinger, Toth, & Gerber, 2001).

Expanding from attachment theory, Davies and Cummings (1994) put forth the emotional security hypothesis, which also posits emotional security as the main goal and provision of early parent-child interactions. Although this theory was originally designed to understand how exposure to martial conflict in childhood disrupts child emotional security, it seems particularly relevant to the development of long-term maladjustment following a history of childhood emotional neglect. Emotional security is described as a regulatory process involved in several response systems that influences a child's ability to cope effectively with stressors in their environment (Cummings & Davies, 1996). Marital conflict is one family context that can be associated with compromised parenting behavior, including a reduced availability/sensitivity to the child, which subsequently undermines the child's sense of emotional security (Cummings & Davies, 1995; Davies & Cummings, 1994). These compromised parenting behaviors have overlapping features with emotional neglect (e.g., limited emotional availability for the child) thus making the emotional security hypothesis applicable to the study of emotional neglect.

Emotional security can be adversely affected when the child is not confident in the availability and predictability of his or her parent, as in the case of emotionally neglectful parents. Emotional insecurity, in turn, directly influences the child's emotion regulation capacities (i.e., their ability to regulate emotions, overt behavioral expressions of emotions, and physiological functioning), serves to motivate the child to attempt to regulate parent behaviors to achieve emotional security, and influences cognitive appraisals as well as internal working models of relationships (Davies & Cummings, 1994). Together, these processes are thought to influence long-term adjustment patterns. Although most research testing the emotional security hypothesis has focused on outcomes measured in childhood, there has been some evidence to suggest that undermining emotional security in childhood can result in deleterious consequences in young adulthood (see Mann & Gilliom, 2004).

The parent-child relationship may also serve as a model for how one engages in close relationships with significant others, consistent with social learning principles (Bandura, 1977). If early experiences with a caregiver were marked with disengagement and emotional unavailability, these patterns may be learned and carried forward through close relationships across the lifespan. An emotion socialization framework is also relevant, as the ways in which parents inform and teach children about emotions also guides later emotion regulation strategies, behaviors, and cognitions. Specifically, providing emotional support and teaching children about their emotions is thought to lead to greater child emotional awareness and understanding, which in turn promotes effective regulation (Denham, 1989, 1993, 1997; Denham & Grout, 1993; Eisenberg, Cumberland & Spinrad, 1998). In contrast, childhood emotional neglect is characterized by a lack of support and parental disengagement. It is unlikely then, that a child who has experienced emotional neglect adequately learns about their emotions and,

consequently, how to regulate their emotions. Thus, the child would be more likely to believe that emotions are unmanageable, question the acceptability of emotion expression, and have a poor understanding of effective emotion regulation and associated coping strategies. If these experiences are not corrected, emotion knowledge and understanding as well as associated beliefs about emotions can leak into adulthood.

Purpose of Current Studies

Although current literature has begun to elucidate how a history of childhood emotional abuse, and emotional maltreatment as a whole, influence long-term interpersonal outcomes, less is known about how childhood emotional neglect impacts various relationships in adulthood. This might be because interactions that threaten a child's sense of physical safety (e.g., intimidation, terrorization) are more easily identified, while emotional neglect, or the omission of emotional availability and engagement, is more difficult to recognize (Chamberland, Fallon, Black, & Trocmé, 2011). Thus, the purpose of the current studies aimed to examine maladaptive parenting and young adult dating outcomes associated with a history of childhood emotional neglect as well as consider contextual variables that may amplify or buffer these relations.

CHAPTER 2

CHILDHOOD EMOTIONAL NEGLECT AND DATING VIOLENCE IN YOUNG ADULTHOOD: THE MODERATING ROLE OF ADULT PARTNER ATTACHMENT

Dating violence in young adulthood is a prevalent concern, as the incidence of physical and sexual dating violence victimization in young adulthood has been shown to be at approximately forty percent (Halpern, Spriggs, Martin, & Kupper, 2009). Within adolescent and young adult samples, displays of physical aggression in dating relationships have been estimated at thirty-three to fifty percent (Makepeace 1981; Straus and Gelles 1986; Sugarman and Hotaling 1989; Wolfe, Scott, Reitzel-Jaffe, & Wekerle, 2001). It appears that both males and females perpetrate violence against their intimate partners and that violence in romantic relationships, whether they be dating or marital unions, is often mutual (Capaldi and Crosby 1997; Cascardi and Vivian 1995; Molidor and Tolman 1998). Within young adulthood, there is also growing evidence that both males and females tend to report approximately the same level of dating aggression, with family of origin relationship quality and childhood maltreatment significantly predicting aggression in dating relationships (Fang & Corso, 2007; Linder, Crick, & Collins, 2002).

Extant literature has generally supported a model in which a childhood maltreatment history significantly predicts dating violence. Within a sample of young adults who have experienced severe dating violence, as measured by police arrests for this type of violence as well as restraining order requests, there is evidence that young adults with a maltreatment history, as compared to a control group without a maltreatment history, were more likely to

perpetrate violence within their dating relationship (Millett, Kohl, Jonson-Reid, Drake, & Petra, 2013). Millett and colleagues (2013) also found support that young adult men with a maltreatment history, as compared to young adult females with a maltreatment history, had higher dating violence perpetration rates. Specific to emotional forms of maltreatment, childhood emotional abuse is predictive of both dating aggression and victimization in young adulthood (Crawford & Wright, 2007; Sappington, Pharr, Tunstall, & Rickert, 1997), with some research suggesting that childhood emotional abuse is a stronger predictor than other forms of maltreatment on dating aggression and victimization in young adulthood (e.g., Berzenski & Yates, 2010; Zurbriggen et al., 2010). However, less is known about how experiences of childhood emotional neglect may predict young adult dating violence. Although some studies have suggested that a history of childhood emotional neglect is not positively associated with the perpetration of dating violence (Lang, Stein, Kennedy, & Foy, 2004; Roberts, McLaughlin, Conron, & Koenen, 2011), there is no research to the author's knowledge that examines contextual factors that may interact with a history of childhood emotional neglect to increase dating aggression nor are there any studies that look at the direct effect of childhood emotional neglect on later dating violence victimization in young adulthood.

While research has often considered individuals' own adult attachment-related beliefs as predictive of relationship and interpersonal functioning (Haggerty, Hilsenroth, & ValaStewart, 2009; McCarthy & Taylor, 1999; Wright, Crawford, & Del Castillo, 2009), less research has focused on the role of the partner's attachment history and attachment-related beliefs (for an exception, see Salvatore, Kuo, Steele, Simpson, & Collins, 2011). Studying how partner characteristics, like adult attachment, interact with an individual's childhood emotional neglect history serves to increase our understanding of dyadic vulnerabilities that heighten the risk for

dating violence. Consistent with this theoretical framework, Doumas and colleagues (2008) describe a "mispairing" of dating partners that significantly increases dating violence, in which males who endorse high avoidant attachment pair with females who indicate high attachment anxiety. While this study did not examine how instances of childhood maltreatment, and emotional neglect in particular, impact this mispairing, attachment theory and emotional security hypothesis posit that limited parental availability and sensitivity in childhood can impede emotion regulation strategies, behavioral expressions of emotions, as well as internal working models of relationships in young adulthood, which in turn can influence dating dyadic processes and maladaptive interactions (Bowlby, 1982; Hazen & Shaver, 1987, 1994).

Adult romantic attachment is conceptualized as an extension of childhood attachment and can be used to identify attachment (in)security in dating partners (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). However, as compared to early childhood attachment styles, adult attachment is mostly viewed through a dimensional framework rather than categorically (Fraley & Shaver, 2000). Specifically, Fraley and colleagues (2000) provide evidence for a two-dimensional view of romantic attachment that encompasses anxious and avoidant attachment, where anxious attachment-related cognitions encompass beliefs regarding their dating partner's availability and responsiveness, and adult avoidant attachment-related cognitions include beliefs about the dependability of their dating partner as well as the individual's comfort in dating relationships. Thus, young adults who have low attachment anxiety and avoidance would be characterized as secure, as these individuals would not typically experience fear of abandonment and are comfortable in engaging in close dating relationships.

Specific to insecure adult attachment, avoidant attachment has been associated with higher levels of self-reliance and ambivalence as well as lower reports of proximity-seeking in

romantic relationships (Brennan & Shaver, 1995). With regard to dating violence, there is some evidence that avoidant attachment predicts overall dating violence revictimization, psychological aggression when individuals are under high stress, and coercive sexual behaviors (Gormley & Lopez, 2010; Kuijpers, van der Knaap, & Winkel, 2012; Smallbone & Dadds, 2001). In line with avoidant-related beliefs, ambivalence in dating relationships has been significantly associated with both aggression and victimization, and high levels of self-reliance being linked to victimization (Linder, Crick, & Collins, 2002). Given current findings in the literature, it may be that partners who have higher levels of avoidant attachment-related beliefs distance themselves in a relationship, which may affirm or trigger negative schemas of the individual who has a childhood emotional neglect history, leading to dating difficulties and violence.

In contrast to avoidant attachment, higher levels of anxious attachment has been associated with jealousy, clinginess, and low trust (Brennan & Shaver, 1995). However, like avoidant attachment beliefs, anxious attachment has also been linked to dating violence victimization and perpetration (Doumas, Pearson, Elgin, & McKinley, 2008; Riggs & Kaminski, 2010). In line with these findings, Linder, Crick, and Collins (2002), found associations with anxious attachment beliefs and related behaviors (i.e., anxious clinging, jealousy) and dating violence perpetration as well as victimization in young adulthood. To better understand the mechanisms underlying the association between adult attachment and dating violence, Follingstad and colleagues (2002) investigated, and found support for, a model in which high levels of anxious adult attachment significantly predicts anger, which then predicts a desire to control dating partners, and ultimately influences violence perpetration in young adult dating relationships. In a similar vein, Doumas and colleagues (2008) investigated partner and individual adult attachment and found support for a specific cyclical model of dating violence,

where females high in anxious attachment, and who were dating males who had high levels of avoidant attachment, were at an increased risk for dating violence victimization, which in turn led to a heightened risk for these females engaging in the perpetration of dating violence. Findings are in line with previous research that indicates dating violence is often mutual (Baker, 2008; Capaldi & Crosby, 1997) and suggest that discrepancies in partner's needs and attachment cognitions, including closeness versus distance and reassurance versus separateness, can lead to dating violence.

Taken together, if an individual with a childhood emotional neglect history engages in a dating relationship with a partner who has an insecure adult attachment, it seems likely that this interaction could increase the risk for dating violence. However, there is no research, to the author's knowledge, that has investigated if and how an individual's emotional neglect history interacts with a partner's insecure adult attachment to predict dating outcomes. Thus, by examining how one's partner's attachment interacts with one's own childhood emotional neglect, we can contextualize and conceptualize if and how a history of childhood emotional neglect impacts young adult dating aggression and victimization. Since a direct effect of childhood emotional abuse has been linked to dating perpetration (Zurbriggen et al., 2010), and partner's attachment have been associated with dating violence (Baker, 2008; Doumas, Pearson, Elgin, & McKinley, 2008), it seems plausible that childhood emotional neglect might also directly and/or indirectly influence young adult dating violence. By doing so, the identification of risk factors such as partner attachment and individual experiences of childhood emotional neglect can be used to better understand processes of young adult dating violence and inform points of clinical intervention.

Given the limited amount of empirical literature on long-term interpersonal outcomes following a history of childhood emotional neglect, the present study aimed to address how emotional neglect might influence maladaptive dating behaviors in young adulthood. Although a history of childhood emotional abuse has been linked to dating violence (Zurbriggen et al., 2010), research has yet to test if childhood emotional neglect is also associated with young adult dating violence. It was hypothesized, based on theoretical evidence, that a history of childhood emotional neglect would be significantly positively related to young adult dating violence perpetration as well as victimization.

In addition, due to literature supporting widespread consequences of insecure attachment in dating relationships (Li & Chan, 2012), including evidence to suggest that both avoidant and anxious attachment beliefs can influence dating violence (Doumas, Pearson, Elgin, & McKinley, 2008; Kuijpers, van der Knaap, & Winkel, 2012; Smallbone & Dadds, 2001), the present study also investigated if and how one's partner's attachment influenced the association between an individual history of childhood emotional neglect and young adult dating victimization and aggression. Specifically, partners' anxious and avoidant attachment beliefs were examined as moderating variables, so that the relation between childhood emotional neglect and young adult dating violence was analyzed at low (1 standard deviation below the mean), average, and high (1 standard deviation above the mean) levels of both types of insecure attachment reported by the dating partner. It was hypothesized that higher levels of partner avoidant and anxious attachment would moderate the association between childhood emotional neglect and later dating victimization and aggression, such that high levels of either anxious or avoidant partner attachment would interact with a self-reported history of childhood emotional neglect to enhance the risk of dating aggression and victimization.

Method

Participants

Participants in the current study were a part of a larger investigation designed to examine predictors of young adult dating outcomes. Participants were recruited from a southeastern U.S. university through the Department of Psychology's Research Participant Pool as well as via flyers that were distributed around campus. Participants were required to be at least 18 years old and in a current dating relationship of at least one month's duration. The sample included 58 individuals (47 females, 11 males) between the ages of 18 and 24 (*M* age = 19.47, *SD* = 1.39) who were in heterosexual dating relationships. Relationship duration ranged from 1 to 66 months, with a median length of 13 months (*M* = 18.55, *SD* = 15.98). The ethnic composition was as follows: 67.2% of participants were Caucasian, 13.8% Asian, 8.6% Hispanic, 1.7% African American, 6.9% mixed race, and 1.7% identified as "other." The University of Georgia's Institutional Review Board approved the present study and informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Procedure

Respondents were instructed to complete an online survey using Survey Monkey, a website that meets the U.S. Department of Commerce's Safe Harbor Privacy Standards. The survey took approximately two hours to complete and all items included a "prefer not to answer" answer selection. Informed consent was obtained prior to the start of the online survey and all participants were assigned a personal identification number to ensure confidentiality. Research credit for those in a psychology course was used as an incentive for participation. Participants recruited via flyers were entered into a raffle for a $50 gift card. Participants who endorsed being in a current romantic relationship were then asked to complete an additional 2.5-hour assessment

in a laboratory setting with their current partners. During this second phase, participants were given the choice of additional research credit hours or $20 as an incentive to participate. All partners of the participants received $20 for their participation.

Measures

The Child Trauma Questionnaire (CTQ; Bernstein & Fink, 1998). The CTQ is a self-report measure used to assess retrospective histories of childhood maltreatment. The questionnaire is comprised of 28 items and includes five subscales of childhood maltreatment (physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, physical neglect, and emotional neglect). The item responses are rated on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*never true*) to 5 (*very often true*). For the present study, the emotional neglect subscale was used as the independent variable. Sample items for this scale include, "there was someone in my family who helped me feel that I was important or special" and, "I felt loved." Items were then reversed scored so that lower scores on these items indicated a higher level of emotional neglect endorsement. This measure has been used extensively in the literature with acceptable reliability (e.g., Bradbury & Shaffer, 2012; Perry, DiLillo, & Peugh, 2007). The internal consistency of the emotional neglect subscale was adequate in the current sample (α = .85).

The Conflict Tactics Scale-Revised (CTS2; Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996). The CTS2 is a 78-item self-report questionnaire that contains five subscales for victimization and aggression (physical assault, psychological aggression, negotiation, injury, and sexual coercion) to examine various types of conflict in current dating relationships. Item responses are on an 8-point scale that ranges from 0 (*no frequency, has never happened*) to 6 (*high frequency, more than 20 times in the past year*) and includes a seventh option for lifetime prevalence of dating violence (*not in the past year, but it has happened*). This measure has been

used extensively in the literature to assess interpersonal violence within romantic relationships (e.g., Lilly & Graham-Bermann, 2010).

A composite of dating aggression within the participant's current relationship was created by rescoring psychological aggression, physical aggression, sexual aggression, and injury items as either 0 (this behavior has not occurred in the current dating relationship) or 1 (this behavior has occurred in the current dating relationship). Mirroring the composite for dating aggression, a composite was used to assess dating victimization using psychological victimization, physical victimization, sexual victimization, and injury. Thus, reports of dating aggression and victimization could range from 0 (no occurrence of behavior) to 32 (all aggressive/victimization behaviors occurred). This computation has been used successfully in the extant literature to assess interpersonal violence in romantic relationships (Harding, Morelen, Thomassin, Bradbury, & Shaffer, 2013). The total composite scores from dating aggression and victimization were used as the dependent variables in the current analyses. Internal reliability for victimization and aggression subscales was adequate for both indices (dating aggression α = .79; dating victimization α = .78).

Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised (ECR-R; Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000). The ECR-R is a 36-item self-report measure used to assess romantic attachment-related cognitions. Dating partners of the study participants were instructed to use the 7-point scale that ranges from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) to complete the measure. The ECR-R includes two subscales used to assess romantic attachment avoidance (sample item: "I don't feel comfortable opening up to romantic partners") and romantic attachment anxiety (sample item: "I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me"). This measure has been widely used throughout the literature (e.g., Haggerty, Hilsenroth, & Vala-Stewart, 2009; McDermott &

Lopez, 2013). For the current study, both subscales were used as moderating variables. The internal consistency of the two subscales was adequate (avoidance $\alpha = .89$; anxiety $\alpha = .92$).

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations

Possible covariates were examined prior to conducting the primary analyses. Independent samples *t*-tests assessed potential gender differences among the variables of interest; no significant differences emerged. One-way ANOVAs were examined to determine if there were racial or dating length differences among the variables of interest; no significant differences emerged. It was therefore concluded that no demographic variables needed to be controlled for in the primary analyses. The average report of emotional neglect in the current study was consistent rates reported in other young adult college samples ($M = 8.28$, $SD = 3.08$; e.g., Paivio & Cramer, 2004; Scher, Stein, Asmundson, McCreary, & Forde, 2001). Reports of dating victimization ($M = 2.59$, $SD = 2.79$) and aggression ($M = 3.24$, $SD = 3.02$) were also is consistent with young adult community samples (e.g., Harding, Morelen, Thomassin, Bradbury, & Shaffer, 2013). Average reports of adult attachment anxiety ($M = 38.09$, $SD = 17.76$) and avoidance ($M = 35.30$, $SD = 16.31$) were higher in the current study when compared to other young adult samples that utilized the same measure of attachment security (e.g., Scott, Levy, & Pincus, 2009; Wei, Russell, & Zakalik, 2005).

Bivariate correlations were then examined to assess for significant relationships among the study variables. Childhood emotional neglect was not found to be significantly associated with any other study variables (see Table 1). Experiences of dating victimization and aggression were significantly and positively correlated ($r = .82$, $p < .001$). Dating victimization was also positively correlated with partner avoidant and anxious attachment ($r = .32$, $p = .01$; $r = .32$, $p =$

.02, respectively). Dating violence perpetration was significantly related to partner avoidant attachment (r = .31, p = .02), but was not significantly related to partner anxious attachment (r = .17, p = .21). Partner avoidant and anxious attachment were also positively correlated (r = .55, p < .001). Although results indicated that individual experiences of childhood emotional neglect were not correlated with later dating aggression or victimization in young adulthood, it was still possible for there to be a significant interaction between individual-reported childhood emotional neglect and partner-reported attachment in predicting dating victimization and perpetration. Therefore, moderation results were conducted.

Primary Analyses

Moderation analyses were run using the PROCESS macro in SPSS version 22 (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) to examine how a self-reported history of childhood emotional neglect interacts with their dating partner's adult attachment, both anxious and avoidant, at low (i.e., one standard deviation below the mean), average, and high (i.e., one standard deviation above the mean) levels in predicting self-reported young adult dating aggression and victimization. Moderation analyses via the PROCESS macro used 1000 bootstrapped samples to determine interactions, with significant interactions indicated when the 95% confidence intervals (CI) did not include zero. All variables were centered prior to analyses.

Results indicated that there was no direct effect between childhood emotional neglect and dating aggression (t = 1.15, p = .26, 95% CI = -.11 to .41) nor was there a significant interaction between childhood emotional neglect and partner-reported anxiety attachment in predicting dating aggression (F (1, 53) = 1.21; CI = -.01 to .03; p = .28; total R^2 = .07; ΔR^2 = .02; see Table 2 and Figure 1). The moderating role of partner-reported avoidant attachment was also

nonsignificant in the association between childhood emotional neglect and dating aggression (F (1, 51) = .07; CI = -.01 to .02; p = .79; total R^2 = .10; ΔR^2 < .01; see Table 3 and Figure 2).

A similar pattern of results was found in predicting dating victimization. Specifically, results indicated that there was no direct effect between childhood emotional neglect and dating victimization (t = .68, p = .50, 95% CI = -.15, .31) nor was there a significant interaction between childhood emotional neglect and partner-reported anxiety attachment in predicting dating victimization (F (1, 53) = .49; CI = -.01 to .02; p = .49; total R^2 = .12; ΔR^2 < .01; see Table 4 and Figure 3). The moderating role of partner-reported avoidant attachment was also nonsignificant in the association between childhood emotional neglect and dating victimization (F (1, 51) = .12; CI = -.01 to .02; p = .73; total R^2 = .10; ΔR^2 < .01; see Table 5 and Figure 4).

Post-hoc analyses were conducted to examine if associations with study variables and self-reported childhood emotional abuse were the same, or similar to, childhood emotional neglect (see Table 1). Like emotional neglect, an individual's history of emotional abuse was not found to be associated with either form of partner attachment (anxious attachment r = -.03, p = .82; avoidant attachment r = .20, p = .14). However, unlike childhood emotional neglect, childhood emotional abuse was significantly correlated with dating victimization (r = .26, p < .05) and was trending in the expected direction with dating aggression (r = .25, p = .09). Reports of childhood emotional abuse and emotional neglect were also significantly correlated (r = .53, p < .001).

Discussion

The goal of the current study was to investigate associations between an individual's childhood emotional neglect history and later young adult dating violence perpetration as well as victimization. Possible associations were also probed for the moderating role of romantic

partners' adult attachment to examine the extent to which an individual's history of childhood emotional neglect interacts with their partner's adult attachment orientation to predict dating aggression and victimization in a young adult college sample. In general, hypotheses in the current study were not supported. Childhood emotional neglect was not shown to be significantly associated with later self-reported young adult dating violence aggression or victimization. In addition, partners' adult attachment orientations, both anxious and avoidant, were not found to significantly moderate the relation between a self-reported history of childhood emotional neglect and dating victimization or aggression. However, consistent with previous research, dating victimization and aggression were positively correlated (Jain, Buka, Subramanian, & Molnar, 2010; Linder, Crick, & Collins, 2002), which suggests that dating violence is often mutual between partners, with higher levels of aggression predicting higher levels of victimization and vice versa.

Also in line with extant literature, having a partner who endorsed more avoidant attachment-related beliefs was positively related to both self-reported dating victimization and aggression (Kuijpers, van der Knaap, & Winkel, 2012; Linder, Crick, & Collins, 2002). It may be that those with higher levels of avoidant attachment express more emotional distance and a reluctance to rely on their partner in their relationships, which then might lead their partner (the participant of the current study) to engage in aggressive acts in an attempt to engage or control their partner. On the other hand, those with higher levels of emotional distance and self-reliance might be more likely to engage in aggressive acts within their dating relationships since these individuals are likely to rely less on their partner and may react aggressively when their partner engages in attempts to control or keep them close.

While partners' anxious attachment-related beliefs were related to self-reported dating victimization, they were not related to self-reports of dating aggression toward their partners. This contrasts with previous literature that has found this association (e.g., Doumas, Pearson, Elgin, & McKinley, 2008). It may be the case that partners' adult anxious attachment was not related to self-reported perpetration of aggressive acts within dating relationships because partners' high in anxious attachment may be less trusting (Brennan & Shaver, 1995), and therefore more sensitive to, warning signs of dating violence. This sensitivity might then serve to influence decision making processes related to ending dating relationships where aggression is high. However, this sensitivity within dating relationships might also become maladaptive, as individuals with higher attachment anxiety are more likely to fear abandonment, engage in clingy behaviors, and worry about the dissolution of the relationship (Brennan & Shaver, 1995). Consistent with Follingstad and colleagues (2002), this might then lead to a partner with high anxious attachment to engage in dating aggression in an attempt to control the individual and avoid abandonment.

The current results also indicate a significant association between partner avoidant and anxious attachment, which is in line with previous research regarding the association of these two-dimensional models of attachment (Lee & Hankin, 2009; Scott, Levy, & Pincus, 2009; Wei, Russell, & Zakalik, 2005). As indicated by Fraley and colleagues (2000), high attachment avoidance and high attachment anxiety are not mutually exclusive, and may reflect a fearful-avoidant adult attachment style, in which individuals desire closeness in their dating relationship and worry about abandonment and, at the same time, avoid closeness and dependency on their partner.

A primary goal of this study was to consider how partners' attachment orientation could moderate associations between participants' history of emotional neglect and later dating violence. In contrast to hypotheses, partner attachment, both anxious and avoidant, were not found to be moderators between self-reported experiences of childhood emotional neglect and later dating violence. Given that emotional neglect was not directly related to dating violence, but partner attachment in general was directly related to dating violence, it seems that partners' attachment-related beliefs are more predictive of dating violence and may interact with other individual and partner variables to increase or buffer dating violence risk. For example, it may be that a "mismatch" between individual and partner attachment increases dating violence risk (Doumas, Pearson, Elgin, & McKinley, 2008).

The current findings also suggest that while childhood emotional neglect was not related to later dating violence, both aggression and victimization, childhood emotional abuse was positively associated with dating violence victimization and was trending in the expected direction for dating aggression. These results are in line with previous literature that has established a link between childhood emotional abuse and later dating violence (Berzenski & Yates, 2010; Crawford & Wright, 2007; Sappington, Pharr, Tunstall, & Rickert, 1997; Zurbriggen et al., 2010). The lack of an association between childhood emotional neglect and dating aggression seems to be consistent with other studies (Lang, Stein, Kennedy, & Foy, 2004; Roberts, McLaughlin, Conron, & Koenen, 2011). However, the relationship between childhood emotional neglect and dating violence victimization in young adulthood had not been previously examined to the author's knowledge.

Although these findings warrant further study and replication, it might be that childhood emotional abuse is related to dating violence, as opposed to childhood emotional neglect, due to

the unique nature of the active engagement emotional abuse encompasses. As an example, individuals within dating relationships may be modeling behaviors that resemble past childhood emotional abuse (i.e., psychological aggression). This would likely be in opposition of the modeling of behaviors learned in experiences of emotional neglect in dating relationships, as this likely resembles detachment and emotional distance. These results also align with theoretical evidence that messages sent to children who experience emotional abuse are likely different from messages sent to children who have a parent who is emotionally unavailable and absent from the parent-child relationship. Subsequently, it would be expected that this would lead to different schemas about self, others, and self in relation to others as well as predict different long-term outcomes. There is also evidence to suggest that childhood histories of other forms of maltreatment, particularly emotional abuse and physical abuse, interact with partner attachment to increase the risk for physical dating violence (Baker, 2008). Thus, the present study also provides evidence that childhood emotional neglect and emotional abuse do not predict the same outcomes. Although childhood emotional neglect and emotional abuse were correlated, which has been a widespread finding throughout the literature (Soffer, Gilboa–Schechtman, & Shahar, 008; Spertus, Yehuda, Wong, Halligan, & Seremetis, 2003; Wright, Crawford, & Del Castillo, 2009), they seem to be predicting, or not predicting, different outcomes.

It is notable that this study had several limitations, including a small sample size of young adults who were attending college. Thus, this sample is likely not representative of all young adults nor of adults in a community setting, and it therefore seems advantageous to replicate and expand upon these findings within other populations (e.g., childhood maltreatment sample, psychiatric sample, younger adolescent dating couples, marital couples).

In sum, the present study provides preliminary evidence that childhood emotional neglect is not significantly associated with young adult dating violence. However, given the limited research in this area, in conjunction with aforementioned limitations, it seems premature to assert that childhood emotional neglect never influences dating violence and thus seems worthwhile to continue investigating, and replicating, these relations. Overall, it also seems important to continue examining emotional abuse and emotional neglect separately, as measuring them together may not provide adequate information about how and what form of emotional maltreatment is driving results.

CHAPTER 3

THE INTERACTION BETWEEN MATERNAL HISTORY OF CHILDHOOD EMOTIONAL NEGLECT AND CURRENT CHILD NEGATIVE AFFECTIVITY ON PARENT-CHILD DYSFUNCTION

Dysfunctional parent-child interactions have been linked to pervasive detrimental child outcomes including externalizing behaviors (Erath, El-Sheikh, & Cummings, 2009), internalizing behaviors (Hollenstein, Granic, Stoolmiller, & Snyder, 2004), lowered self-esteem (Amato & Fowler, 2002), higher levels of aggression (Knutson, DeGarmo, Koeppl, & Reid, 2005; Weiss, Dodge, Bates, & Pettit, 1992), and emotion regulation difficulties (Chang, Schwartz, Dodge, & McBride-Chang, 2003). Difficulties in the parent-child relationship have also been linked to parental distress (Pinderhughes, Dodge, Bates, Pettit, & Zelli, 2000; Webster-Stratton, 1990) and a childhood maltreatment history (Bennett, Sullivan, & Lewis, 2006; DiLillo & Damashek, 2003). Research has examined, and found support for, an intergenerational transmission of parenting practices, such that parents who received harsh parenting or experienced childhood maltreatment are more likely to engage in similar parenting practices with their children (Dowdney, Skuse, Rutter, Quinton, & Mrazek, 1985; Simons, Whitbeck, Conger, & Wu, 1991; Quinton & Rutter, 1984; Quinton, Rutter, & Liddle, 1984). Thus, while it appears that a maltreatment history is a risk factor for later maladaptive parenting practices, it should be noted that even though the extant literature links a history of childhood maltreatment to later dysfunctional parenting outcomes, this by no means is absolute. Indeed, as noted by Kaufman

and Zigler (1987), intergenerational transmission of abuse rates has been estimated to be approximately thirty percent.

Despite these rates of intergenerational transmission, research on how a maternal history of emotional maltreatment influences her own parenting behaviors is still lacking. One study done by Bert et al. (2009) found evidence that a childhood history of emotional abuse was related to later maladaptive parenting behaviors, including less maternal responsivity and a greater propensity for abusive behaviors. This line of research has been supported by other studies that have linked a maternal history of emotional abuse to later emotionally unsupportive parenting behaviors, including psychological unavailability (McCullough, Harding, Shaffer, Han, & Bright, 2014; McCullough, Han, Morelen, & Shaffer, 2017). However, no research to the author's knowledge has investigated the potential influence of a maternal history of childhood emotional neglect on later parent-child dysfunction.

Given research on attachment theory and the emotional security hypothesis, it seems plausible that a history of childhood emotional neglect would predict later parent-child dysfunction. Specifically, if a mother experienced parental disengagement, limited responsiveness, and her emotional needs were inadequately met as a child, this in turn would inform internal working models of parenting and associated behaviors that could then be carried into her own relationship with her child. Also, as noted in social learning theory (Bandura & Walters, 1977), suboptimal emotional support and parent coaching can lead to difficulties in understanding emotion regulation, behavioral displays of emotion, as well as the belief that emotions are unmanageable. If these difficulties persist into adulthood and the mother's own parenting practices, it could then influence the parent-child relationship.

Given this information, it seems important to first examine the relation between a maternal history of childhood emotional neglect and parent-child dysfunction and then address risk and protective factors that may amplify or buffer parents from engaging in dysfunctional parenting practices. Further, there has been a move towards examining contextual variables that attenuate or exacerbate risk. As noted by Belsky and colleagues (2009), additional research on moderating variables in the intergenerational transmission of parenting practices is still needed. To examine the continuity of maladaptive parenting, it seems that the child's characteristics within the parent-child dyad might interact with, and subsequently amplify, dysfunction within the dyad's relationship.

For several decades, research has demonstrated how children's characteristics influence parenting behaviors (Bates, 1976; Harach & Kuczynski, 2005; Larsson, Viding, Rijsdijk, & Plomin, 2008; Loulis & Kuczynski, 1997). Child negative affectivity, in particular, has been linked to dysfunctional parent-child interactions (Clark, Kochanska, & Ready, 2000; Lipscomb et al., 2011). Evidence suggests that child negative affectivity can be informed by genetic predisposition (Caspi et al., 2004; Larsson, Viding, Rijsdijk, & Plomin, 2008) as well as by the quality of parent-child interactions (Bates, Pettit, Dodge, & Ridge, 1998). Problematic behaviors exhibited by a child have been linked to resulting parenting behaviors (Kerr & Sttatin, 2003), with high child externalizing behaviors increasing the likelihood for parenting discipline and lowered parental support (Fite, Colder, Lochman, & Wells, 2006; Huh, Tristan, Wade, & Stice, 2006). Thus, it seems that a mother's history of emotional neglect might elicit increased dysfunction in the parent-child relationship if the child also displays high levels of negative affectivity, as these behavioral expressions of emotions might be perceived as more unmanageable and difficult to understand by mothers with compromised histories of emotion

socialization. Since parent-child relationship difficulties during early childhood can also influence the development of emotion and affect regulation (Morris, Silk, Steinberg, Myers, & Robinson, 2007), it might be particularly salient to examine this association to inform parenting interventions.

It is also important to consider how child negative affectivity and parent-child dysfunction are measured. There is strong empirical support for discrepancies between parent and other informant reports on child behaviors and the dyadic relationship (Achenbach, McConaughy, & Howell, 1987; Gardner, 2000; Hoyt, 2000; Sameroff, Seifer, & Elias, 1982). Parent reports of child affect and perceived parent-child relationship have been linked to several parental characteristics, including socioeconomic status, psychopathology, and race (Kroes, Veerman, & De Bruyn, 2003; Sameroff, Seifer, & Elias, 1982; Vaughn, Deinard, &, Egeland, 1980). As noted by Seifer and colleagues (2004), it may be that parent reports are discrepant with observational ratings due to an inaccurate interpretation on the parent's behalf, or it could be that this discrepancy exists because observers do not have all of the information pertaining to the child that the parent has (e.g., interacting with the child on a regular basis, seeing the child in multiple contexts). Although this debate continues, it seems particularly relevant to assess child negative affectivity and the parent-child relationship both via parent report as well as with observational ratings.

Based on theoretical rationale, it was hypothesized that a maternal history of childhood emotional neglect would be associated with an increase in mother-reported dysfunctional parent-child interactions and a decrease in observed parent-child interaction quality. Given extant literature on child factors that influence and interact with parental factors to create the parent-child relationship, it was also expected that mother's report of child's negative affectivity would

moderate the association between a maternal history of childhood emotional neglect and dysfunctional interactions between parent and child. Specifically, it was hypothesized that a mother's history of childhood emotional neglect would predict higher rates of perceived dysfunctional parent-child interactions within dyads that also had higher subjective rates of child negative affectivity. However, given research on potential biases with parent self-report, exploratory analyses also compared observational scores of child negative affectivity as a moderator as well as observed ratings of overall parent-child interaction quality as an outcome during a laboratory task.

Method

Participants

The current study included 96 mothers (M_{age} = 30.32 years; *SD* = 6.06) and their 36- to 60-month-old children (M_{age} = 3.52 years; *SD* = .52; 60.6 % male). Participants were recruited via flyers posted throughout the community. Given that this sample was collected for a larger study that collected physiological data, inclusion criteria included mothers who were not currently pregnant. Additional inclusion requirements included written and spoken English fluency, the mother and child living together for at least two years, and the absence of significant child developmental disabilities (e.g., disabilities that would hinder participation such as severe autism). The present sample was ethnically diverse: 52.1% identified as African American, 37.2% Caucasian, 4.3% Hispanic, 1% Asian, and 5.3% as "other." Marital status of the mother was as follows: 46.2% reported never being married, 43% reported currently being married, 3.2% reported separation, 3.2% identified as divorced, 2.2% identified as widowed, and 2.2% reported being engaged to be married. Mothers in the current study reported a range of education status: 26% were college graduates, 20.8% reported some college experience, 18.8% received

graduate school training, 17.7% received a GED, 13.5% graduated high school, 1% reported finishing junior high school, and 2.1% did not indicate highest level of education attained. Total reported household income also ranged in the current study: 28.9% reported an annual household income of less than 10,000 dollars a year, 15.6% reported an annual income of over 80,000 dollars, 13.3% indicated 20,000-29,999 dollars, 12.2% reported 10,000-19,999 dollars, 7.8% reported 30,000-39,999 dollars, 7.8% reported 70,000-79,999 dollars, 6.7% reported 60,000-69,999 dollars, 5.6% reported 40,000-49,999 dollars, and 2.2% reported 50,000-59,999 dollars.

Procedures

Potential participants were first screened for the study via phone calls by research assistants. After determining that the mother-child dyad met inclusion criteria, eligible dyads were sent a packet of self-report measures through the mail. Prior to the lab visit, mothers were asked to complete and bring this packet with them to the visit. If any measures were incomplete on the day of the lab visit, mothers were asked to fill out any remaining questionnaires on site. At the beginning of the lab visit, mothers provided consent to participate in the study and children provided assent.

As part of the lab visit, mother-child dyads were instructed to collaboratively work on completing a picture of a house using an etch-a-sketch for five minutes. The child had control of one knob, while the mother had control of the other, such that the pair had to work together to create movement on the etch-a-sketch. The task was video recorded for future coding purposes and timed by a research assistant. This task has been used in the literature to observationally examine mother-preschooler levels of cooperation, parental sensitivity, and child emotion regulation (e.g., Deater-Deckard et al., 2001). The procedure was video recorded and later coded by research assistants. Mothers were compensated $100 for their participation and children were

given the opportunity to choose a small prize. This study was approved and in accordance with the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Measures

The Child Trauma Questionnaire (CTQ; Bernstein & Fink, 1998). The CTQ is a self-report measure used to assess retrospective histories of childhood maltreatment. The questionnaire is comprised of 28 items and includes five subscales of maltreatment (physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, physical neglect, and emotional neglect). The item responses are rated on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*never true*) to 5 (*very often true*). For the present study, the emotional neglect subscale was used as the independent variable. Sample items for this scale include, "there was someone in my family who helped me feel that I was important or special" and, "I felt loved." Items were then reversed scored so that lower scores on these items indicated a higher level of emotional neglect endorsement. This measure has been used extensively in the literature with acceptable reliability (e.g., Bradbury & Shaffer, 2012; Perry, DiLillo, & Peugh, 2007). The internal consistency of the emotional neglect subscale was adequate in the present study (α = .86).

The Parenting Stress Index – Short Form (PSI-SF; Abidin, 1995). The PSI-SF is a 36-item self-report measure completed by parents to measure stress in the parent-child relationship. The PSI-SF consists of three subscales: Parental Distress, Parent-Child Dysfunctional Interactions, and Difficult Child. Each subscale includes 12 items that range from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). This measure has been used throughout the literature (e.g., Hassall, Rose, & McDonald, 2005). The current study used the Parent-Child Dysfunctional Interaction subscale as the mother-reported dependent variable, which assesses the mother's perception of interactions with their child. Sample items include, "Sometimes I feel my child

doesn't like me and doesn't want to be close to me," and, "I expected to have closer and warmer feelings for my child than I do and this bothers me." Thus, higher scores on this subscale indicate that the child is failing to meet parental expectations and that the interactions with the child are not reinforcing. The internal consistency of the Parent-Child Dysfunctional Interactions subscale was adequate (α = .82).

Observational Coding of Overall Parent-Child Interaction Quality. To assess global, verbal and nonverbal indicators of parent-child quality, two observational scales were composited. Dyadic collaboration and shared positive affect were coded via a recording of the mother and child participating in a five-minute interaction task (described above). Research assistants were instructed to rate the dyad's desire to work together (dyadic collaboration) as well as expressions of reciprocal positive affect on a five-point scale (i.e., *Very Low* to *Very High*), and then participated in regular consensus meetings to check reliability. Dyads scoring low on dyadic collaboration engaged in the task independently of one another, ignored one another, and/or engaged in non-cooperation. In contrast, dyads scoring high on collaboration were seen to be cooperative, engaged in respectful negotiation to complete the task, as well as actively discussed one another's ideas and potential solutions. Scores on collaboration were typically "*Mixed*" for dyads in the present study (M = 3.47; SD = 1.27), suggesting an average overall level of collaboration in the sample.

Dyads scoring high on shared positive affect displayed high levels of coordinated and reciprocal shared positive affect (e.g., smiling, laughing, sharing happy feelings, showing physical or verbal affection). For example, if the child smiled and hugged their mother, this was met with a reciprocal display of positive affect from the mother. Dyads scoring low on this scale rarely engaged in reciprocal displays of positive affect. This could mean that neither member in

the dyad displayed positive affect or one member displayed positive affect, which was met with neutral or negative affect from the other member. Scores on shared positive affect were typically "*Mixed*" for dyads ($M = 2.67$; $SD = 1.39$), suggesting a low average overall level of shared positive affect in the sample. Dyadic collaboration and shared positive affect were significantly correlated ($r = .43$, $p < .001$). The two scales were summed together to create a 9-point range (i.e., 2; *Very Low* to 10; *Very High Interaction Quality*). Thus, taken together, dyads scoring high on overall parent-child interaction quality consistently displayed behavioral and positive affect reciprocity, whereas dyads scoring low were not seen to effectively engage with one another. Intraclass correlations for dyadic collaboration and shared positive affect (*ICC* = .69 and .83 respectively) indicated moderate to good reliability. Overall observed parent-child interaction quality was used as a dependent variable.

Observational Coding of Child Negative Affectivity. For the present analyses, the frequency score of the number of times the child displayed negative emotions during the five-minute interaction task (described above) was used as a moderating variable. Displays of negative emotions included tone of voice, facial expressions, body language, and vocal displays of negative emotions (i.e., fear, anger, frustration, sadness, guilt, disgust). Research assistants then counted the number of negative emotion displays and participated in consensus meetings of coder pairs to check reliability. Scores for child negative emotion displays ranged from 0 to 24 ($M = 1.33$; $SD = 2.90$). Interrater reliability was acceptable (*kappa* = .73).

The Emotion Regulation Checklist (ERC; Shields & Cicchetti, 1997). The ERC is a measure of child behavioral displays of emotion regulation completed by parents. It contains 24 items, rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 4 (*always*). The measure contains two subscales: Child Negative Affect and Mood Lability, and Child Emotion Regulation. For the

present study, the Child Negative Affect and Mood Lability subscale was utilized as the mother-reported moderator. Sample items for this scale include items such as, "Is easily frustrated," and, "Responds angrily to limit-setting by adults." This measure has been used extensively in the literature with acceptable reliability (e.g., Graziano, Reavis, Keane, & Calkins, 2007). The internal consistency of child negative affect and mood lability subscale was adequate (α = .83).

Results

Missing Data

Within the total sample (N = 96), 68 mother-child dyads had complete data for mother-reported variables (i.e., maternal history of emotional neglect, child negative affectivity, parent-child dysfunction). 57 dyads had complete data for observational ratings for child negativity and 66 dyads had complete data for observational ratings of overall parent-child interaction quality. Missing data for the observational codes during the Etch-a-Sketch task were due to technological difficulties (e.g., disrupted video footage), trouble seeing dyads on camera, which hindered coding ability, protocol deviations, and dyads that declined participation in the Etch-a-Sketch task. Missing data from mother-reported measures was due to a failure to complete some or all items on the measure. After analyzing independent samples t tests, no significant differences were found between dyads with and without missing data on all study variables and relevant demographic characteristics (i.e., child sex, ethnicity, income, marital status).

Patterns of missing data were then analyzed via Little's MCAR test and data were found to be missing at random ($\chi^2(37) = 37.71$, p = .58; Little, 1988). Thus, multiple imputation data procedures were utilized to maximize sample size, decrease bias, and increase precision for study variables and covariates. As recommended in the literature, variables were centered and product terms were calculated prior to imputation and 10 iterations were created for each imputation

(Graham, 2009; Von Hippel, 2009; Raghunathan, Solenberger, & Van Hoewyk, 2002). Pooled statistics were used in all analyses.

Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations

Demographic characteristics, including ethnicity, child sex, household income, and marital status, were examined to determine if any demographic variables need to be included as covariates in the moderation model. Independent samples *t*-tests revealed child sex differences within the variables of interest (Levene's Test for Equality of Variance; $F = 8.41$, $p < .01$; $t(54.76) = -2.65$, $p = .01$), such that mothers of female children endorsed higher rates of maternal childhood emotional neglect. One-way ANOVAs indicated that mother-reported ethnicity also differed significantly with both maternal history of emotional neglect [$F(3, 89) = 5.68$, $p < .01$] and observed overall parent child interaction quality [$F(3, 89) = 5.49$, $p < .01$], such that Hispanic mothers reported higher levels of childhood emotional neglect and had higher observational ratings of overall parent-child interaction quality. Overall parent-child interaction quality significantly differed by marital status [$F(5, 87) = 3.39$, $p < .01$], such that mothers who indicated never being married had the lowest observed parent-child interaction quality, and married mothers had the highest observed parent-child interaction quality. No significant differences with study variables were found with household income.

The average report of maternal history of childhood emotional neglect in the current study was consistent with other community samples ($M = 8.87$, $SD = 4.22$; Yehuda, Halligan, & Grossman, 2001). Maternal report of child negative affectivity ($M = 28.61$, $SD = 6.32$) was also is consistent with adult community samples (Havighurst, Harley, & Prior, 2004; Shipman et al., 2007). Mother-reported parent-child dysfunction ($M = 17.22$, $SD = 5.23$) was within the low average range when compared to research using a Head Start population (Reitman, Currier, &

Stickle, 2002). The average observed frequency of instances of child negativity during the parent-child interaction task was approximately once (M = 1.33, SD = 2.90). Observed overall parent-child interaction quality was within the average range of scores (*range* = 2 to 10; M = 6.01, SD = 2.36).

Bivariate correlations were then examined to assess for significant relationships for the study variables (see Table 6). Maternal experience of childhood emotional neglect was significantly correlated with mother-reported parent-child dysfunction (r = .38, p < .01), but was not significantly related to observational rating of overall parent-child interaction quality (r = .07, p = .51) or child negative affectivity (mother-reported child negativity r = -.04, p = .69*;* observational rating of child negative affectivity r = -.11, p = .29). Maternal report of parent-child dysfunction was significantly and positively related to mother-reported child negative affectivity (r = .45, p < .01), but was not associated with observational ratings of parent-child overall quality (r = .03, p = .74) or observational ratings of child negative affectivity (r = -.08, p = .47). Observational parent-child interaction quality was negatively associated with observational coding of child negative affectivity (r = -.39, p < .01), but was not associated with maternal reports of child negative affectivity (r = -.08, p = .44). Finally, no significant correlation was found between mother-reported child negative affectivity and observational ratings of child negative affectivity (r = -.03, p = .77).

Primary Analyses

Moderation analyses were run using the PROCESS macro in SPSS version 22 (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) to examine how a maternal history of childhood emotional neglect interacts with their child's negative affectivity, both mother-reported and observationally rated, at low (i.e., one standard deviation below the mean), average, and high (i.e., one standard deviation above the

mean) levels in predicting mother-reported and observed parent-child interaction quality. Moderation analyses via the PROCESS macro used 1000 bootstrapped samples to determine interactions, with significant interactions indicated when the 95% confidence intervals (CI) did not include zero. All variables were centered prior to analyses. Covariates included in the moderation models were child sex, ethnicity, and marital status.

Results indicated a significant direct effect between maternal history of childhood emotional neglect and maternal reports of parent-child dysfunction ($t = 5.65$, $p < .01$, 95% *CI* = .37 to .77). A significant interaction was found between maternal history of childhood emotional neglect and mother-reported child negative affectivity in predicting maternal reports of parent-child dysfunction (F (1, 86) = 19.12; *CI* = .05 to .12; $p < .01$; total $R^2 = .49$; $\Delta R^2 = .11$; see Table 7). Simple slopes analyses indicated that mother-reported child negative affectivity significantly interacted with maternal history of childhood emotional neglect at average ($t = 5.65$, $p < .01$, 95% CI = 0.37, 0.77) and high levels of child negative affectivity ($t = 6.51$, $p < .01$, 95% CI = 0.77, 1.44), but not at low levels ($t = .25$, $p = .80$, 95% CI = -0.26, 0.33; see Figure 5). However, observed child negativity was not found to be a moderator in the relation between maternal history of childhood emotional neglect and mother-reported parent-child dysfunction (F (1, 86) = .77; *CI* = -.16 to .06; $p = .38$; total $R^2 = .17$; $\Delta R^2 < .01$; see Table 8 and Figure 6).

With regard to observational overall parent-child interaction quality, no significant direct effect was found between maternal history of childhood emotional neglect and observed ratings of parent-child interaction quality ($t = -.18$, $p = .85$, 95% *CI* = -.13 to .11). No significant interaction was found between maternal history of childhood emotional neglect and mother-reported child negative affectivity in predicting observed ratings of overall parent-child interaction quality (F (1, 84) = .26; *CI* = -.02 to .03; $p = .61$; total $R^2 = .07$; $\Delta R^2 < .01$; see Table

9 and Figure 7). A similar pattern of results was found in testing the moderating role of observed child negative affectivity. Specifically, results indicated that there was no significant interaction between maternal childhood emotional neglect and observational child negative affectivity in predicting observational overall parent-child interaction quality (F (1, 84) = .43; CI = -.06 to .03; p = .51; total R^2 = .17; ΔR^2 < .01; see Table 10 and Figure 8).

Discussion

The purpose of the current study was twofold: 1) to investigate potential associations between a maternal history of emotional neglect and later parent-child dysfunction; and 2) to probe how child negative affectivity might influence this relation in a community sample of mother-child dyads. Given discrepancies noted in the literature between parent and other informant reports on child behaviors and the parent-child relationship, both mother-reported and observational ratings of child negative affectivity as well as parent-child dysfunction were used to increase understanding of potential associations and moderations (Achenbach, McConaughy, & Howell, 1987; Gardner, 2000; Hoyt, 2000; Sameroff, Seifer, & Elias, 1982). Hypotheses were partially supported. Maternal history of childhood emotional neglect was positively related to mother-reported parent-child dysfunction, but was not linked to observational ratings of overall parent-child interaction quality. Consistent with previous literature, results suggest that maternal perceptions of the parent-child relationship differ from observational ratings (Achenbach, McConaughy, & Howell, 1987; Hoyt, 2000). This may be due to differences between maternal and observational observation, leading to parental bias in reports, or it may be that mothers have more information to draw upon than an observer when reporting on child and parent-child outcomes (Seifer, Sameroff, Dickstein, Schiller, & Hayden, 2004). While these results continue

to be difficult to disentangle, the present study points towards the overall importance of multiple informants in psychological research.

As predicted, a significant moderation of mother-reported child negative affectivity was found in the relation between maternal history of childhood emotional neglect and maternal report of parent-child dysfunction. These results suggest that mother-reported child negative affectivity at average and high levels, but not low levels, heighten the association between mothers' emotional neglect history and perceived parent-child dysfunction. However, all moderation models that included observational ratings of either child negative affectivity or overall parent-child interaction quality were not significant. Overall, these findings seem to indicate the importance of maternal perception. The current study provides evidence that mothers with a history of childhood emotional neglect, combined with average to high levels of perceived child negative affectivity, tend to be at greater risk for subjectively experiencing more dysfunction in the parent-child relationship.

Based on current results, it seems that a maternal history of childhood emotional neglect increases the likelihood for mothers to perceive more dysfunction in interactions with their child. In line with previous literature supporting an intergenerational transmission of parenting practices and dysfunction following childhood emotional abuse (McCullough, Harding, Shaffer, Han, & Bright, 2014; McCullough, Han, Morelen, & Shaffer, 2017), the present study found support for a similar pattern for maternal childhood emotional neglect. This is consistent with theoretical evidence that indicates experiences of childhood emotional neglect can have long-lasting interpersonal consequences due to inadequate emotion socialization, leading to difficulties with emotion awareness and emotion expression in the parenting relationship, and

ultimately negatively influencing the parent-child dyadic relationship (Denham, 1989, 1993, 1997; Denham & Grout, 1993; Eisenberg, Cumberland & Spinrad, 1998).

Further, building on attachment theory, a maternal history of childhood emotional neglect might also influence the maternal perception and response within the parent-child relationship. Specifically, by impeding secure attachment to a primary caregiver, lasting effects on interpersonal schemas about self, others, and self in relation to others can result (Bowlby, 1982). Indeed, as outlined in the emotional security hypothesis, it could be that a maternal history of childhood emotional neglect negatively influences a mother's ability to tolerate, and effectively cope with, distress in her own parent-child relationship, leading to perceived difficulties within dyadic interactions (Davies & Cummings, 1994; 1996).

Maternal experiences of childhood emotional neglect was not found to be significantly related to mother-reported or observational ratings of child negative affectivity. Although a maternal maltreatment history may influence perception and awareness of others emotions (see Bandura & Walters, 1997), it could be that, due to difficulties with emotion regulation following childhood emotional neglect, mothers have trouble identifying their child's expressed emotions. An association between maternal history of childhood emotional neglect and observed child negative affectivity was also not expected in the current study.

A negative association was found between observational ratings of child negative affectivity and observed overall parent-child interaction quality, which suggests that lower demonstrated child negative affectivity is associated with higher observed parent-child interaction quality. Similar findings were seen for mother-reported child negative affectivity and maternal reports of parent-child dysfunction, such that higher ratings of child negative affectivity increased the likelihood of higher ratings of parent-child dysfunction. These findings are in line

with evidence that points towards child negative affectivity influencing the parent-child relationship (Clark, Kochanska, & Ready, 2000; Lipscomb et al., 2011). However, observational ratings were not significantly related to mother-reported child negative affectivity or parent-child dysfunction.

As noted previously, although it is unclear what drives the discrepancy between observational ratings and maternal reports in the current study, this has been a consistent issue throughout the literature that has yet to be fully understood (Achenbach, McConaughy, & Howell, 1987; Hoyt, 2000; Sameroff, Seifer, & Elias, 1982; Seifer, Sameroff, Dickstein, Schiller, & Hayden, 2004). Thus, it is unknown if maternal reports of child negative affectivity and parent-child dysfunction is more or less accurate when compared to observational ratings. Further, it could be that children tend to express negative affectivity at different frequencies at home versus in an unfamiliar setting, like a research laboratory, so both maternal and observational reports might be indicative of true representations of child negative affectivity. Regardless, it seems important to continue collecting multi-informants' reports to better understand this phenomena. Given that a community sample was used in the current study, it might also be beneficial for future studies to consider studying long-term parenting effects resulting from childhood emotional neglect in a maltreated sample. Further, the present study utilized maternal participation and report, with no information collected from father figures. Thus, it is likely advantageous to replicate the current study with fathers to see if the same, or similar, results are found.

Overall, the current study is in line with previous literature supporting a link between childhood maltreatment and parent-child outcomes (Dowdney, Skuse, Rutter, Quinton, & Mrazek, 1985; Simons, Whitbeck, Conger, & Wu, 1991; Quinton & Rutter, 1984; Quinton,

Rutter, & Liddle, 1984), with child negative affectivity having a direct and indirect influence on the parent-child relationship (Clark, Kochanska, & Ready, 2000; Lipscomb et al., 2011). However, literature examining if and how a maternal history of childhood emotional neglect influences later parenting has been severely lacking. Thus, this study provides evidence that a maternal history of childhood emotional neglect, like other forms of childhood maltreatment, has a longstanding deleterious influence that can bleed into the parent-child relationship and warrants further attention.

CHAPTER 4

OVERALL DISCUSSION: IMPLICATIONS FROM THE CURRENT STUDIES

To review, childhood emotional neglect is defined as a lack of availability, emotional engagement, and nurturing within the parent-child relationship (Burgess & Conger, 1978; Chamberland, Fallon, Black, & Trocmé, 2011; Crittenden, 1999; Gauthier, Stollak, Messe, & Aronoff, 1996). Experiences of childhood emotional neglect has been associated with a host of deleterious outcomes throughout the lifespan, including child adjustment difficulties and stress reactivity (Sturge-Apple, Davies, Cicchetti, & Manning, 2012; Sturge-Apple, Davies, & Cummings, 2006), psychopathology in adolescence (Lipschitz et al., 1999; Young, Lennie, & Minnis, 2011), increased loneliness and social isolation in young adulthood (Loos & Alexander, 1997), and adult psychopathology (Lang, Stein, Kennedy, & Foy, 2004; Spertus, Yehuda, Wong, Halligan, & Seremetis, 2003). However, childhood emotional maltreatment, which subsumes emotional neglect, is the least studied form of childhood maltreatment (Barnet, Miller-Perrin, &Perrin, 2005). While research has begun to gather for emotional abuse, the other component within emotional maltreatment, emotional neglect, is still widely understudied. This ultimately serves to limit our understanding of this type of maltreatment, which then in turn hinders prevention and intervention.

The purpose of the current studies was to investigate long-term interpersonal consequences following experiences of childhood emotional neglect. Specifically, the relations between childhood emotional neglect and young adult dating violence as well as parent-child dysfunction were probed. Partner variables were then examined as contextual factors to better

understand if and how partner effects might amplify or buffer these relations. Although childhood emotional neglect was not shown to be related to later dating violence in young adulthood, it was found to be correlated with maternal reports of parent-child dysfunction. When combined with average to high levels of child negative affectivity reported by mothers, the relation between maternal experiences of childhood emotional neglect and perceived parent-child dysfunction was heightened.

With results providing evidence that childhood emotional neglect deserves further study, it also points toward the importance of examining childhood emotional abuse and emotional neglect separately. Although study 1 found a correlation between these two forms of emotional maltreatment, results also suggest that they differentially relate to some outcomes. Further, given that childhood emotional neglect is severely understudied as compared to other forms of maltreatment, it seems beneficial to not lump emotional abuse and emotional neglect together to aid in the increased understanding of this silent form of maltreatment.

Clinical Implications

There are also clinical implications to consider. Given that a maternal history of childhood emotional neglect predicted later perceived dysfunction within the parent-child relationship, and that this association was stronger for mothers who also reported average to high levels of child negative affectivity, it seems that assessing, and intervening on if necessary, maternal perception and schemas would be especially beneficial for those who have endorsed experiences of childhood emotional neglect. Maternal perceptions could be addressed within the context of individual or family therapy. In line with attachment theory, a mother with a history of childhood emotional neglect who is perceiving dysfunction in the parent-child relationship would likely benefit from Schema Therapy (Young, Klosko, & Weishaar, 2003). Schema

Therapy is used to change maladaptive schemas that were created in childhood and are currently causing distress in adulthood. Since childhood emotional neglect can instill negative beliefs about self, others, and self-in-relation to others that continue into adulthood, it seems that addressing maternal schemas would likely decrease parent-child dysfunction if the mother's perception of the dysfunction is distorted (Riso et al., 2006; Rogosch, Cicchetti, Shields, & Toth, 1995; Serbin & Karp, 2003; Waldinger, Toth, & Gerber, 2001).

If the dyad was better suited for family therapy, Let's Connect, which focuses on emotion communication skills in parent-child interactions, seems particularly relevant (Shipman, Fitzgerald, & Fauchier, 2013). Based on an emotion socialization framework, Let's Connect targets parental emotion awareness, regulation, communication, and listening to aid in decreasing parent-child dysfunction and increase emotional security (Eisenberg, Cumberland & Spinrad, 1998; Shipman, Fitzgerald, & Fauchier, 2013; Shipman & Zeman, 2001). Given that childhood emotional neglect is characterized by a lack of support and parental disengagement, mothers may have longstanding difficulties with their emotion regulation as well as with understanding their child's emotions. This could then lead to perceptions of parent-child dysfunction. Further, Let's Connect may circumvent the intergenerational transmission of ineffective parenting practices that can arise following a maternal maltreatment history (Dowdney, Skuse, Rutter, Quinton, & Mrazek, 1985; Simons, Whitbeck, Conger, & Wu, 1991; Quinton & Rutter, 1984; Quinton, Rutter, & Liddle, 1984).

Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) would also be a good fit in addressing parent-child dysfunction from a social learning and attachment framework (Ainsworth, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Bandura, 1977; Bowlby, 1982; Eyberg, 1988; Eyberg & Matarazzo, 1980). Given that a maternal history of childhood emotional neglect might serve as an ineffective model for parent-

child relationship (e.g., disengagement, emotional unavailability), disrupt secure attachment processes, and lead to maladaptive schemas, PCIT could be used to improve the dyadic relationship and change interaction patterns via having the parent and child learn and practice limit setting, effective communication, nurturance, and firm control (Baumrind, 1967; Eyberg, 1988; Eyberg & Matarazzo, 1980). Thus, it seems that by focusing on the parent-child relationship in PCIT, the parents could learn skills that were likely negatively impacted by experiences of childhood emotional neglect (i.e., communication skills, warmth in the parent-child relationship, emotion socialization), aiding in an overall improvement of the dyadic relationship and decreasing disruptive child negative affectivity (Schuhmann, Foote, Eyberg, Boggs, & Algina, 1998; Thomas & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2007; Zisser & Eyberg, 2010).

Finally, The Positive Parenting Program, also known as Triple P, is worth considering (Sanders, 1999; 2008). Triple P is a multiple level family program that encompasses parenting psychoeducation, skills, and confidence to aid in diminishing child difficulties, increasing positive parent-child interactions, and preventing child maltreatment (Horwitz, Chamberlain, Landsverk, & Mullican, 2010; Prinz, Sanders, Shapiro, Whitaker, & Lutzker, 2009; Sanders, 1999; 2008). The levels within Triple P increase depending on the severity of difficulties for the family, which may be beneficial for mothers who perceive dysfunction in their parent-child relationship, but are not experiencing overt child behavioral issues (Sanders, 1999). Thus, the program allows flexibility for level of distress as well as skills needed within specific dyads.

Future Directions

The results from the present studies demonstrate a need for additional research into the long-term consequences of childhood emotional neglect. Thus, the current studies should be replicated with the same, and different, populations to continue garnering evidence for if, how,

and for whom childhood emotional neglect influences later interpersonal effects in adulthood. Towards this point, it also seems relevant to use different research designs (e.g., cross-sectional, longitudinal, meta-analysis) to better inform developmental processes that are likely contributing to long lasting maladaptive outcomes.

It is also important to consider the definition of childhood emotional neglect. With the APSAC (2010) and Glaser's (1993, 2002) definitions of emotional maltreatment, it is clear that both focus more heavily on emotional abuse, and the active engagement that comprises emotional maltreatment, with little attention towards emotional neglect. This might be why the operational definition of emotional neglect is still somewhat fuzzy, with characterizations of the construct ranging from "inadequate nurturing or affection" (Chamberland, Fallon, Black, & Trocmé, 2011), the harm of a child "through lack of care" (Burgess & Conger, 1978), "the failure to connect emotionally" (Crittenden, 1999), or as the "complete disengagement between parents and their children" (Gauthier, Stollak, Messe, & Aronoff, 1996). Further, it is also unclear what constitutes as emotional neglect and what might be suboptimal parenting. With terms such as psychological unavailability used in the research, it makes it more difficult to compare and contrast evidence throughout the literature on emotional neglect. Without a clear definition of the construct, it seems that these blurred boundaries will continue to hinder our understanding of this form of maltreatment. Thus, due to the paucity of literature, as well as the definitional issues for emotional neglect, it is worthwhile to continue examining, and refining, our understanding of the construct throughout the lifespan.

It is notable as well that most measures of childhood emotional neglect are retrospective self-reports. While emotional neglect might be more difficult to recognize in childhood due to the nature of this form of maltreatment (i.e., parental unavailability, disengagement in the parent-

child relationship), there might also be individual factors that make individuals more likely to endorse a history of emotional neglect (e.g., negativity bias). While other forms of maltreatment can usually be more readily identified via objective reports and direct observation, it seems that emotional maltreatment, and specifically emotional neglect, is more difficult to substantiate (see Chamberland, Fallon, Black, Trocmé, & Chabot, 2012). This raises a measurement-related concern, as it places more reliance on self-report and limits our ability to examine objective data for childhood emotional neglect.

In sum, the current project aimed to highlight, and begin to address, the large gap in the emotional maltreatment literature by investigating, and contextualizing, the long-term interpersonal consequences following experiences of childhood emotional neglect. While results varied across the two studies, evidence was found to support that childhood emotional neglect predicts deleterious adulthood outcomes via parenting. Results also suggest that there is a fundamental importance in examining how partner variables interact within these relations to amplify or buffer long-term difficulties following childhood emotional neglect. With looming definitional and measurement issues for the construct of childhood emotional neglect, it seems that the field itself has widely neglected this form of maltreatment. Thus, the overarching goal of the present studies was to acknowledge this blind spot within the literature and to engage (as opposed to disengage) in the pursuit of increasing our understanding of childhood emotional neglect.

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Table 1

Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations.

	M	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5
1 Emotional Neglect	8.28	3.08					
2 Emotional Abuse	7.59	2.73	.53**				
3 Victimization	2.59	2.79	.04	.26*			
4 Perpetration	3.24	3.02	.13	.23	.82**		
5 Partner's Anxious Attachment	38.09	17.76	-.06	-.03	.32*	.17	
6 Partner's Avoidant Attachment	35.30	16.31	.09	.20	.32*	.31*	.55**

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

Table 2

Moderation analyses of individual CEN and partner anxiety attachment on individual-reported dating aggression.

Model	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	3.24**	0.40	8.12	<.01	2.44	4.04
Partner anxious attachment	0.04	0.02	1.55	.13	-0.01	0.08
CEN	0.15	0.13	1.15	.26	-0.11	0.41
CEN X Partner anxious attachment	0.01	0.01	1.10	.28	-0.01	0.03

Model Summary	*R*	R^2	*F*	df1	df2	*p*
	.27	.07	1.37	3	53	.26

CEN X Partner anxious attachment	R^2 Change	*F*	df1	df2	*p*
	.02	1.21	1	53	.28

Note. CEN = childhood emotional neglect; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$

Table 3

Moderation analyses of individual CEN and partner avoidant attachment on individual-reported dating aggression.

Model	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	3.23**	0.41	7.94	<.01	2.41	4.04
Partner avoidant attachment	0.05*	0.03	2.08	.04	0.002	0.11
CEN	0.11	0.13	0.84	.40	-0.16	0.38
CEN X Partner avoidant attachment	0.002	0.01	0.27	.79	-0.01	0.02

Model Summary	*R*	R^2	*F*	df1	df2	*p*
	.32	.10	2.04	3	51	.12

CEN X Partner avoidant attachment	R^2 Change	*F*	df1	df2	*p*
	.001	.07	1	51	.79

Note. CEN = childhood emotional neglect; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$

Table 4

Moderation analyses of individual CEN and partner anxiety attachment on individual-reported dating victimization.

Model	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	2.53**	0.35	7.16	<.01	1.82	3.23
Partner anxious attachment	0.05*	0.02	2.63	.01	0.01	0.10
CEN	0.08	0.12	0.68	.50	-0.15	0.31
CEN X Partner anxious attachment	0.01	0.01	0.70	.49	-0.01	0.02

Model Summary	*R*	R^2	*F*	df1	df2	*p*
	.35	.12	2.40	3	53	.08

CEN X Partner anxious attachment	R^2 Change	*F*	df1	df2	*p*
	.01	.49	1	53	.49

Note. CEN = childhood emotional neglect; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$

Table 5

Moderation analyses of individual CEN and partner avoidance attachment on individual-reported dating victimization.

Model	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	2.53**	0.37	6.90	<.01	1.80	3.27
Partner avoidant attachment	0.05**	0.02	2.17	<.01	0.003	0.10
CEN	0.03	0.12	0.29	.77	-0.21	0.28
CEN X Partner avoidant attachment	0.003	0.08	0.34	.73	-0.01	0.02

Model Summary	*R*	R^2	*F*	df1	df2	*p*
	.32	.10	1.96	1	51	.13

CEN X Partner avoidant attachment	R^2 Change	*F*	df1	df2	*p*
	.002	.12	1	51	.73

Note. CEN = childhood emotional neglect; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$

Table 6

Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations.

	M	*SD*	1	2	3	4
1 Maternal Emotional Neglect	8.87	4.22				
2 Mother-reported Dysfunctional Interaction	17.22	5.23	.38**			
3 Observational Rating of Mother-Child Interaction	6.01	2.36	.07	.03		
4 Mother-reported Child Negativity	28.61	6.32	-.04	.45**	-.08	
5 Observational Rating of Child Negativity	1.33	2.90	-.11	-.08	-.39**	-.03

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

Table 7

Moderation analyses of maternal CEN and mother-reported child negative affectivity on maternal report of parent-child dysfunction.

Model						
	B	*SE*	*t*	*p*	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	18.36**	0.87	21.06	<.01	16.63	20.09
Child negativity	0.39**	0.06	6.02	<.01	0.26	0.52
CEN	0.57**	0.10	5.65	<.01	0.37	0.77
CEN X Child negativity	-0.08**	0.02	4.37	<.01	0.05	0.12

Model Summary						
	R	R^2	*F*	df1	df2	*p*
	.70**	.49	16.60	5	86	<.01

CEN X Child negativity					
	R^2 Change	*F*	df1	df2	*p*
	.11**	19.12	1	86	<.01

Note. CEN = childhood emotional neglect; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$

Table 8

Moderation analyses of maternal CEN and observed child negative affectivity on maternal report of parent-child dysfunction.

Model						
	B	*SE*	*t*	*p*	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	18.70**	1.11	16.80	<.01	16.49	20.91
Child negativity	-0.16	0.21	-0.77	.44	-0.57	0.25
CEN	0.48**	0.13	3.75	<.01	0.23	0.74
CEN X Child negativity	-0.05	0.05	-0.88	.38	-0.16	0.06

Model Summary						
	R	R^2	*F*	df1	df2	*p*
	.41	.17	3.55	5	86	<.01

CEN X Child negativity					
	R^2 Change	*F*	df1	df2	*p*
	.007	.77	1	86	.38

Note. CEN = childhood emotional neglect; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$

Table 9

Moderation analyses of maternal CEN and mother-reported child negative affectivity on observational rating of overall parent-child interaction quality.

Model	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	5.15**	0.60	8.63	<.01	3.96	6.34
Child negativity	-0.03	0.04	-0.78	.44	-0.11	0.05
CEN	-0.01	0.06	-0.18	.85	-0.13	0.11
CEN X Child negativity	0.01	0.01	0.51	.61	-0.02	0.03

Model Summary	*R*	R^2	*F*	df1	df2	*p*
	.27	.07	1.06	6	84	.39

CEN X Child negativity	R^2 Change	*F*	df1	df2	*p*
	.003	.26	1	84	.61

Note. CEN = childhood emotional neglect; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$

Table 10

Moderation analyses of maternal CEN and observed child negative affectivity on observational rating of overall parent-child interaction quality.

Model						
	B	*SE*	*t*	*p*	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	5.33**	0.57	9.43	<.01	4.21	6.50
Child negativity	-0.30**	0.09	-3.19	<.01	-0.48	-0.11
CEN	-0.02	0.06	-0.41	.68	-0.14	0.09
CEN X Child negativity	-0.02	0.02	-0.65	.51	-0.06	0.03

Model Summary						
	R	R^2	*F*	df1	df2	*p*
	.41*	.17	2.90	6	84	.01

CEN X Child negativity					
	R^2 Change	*F*	df1	df2	*p*
	.004	.43	1	84	.51

Note. CEN = childhood emotional neglect; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$

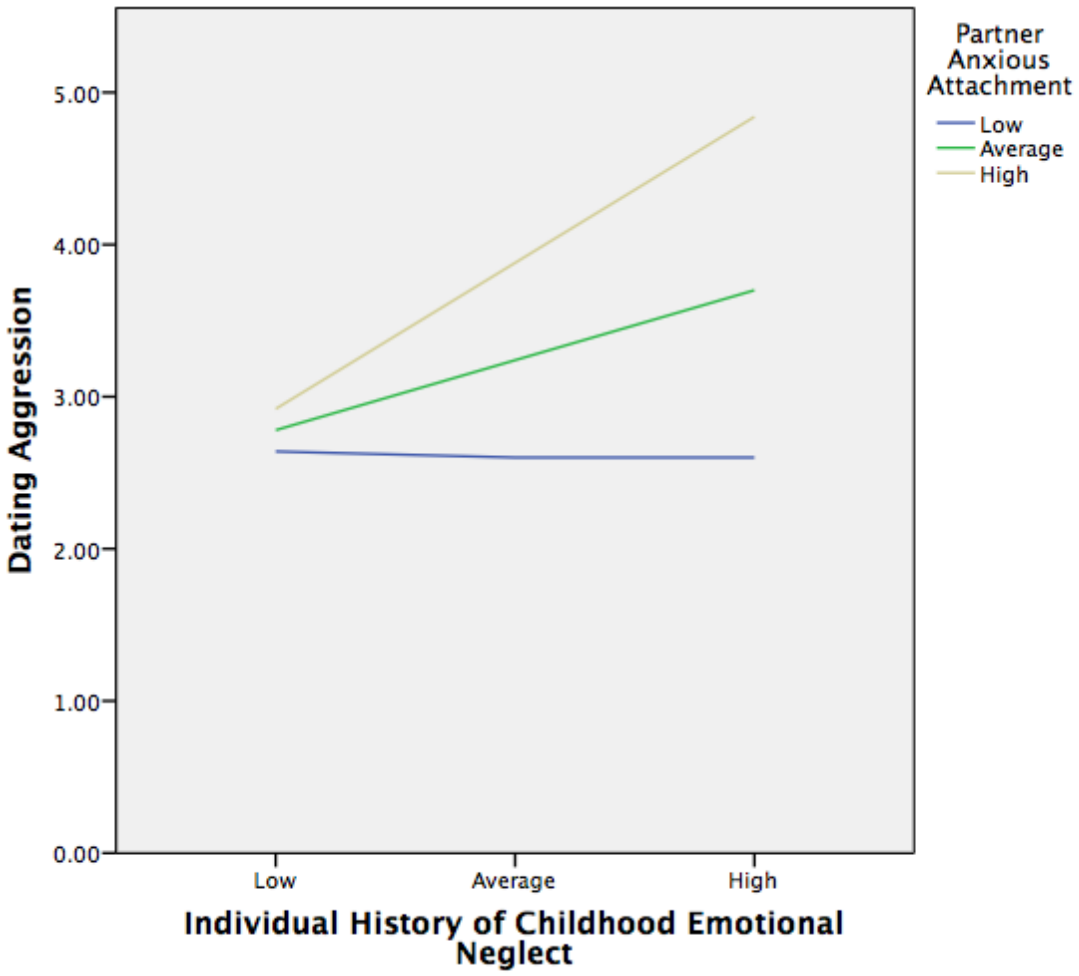

Figure 1

Nonsignificant interaction between individual history of childhood emotional neglect and partner anxious attachment on individual-reported young adult dating aggression.

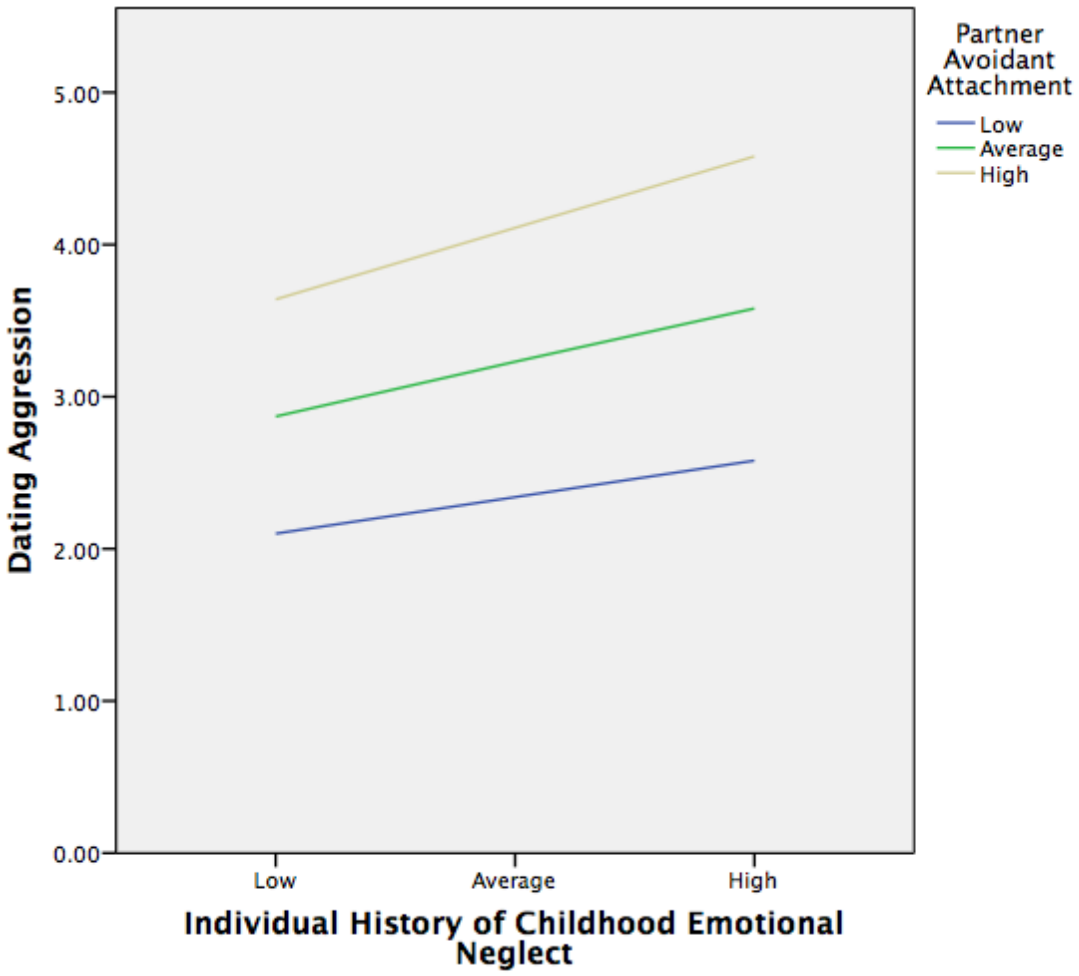

Figure 2

Nonsignificant interaction between individual history of childhood emotional neglect and partner avoidant attachment on individual-reported young adult dating aggression.

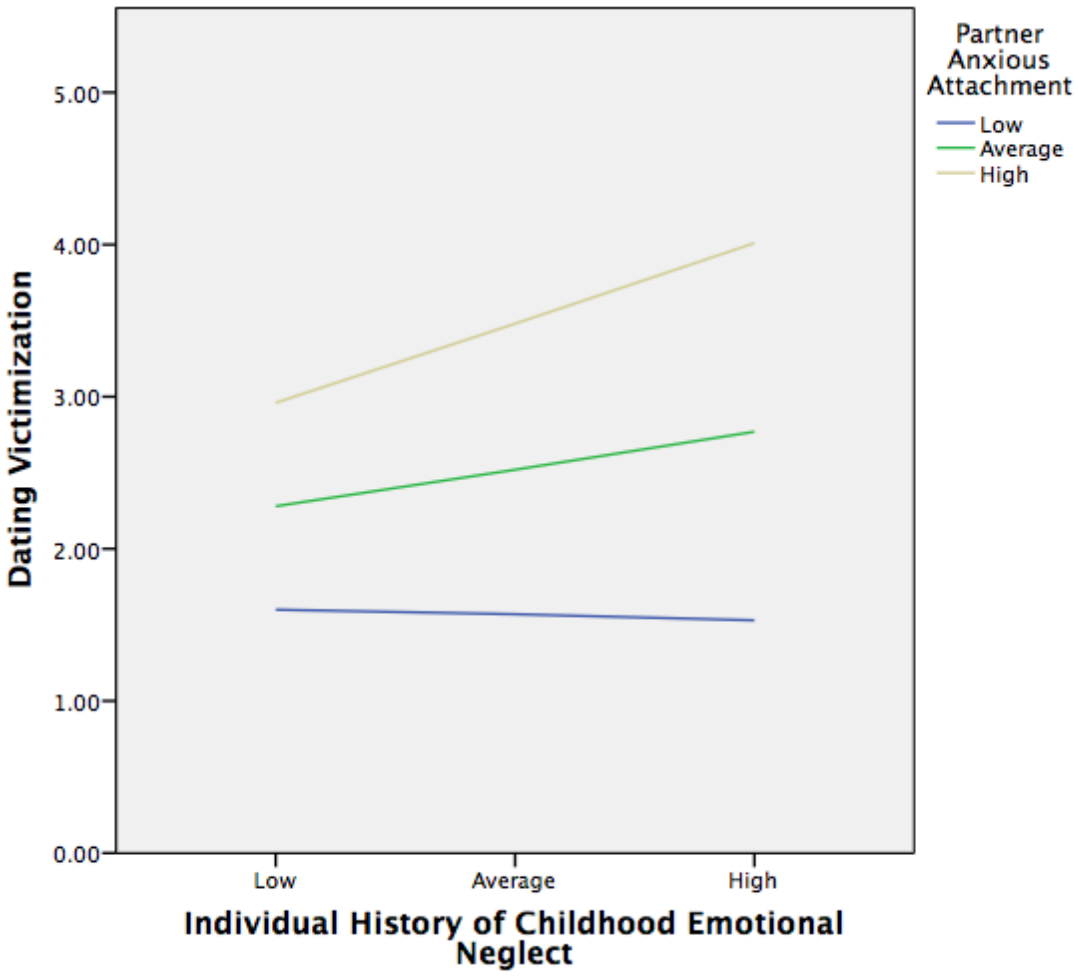

Figure 3

Nonsignificant interaction between individual history of childhood emotional neglect and partner anxious attachment on individual-reported young adult dating victimization.

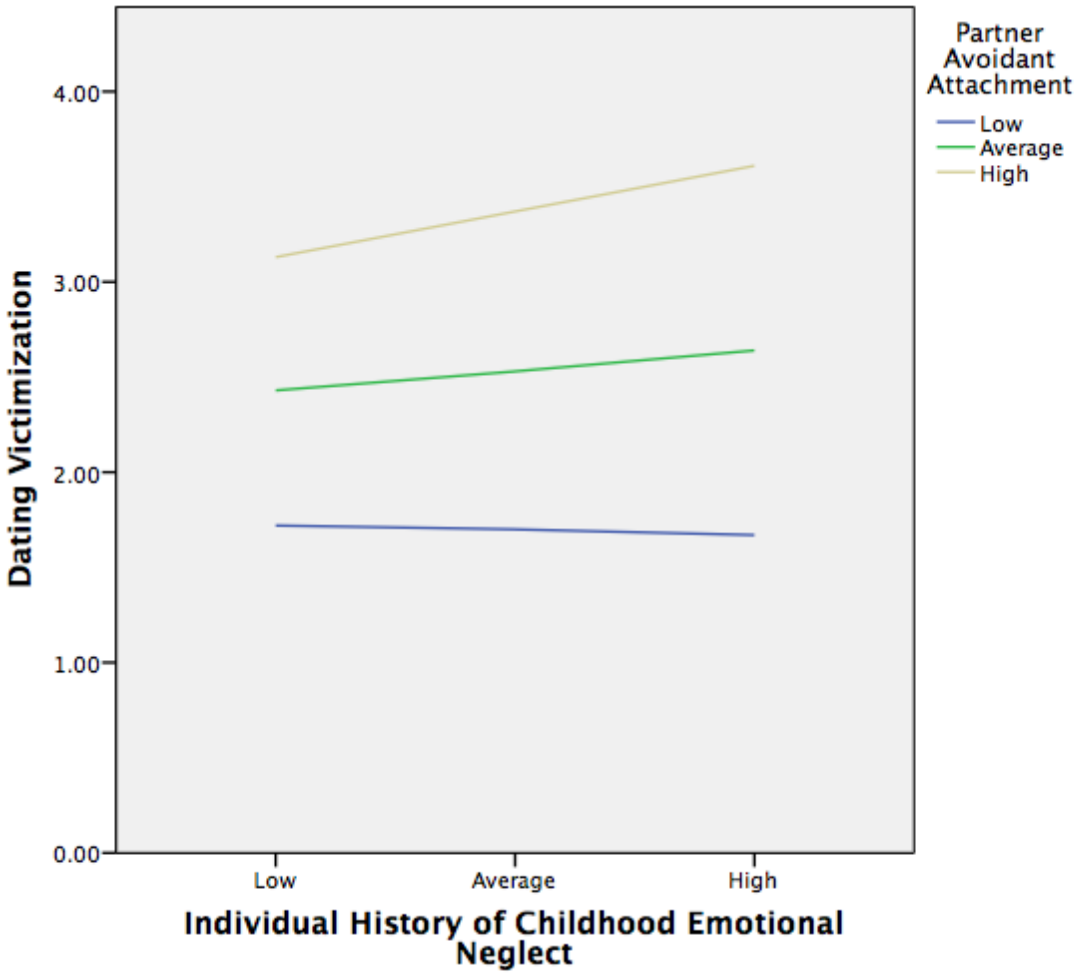

Figure 4

Nonsignificant interaction between an individual history of childhood emotional neglect and partner avoidant attachment on individual-reported young adult dating victimization.

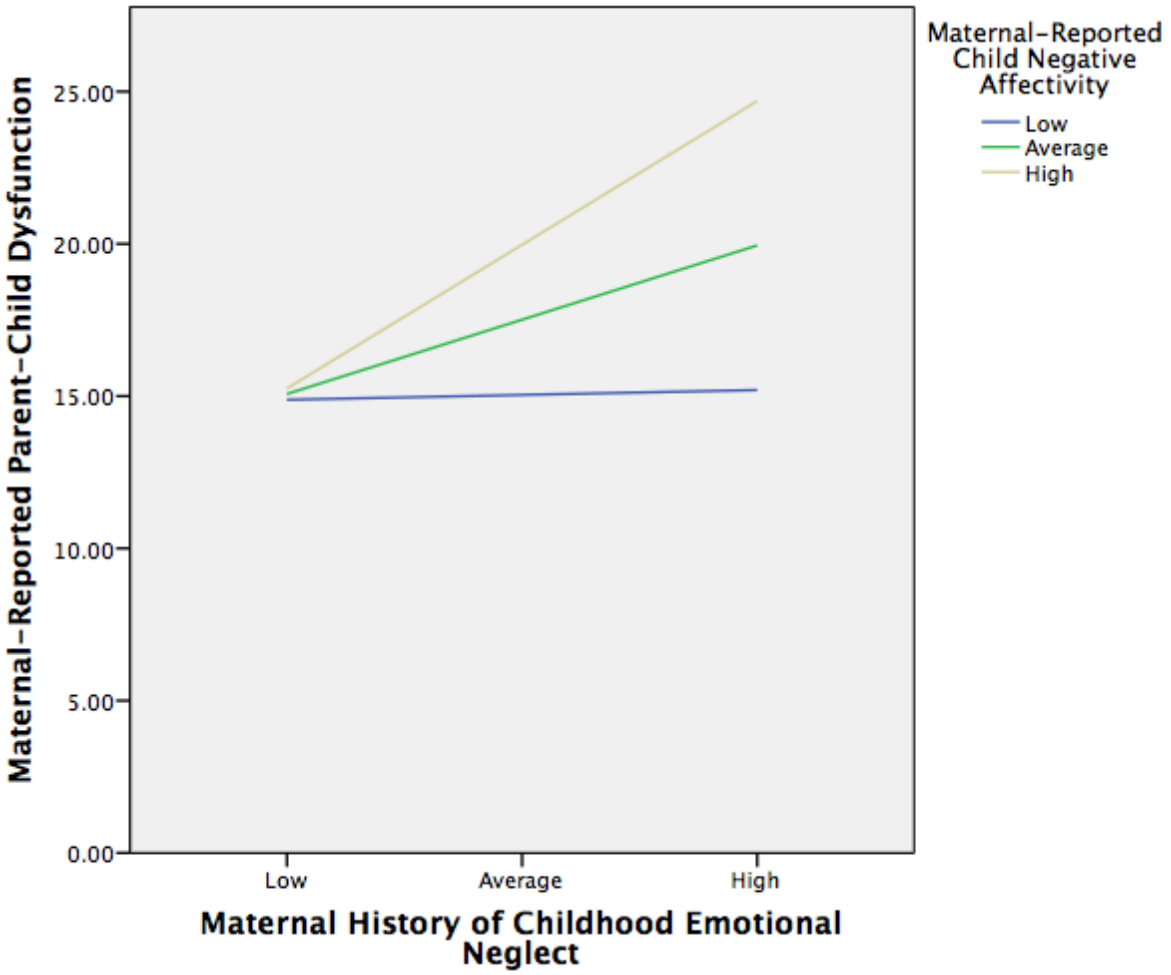

Figure 5

Significant interaction of maternal history of childhood emotional neglect and mother-reported child negative affectivity on maternal report of parent-child dysfunction.

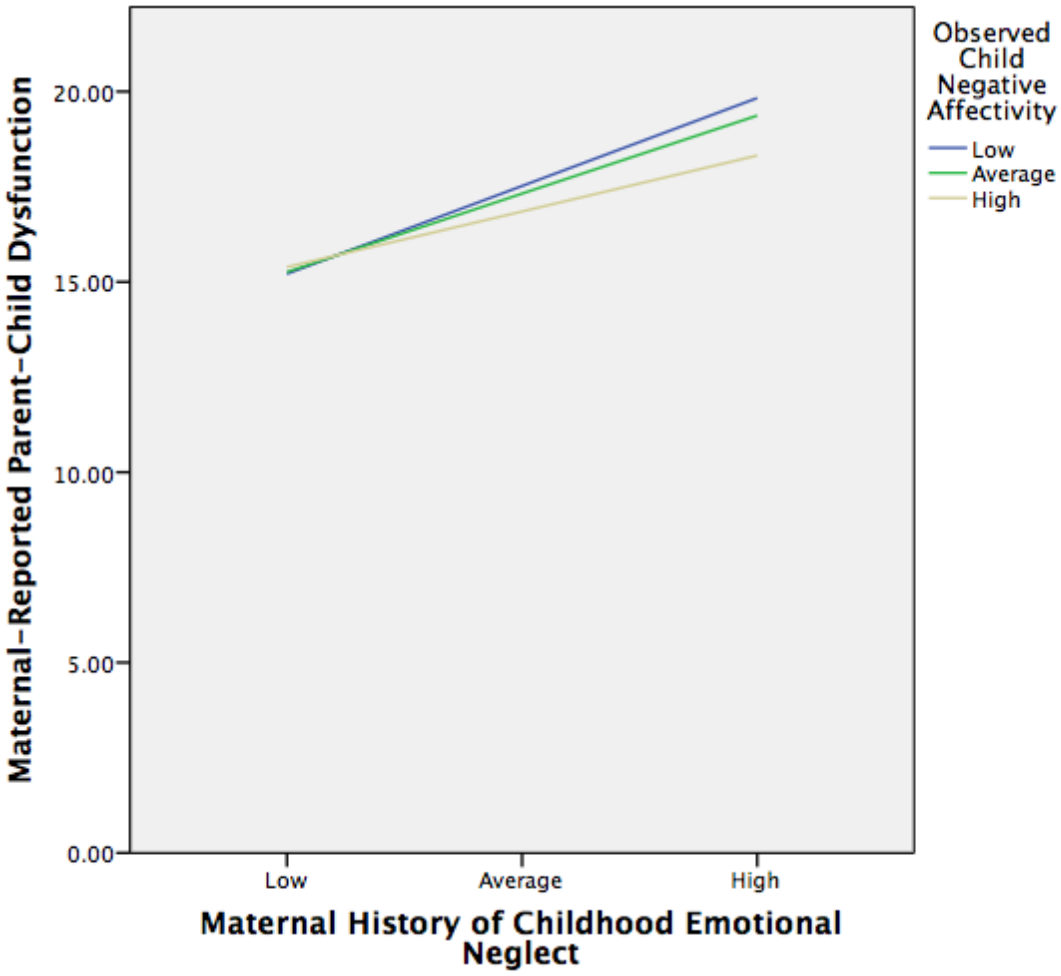

Figure 6

Nonsignificant interaction of maternal history of childhood emotional neglect and observed child negative affectivity on maternal report of parent-child dysfunction.

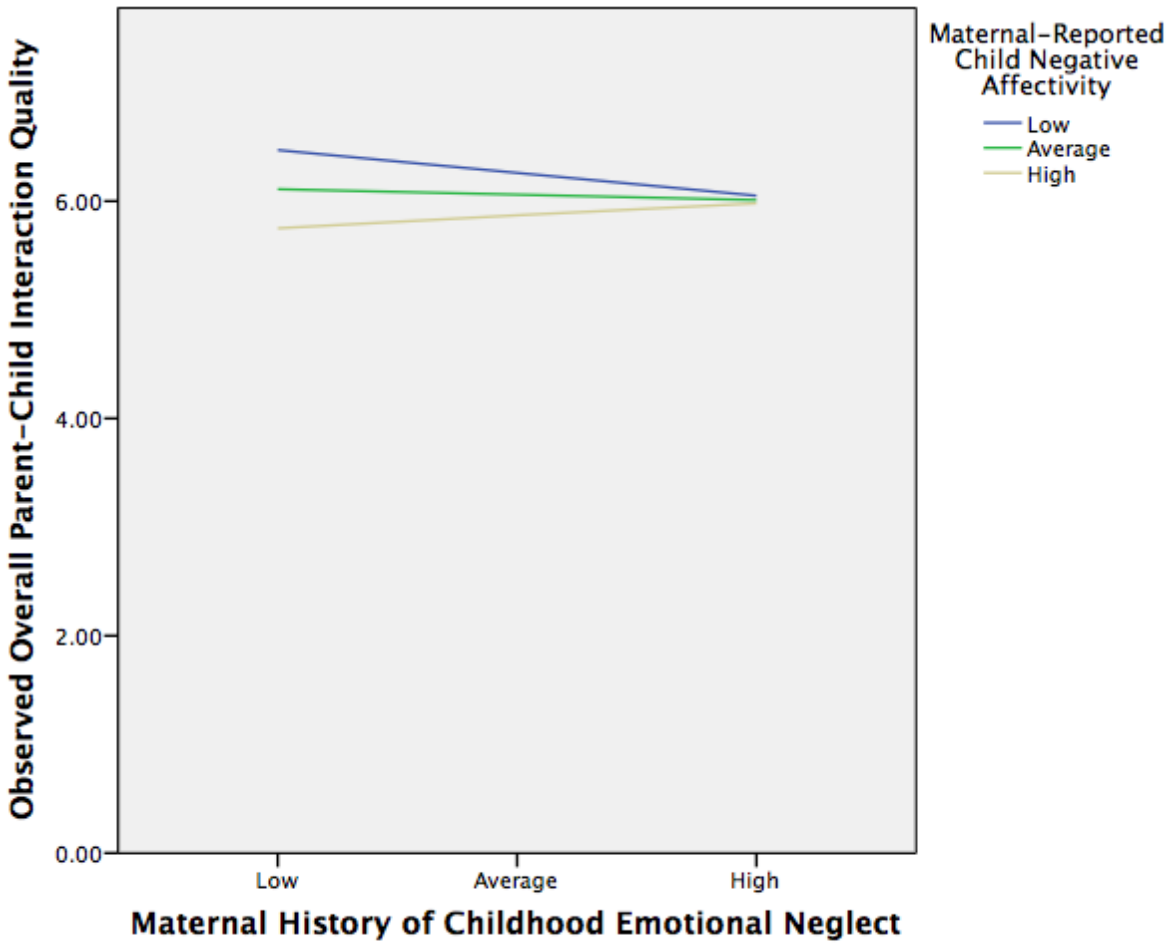

Figure 7

Nonsignificant interaction of maternal history of childhood emotional neglect and mother-reported child negative affectivity on observed overall parent-child interaction quality.

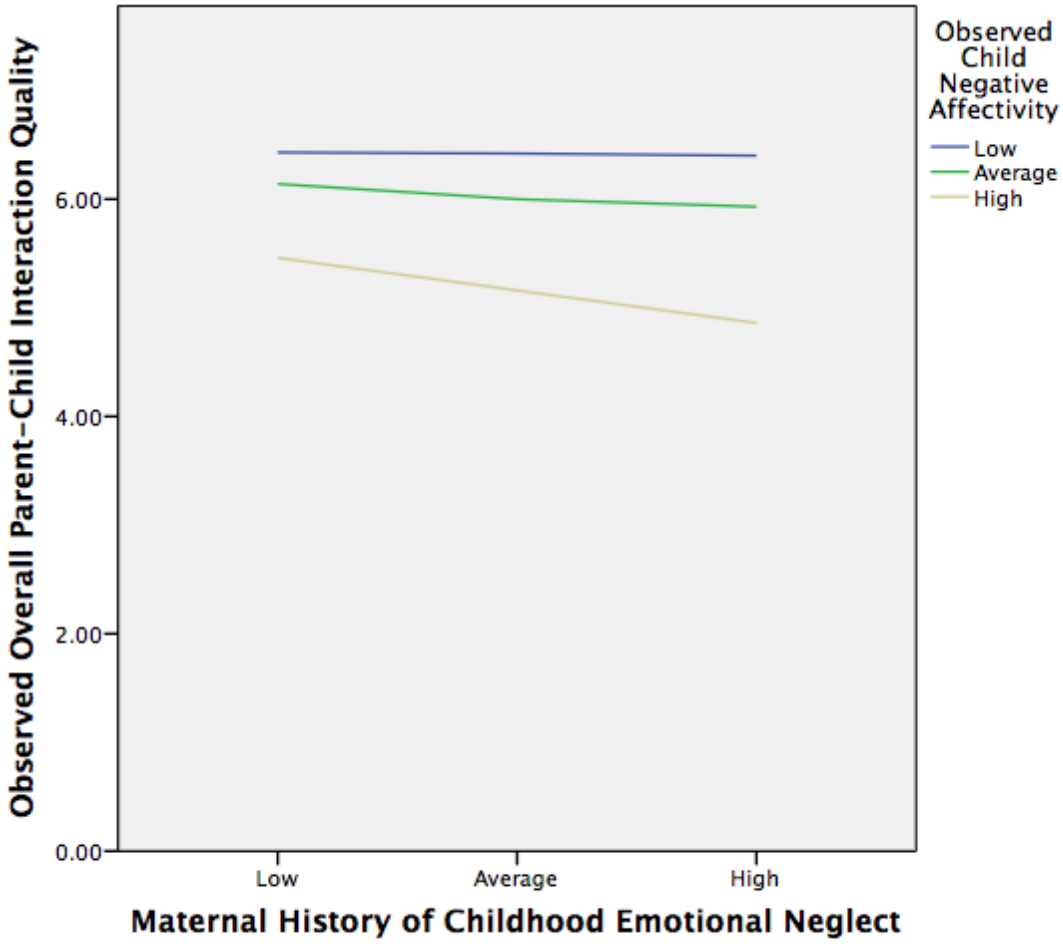

Figure 8

Nonsignificant interaction of maternal history of childhood emotional neglect and observed child negative affectivity on observed overall parent-child interaction quality.