

CONCORDANCE OF ATTACHMENT RELATIONSHIPS AND FAMILY OUTCOMES

by

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(Under the Direction of Geoffrey Brown)

ABSTRACT

Attachment theory has long been critical for our understanding of both child development and parent-child relationships. Despite this foundational value, early attachment research from both Bowlby (1969) and Ainsworth (1979) focused on mother-child attachment exclusively. Over time, research has expanded to include father-child attachment relationships, but studies consistently examine these two relationships separately. This dissertation seeks to integrate family systems theory and attachment theory to explore how the similarity and differences between multiple attachment relationships, termed attachment concordance, impact – and are impacted by -- other domains of family functioning such as dyadic adjustment and coparenting. Prior research suggests that the more secure relationships present the greater the benefit conferred. However, there is also some evidence that a mismatch in attachment relationships may create unique stress and competition between partners. The first study explored how dyadic satisfaction over the transition to parenthood is related to the concordance of mother-child and father-child attachment. Results indicated significant differences in marital satisfaction between couples in which both mothers and fathers develop a secure relationship vs. couples in which only one parent develops a secure attachment relationship with the new baby. The second study examined how the pre-birth concordance of mothers' and fathers' adult attachment styles

predicted marital satisfaction both pre- and postnatally. This study also analyzed how pre-birth adult attachment concordance predicts self-reported coparenting scores at one year. Results indicated few differences in marital or coparental relationship quality as a function of pre-birth attachment concordance. Taken together these studies underscore the value of examining multiple attachment relationships simultaneously rather than in isolation. Further, these results demonstrate the unique patterns of family functioning that can emerge when partners have discordant attachment relationships.

INDEX WORDS: Attachment, Family Systems, Marital Satisfaction, Coparenting, Parent-Child Relationships, Families, Attachment Concordance

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To my family

Cillian and Owen, you both bring so much joy to my life. Josh, you are an incredible partner and I would not have survived without you and your support. Mom and Dad, you have been my loudest and proudest cheerleaders.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Attachment theory has been an important theoretical perspective that is indispensable to our understanding of child-caregiver relationships (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970; Bowlby, 1969; Minuchin, 1985). The assessment and exploration of attachment variables have focused on the interaction between child and caregiver. This research has provided a wealth of information on how children develop their earliest relationships with caregivers and how these relationships are related to lifelong outcomes.

Statement of Need

Despite the value and insight this research has provided, it has been slow to move away from a concentration on mother-child relationships. For example, it has only been within the last twenty years that attachment research has begun to examine father-child attachments with any regularity (Palm, 2014; Paquette, 2004; Pleck, 1997, 2010). Progress has been even slower to integrate the multiple attachment relationships (adult, romantic, and parent-child) in a family into a cohesive paradigm. There has been a repeated call to integrate attachment theory within the wider systemic viewpoint of family systems theory (Marvin & Stewart, 1990; Rothbaum, Rosen, Ujiie, & Uchida, 2002; Stevenson-Hinde, 1990). This joining may be even more important as some authors have cautioned that attachment security may function differently when moving from mother-child or father-child relationship focus to examining triadic family relationships (Talbot, Baker, & McHale, 2009). Specifically, the tradition of examining mother and father attachment separately without consideration for the combination of attachment relationships may

inhibit our ability to fully understand the family process (Paley et al., 2005; Talbot, Baker, & McHale, 2009). One way to examine attachment in the context of the family system is to consider attachment concordance, or the combination of attachment relationships that exist within a family.

Concordance of attachment is a family system variable that has thus far received little research attention. The few studies that do exist focus mostly on child outcomes when considering the multiple attachment relationships with multiple caregivers (Boldt et al., 2014; Bridges, Connell, & Belsky, 1988; Howes, 1999; Kochanska & Kim, 2013; van IJzendoorn et al., 1992) or the similarity of adult attachment styles between romantic partners (Alexandrov et al., 2005; Lele, 2008; Maclean, 2002; Treboux et al., 2004). Even fewer studies have addressed the interaction between parent-child attachment, adult attachment styles, and broader family interactions despite large theoretical overlap in these domains. Two available studies both emphasize how examining the concordance or combination of attachment relationships enhances our understanding of the family system (Paley et al., 2005; Talbot et al., 2009). For example, Paley and associates (2005) found a relationship between negative marital escalation and attachment styles but only when both mother and father attachment styles were considered together. If one partner was secure and the other insecure, negative marital escalation would lead to greater coalition formation. This relationship was not found for double insecure couples and was reversed for double secure couples. This study is a prime example of how considering the constellation of attachment relationships provides new and important insights into family processes. Examining concordance further may support our understanding of this shared security across a family system as well as the challenges created when security is not present in all relationships. Additionally, the similarity or difference between attachment styles within a

family may also enhance or distress the quality of the relationships between caregivers as suggested by Talbot et al. (2009). Partners who develop very different attachment relationships with a new baby may experience distress. If one partner is developing a secure relationship and the other an insecure, this may create feelings of jealousy or competition that have potential consequences for relationship and/or family functioning.

The purpose of this study is to examine how attachment concordance, or the similarity between multiple attachment relationships, is related to couple relationship processes such as marital satisfaction and coparenting. Below is a brief description of attachment concordance research, marital satisfaction, and coparenting to provide context for the studies. This chapter also presents the theoretical frameworks being used to ground and guide this work. Finally, it concludes with an overview of the studies to be discussed in the subsequent chapters.

Concordance of Parent-Child Attachment Relationships

Early attachment research has long supported the idea that children may develop multiple attachment relationships with different caregivers (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970; Ainsworth et al., 1978 & Wall, 1978; Ainsworth, 1979; Bowlby, 1969). However, both Bowlby (1969) and Ainsworth (1979) believed a child's attachment relationships were hierarchical, with there being a primary relationship (traditionally the mother-child relationship) that was particularly influential. The original hierarchal model has not been empirically supported (van IJzendoorn et al., 1992). Instead, research has established that these multiple relationships can impact children differently, with mother-child and father-child attachment style predicting different outcomes in childhood and adolescence (Al-Yagon, 2014; Belsky et al., 1988; Braungart-Rieker et al., 1999; Collins & Russell, 1991; Doyle & Markiewicz, 2009; Howes & Spieker, 2008). Some have theorized that there is a complementary system of attachment relationships with each additional

secure relationship benefiting the child uniquely (Boldt et al., 2014; Bridges et al., 1988; Kochanska & Kim, 2013; van IJzendoorn et al., 1992). Although attachment relationships within a family generally tend to be more similar than different, children regularly form a secure relationship with one caregiver and an insecure relationship with another (Cugmas, 2007; Fox et al., 1991 1991; van Ijzendoorn, 1995; van Ijzendoorn & De Wolff, 1997). Since children can form different styles of attachment, the agreement between these caregiver-child relationships is a potentially important (and overlooked) element of the family system in and of itself. To better understand the sources and consequences of discrepancy between these relationships, a child's attachment network should be examined from a more holistic perspective. Elucidating the correlates of attachment concordance is one step toward better understanding this constellation of attachment relationships.

Attachment concordance is the combination of attachment relationships within a family. It may be the combination of mother-child and father-child attachment quality or the combination of mother adult attachment style and father adult attachment style. When families have similar attachment relationships/styles they are considered concordant; whereas, families with different attachment relationships/styles are defined as discordant. Early research focusing on the concordance of mother-child and father-child attachment relationships has defined attachment constellations as such: a) double-secure (secure with both mother and father), b) mismatched or secure-insecure (secure with one parent and insecure with the other), and c) double-insecure (insecure with both mother and father) (Kochanska & Kim, 2013).

Attachment theory and supporting research offer several possibilities by which these constellations of attachment relationships may affect child and family functioning. In existing studies on child outcomes, double-insecure networks consistently confer the most risk and most

negative outcomes including increased externalizing problems (Kochanska & Kim, 2013), decreased competence within peer groups (Boldt et al., 2014), and greater withdrawal behavior problems (Verschueren & Marcoen, 1999). Furthermore, research has shown that children having at least one secure relationship have better outcomes than those with no secure relationships (Verschueren & Marcoen, 1999). Having a secure relationship with one parent may provide some buffering against the negative consequences of an insecure relationship with the other parent. Yet this buffering may be incomplete (Verschueren & Marcoen, 1999). Some empirical results support this claim by demonstrating greater academic and peer competence (Diener, Isabella, Behunin, & Wong, 2008 & Wong, 2008) and higher rates of socioemotional development (van IJzendoorn et al., 1992) for children with a double secure constellation relative to those with one secure relationship. As such, the benefits of the double secure attachment constellation may be especially vital if each parent contributes uniquely to the child's development.

While research has begun to explore the effects of attachment concordance on child outcomes, it has not yet explored what factors contribute to the development of attachment concordance nor how this concordance may influence other areas of family functioning. As we discover how each attachment relationship contributes to overall development, we must also examine the elements of a family system that may foster concordance or discordance between attachment relationships with multiple caregivers. One major influence on this concordance may be the marital subsystem.

Attachment and the Marital System

Decades of research have found support for the "spillover hypothesis" (Erel & Burman, 1995), or the concept that the quality of the relationship between parents can affect the quality of

the parent-child relationship (Cox, Paley, Payne, & Burchinal, 1999; Engfer, 1988; Gerard, Krishnakumar, & Buehler, 2006; Laurent, Kim, & Capaldi, 2008). Specific to attachment, high levels of conflict are related to more insecure parent-child attachments (Frosch, Mangelsdorf, & McHale, 2000; Owen & Cox, 1997) while a positive correlation exists between marital satisfaction and attachment security (Easterbrooks, 1989; Howes & Markman, 1989). Yet, this relationship between attachment security and marital health has not been fully tested in terms of concordance of attachment relationships. Both Paley et al. (2005) and Talbot et al. (2009) found marital health to be related to the concordance of family attachment. Paley and colleagues (2005) found the highest rates of marital satisfaction during parenthood in couples who were both rated as secure in the adult attachment interview (AAI). Talbot et al. (2009) found a complex interaction between pre-birth AAI, marital behaviors, and coparenting with couples in which both partners were secure or insecure reported overall better coparenting than mixed pairs. These studies highlight how the function of attachment security and the consistency of that security across multiple relationships may change when considered at the triadic level (Paley et al., 2005; Talbot et al., 2009). We are beginning to build our understanding of how attachment networks and family subsystems interact to influence the family. Because these two systems, parent-child and marital, are so interrelated it is possible they reciprocally influence one another. Higher marital satisfaction may promote concordant security in family relationships, and this concordant security may in turn support continued marital health. This feedback loop between family outcomes may also be found in the parenting subsystem, specifically in the coparenting relationship.

Attachment and Coparenting

To study the family system, we must examine both marital elements as well as elements of the parenting system such as coparenting. McHale (1995) defines coparenting as:

the extent to which partners share leadership and support one another in their mutual roles as architects and heads of the family. Well-functioning coparenting systems are those in which partners find ways to accommodate their individual styles and preferences. The essence of coparenting thus involves mutual support and commitment to parenting the child. (pp. 985)

This mutual support and leadership are more than another element of the marital system; instead, it is its own unique variable within the family system. While marital satisfaction and coparenting are often associated (Pedro, Ribeiro, & Shelton, 2012; Schoppe-Sullivan, Mangelsdorf, Frosch, & McHale, 2004); they are distinct. For example, the coparenting relationship exists for blended and divorced families. For these families, mothers and fathers maintain a coparenting relationship though the marital relationship has ended. Coparenting also predicts unique outcomes for children and adults (McHale, 1995; McHale, Kuersten-Hogan, & Rao, 2004; Van Egeren, 2004). Specifically, coparenting behavior is related to child psychological health (Schoppe, Mangelsdorf, & Frosch, 2001; Teubert & Pinquart, 2010) as well as marital health (Morrill, Hines, Mahmood, & Cordova, 2010). Further, coparenting is generally considered a triadic variable, including both parents and children, whereas marital satisfaction is dyadic, including only the spouses (McHale, 1995). When there is more than one child, this variable becomes polyadic, though this is outside the scope of the current study. The triadic configuration makes coparenting an ideal variable to be assessed in relation to attachment networks and family processes. Talbot et al. (2009) and Brown, Schoppe-Sullivan, Mangelsdorf, and Neff (2010)

have both examined how coparenting and attachment interact. Both studies found that positive coparenting was related to secure attachment across multiple relationships. As with marital satisfaction, the relationship between attachment concordance and coparenting may be reciprocal and bidirectional. To best understand overall family health and child development, a systemic perspective on attachment is necessary. By addressing the associations between concordance and other common family processes like marital satisfaction and coparenting, these studies can continue advancing towards a systemic understanding of attachment networks and family health.

Theoretical Frameworks

The studies presented here are based on two theoretical frameworks, attachment theory and family systems theory, that have been the basis for exploring parent-child relationships, marital health, and coparenting. Further, the use of both these theories is in direct response to a consistent call in the field of family research to integrate attachment theory with family systems theory to enhance our overall understanding (Cowan, 1997; Kozłowska & Hanney, 2002; Marvin & Stewart, 1990) of family functioning.

Attachment Theory

Attachment theory was first developed by Bowlby (1969) to describe and understand the relationship that develops between children and their caregivers. Bowlby (1969) argued that children develop an attachment to their caregivers in response to affection, communication, and the caregiver's responsiveness to the infants' many different needs. Bowlby stated "attachment [is] what occurs when certain behavioral systems are activated" (1969, p. 179). He further stated that these systems appear because of an evolutionary adaptation, and attachment behaviors emerge in response to a history of interactions that occur between child and caregiver. These repeated and consistent interactions in caregiving relationships help a child build an internal

working model (Bowlby, 1969; Bretherton & Munholland, 2008). Main and colleagues (1985) define this internal model as

a mental representation of an aspect of the world, others, self, or relationships to others that is of special relevance to the individual [and] are not merely "pictures" or passive introjections of the objects of past experience. They are active constructions and can be restructured (pp. 68).

This internal working model is used to predict and anticipate interactions with partners and is updated and revised throughout the lifespan (Bowlby, 1969; Bretherton & Munholland, 2008). In the case of multiple caregivers, children may integrate these different experiences into one internal working model (van IJzendoorn et al., 1992).

Over the decades, our understanding of parent-child attachment became more nuanced due, in part, to methodological advancements. Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall (1978) continued the expansion of attachment theory with the study of the Strange Situation. This assessment was used to place infant-parent relationships into specific attachment categories: secure, anxious, and avoidant. Later a disorganized category was added (Main & Solomon, 1990). These categories have been used extensively to assess how attachment style is related to health and development.

One common limitation in attachment research is the exclusive focus on mother-child attachment. Both Bowlby (1969) and Ainsworth (1970) focused mainly on mother-child attachment with considerably less regard for father-child relationships. Both researchers placed the father-child attachment lower in the attachment hierarchy; the mother-child relationship was pre-eminent (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970; Bowlby, 1969). Research has shown that infants and children can and do attach to fathers, grandparents, and/or any caregivers who spend a large

amount of time caring for the infant or child (Connor, 2006; Cugmas, 2007; Lamb, 1975; Paquette, 2004; Poehlmann, 2003). In particular, research that has examined father-child attachment has found this relationship to provide resources and support to children (Owen, 1981; Palm, 2014; Paquette, 2004; van Ijzendoorn & De Wolff, 1997) and to significantly contribute to overall child development (Boldt, Kochanska, Yoon, & Koenig Nordling, 2014; Bretherton, 2010; Dumont & Paquette, 2013; Paquette, 2004; Pleck, 1997, 2010). As with mother-child attachment, the quality of attachment between fathers and their children predicts a variety of outcomes.

Categories of Attachment Relationships

Bowlby (1969) spoke broadly of secure or insecure patterns of attachment. In following Bowlby's work, Ainsworth (1979) developed subgroups within these categories in her research with the Strange Situation. In this assessment, a child and his or her caregiver participate in eight episodes that include play, separation, and reunification with the caregiver. Additionally, a stranger would interact with the infant both with and without the caregiver present. Over the eight episodes, the situations gradually became more distressing. From these observations, different types of attachments, subgroups A, B, C, were defined. These were later renamed A as avoidant, B as secure, and C as anxious. During the Strange Situation, securely attached infants and children use the caregiver as a secure base, enjoy close contact of the caregiver, are positive towards the caregiver, and appear to be in harmony with the caregiver (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Securely attached infants are often distressed by the caregiver's departure, but seek proximity and/or contact and are comforted by the caregiver upon reunion. The anxious attachment style is characterized by a lack of confidence in the caregiver's response and and increased separation anxiety. These children are typically very distressed by the caregiver's departure and also

demonstrate ambivalence towards the caregiver's physical contact with them during reunion, at times protesting the affection and at other times demanding it (Ainsworth et al., 1978).

Caregivers in this category are less responsive to the infant's signals. Infants identified as being in avoidant relationships experience the attachment relationship in a pattern of avoiding contact with the caregiver. Upon reunion with a caregiver, avoidant infants may ignore the caregiver or approach temporarily before retreating away (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Main and Solomon (1990) added the additional style of disorganized for infants who did not fall into one of the three already established styles. Individuals with disorganized attachment patterns display both anxious and avoidant behaviors when interacting with caregivers, as well as confused, contradictory, or incoherent behavior patterns (Main & Solomon, 1990). Over the past several decades, attachment research has shown that these attachment classifications are consistently related to a multitude of child outcomes.

Secure attachment has been linked to better social skills (Boldt et al., 2014), emotion regulation (Diener, Mengelsdorf, McHale, & Frosch, 2002), and decreased rates of depression in adolescents (Duchesne & Ratelle, 2014). While insecure styles (avoidant, anxious, and disorganized) are related to greater conflict behaviors (Main & Weston, 1981) and higher rates of both internalizing and externalizing behaviors (O'Connor, Bureau, McCartney, & Lyons-Ruth, 2011). The influence of attachment is found for infants (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970; Bates, Maslin, & Frankel, 1985), toddlers (Lickenbrock et al., 2013; Paquette & Dumont, 2013), school-age children (Coyl-Shepherd & Newland, 2013; Pasco Fearon & Belsky, 2011), and adolescents (Ducharme, Doyle, & Markiewicz, 2002; Scharf, Mayseless, & Kivenson-Baron, 2012). Increasing evidence suggests the importance of attachment is not limited to childhood but continues throughout the life course.

Adult Attachment

The application of attachment theory to adult relationships has been widely studied and developed in two major theoretical frameworks (Rholes & Simpson, 2004): the adult attachment interview and romantic attachment. Hazan and Shaver (1987) drew upon the similarities between caregiving and romantic dyads to explain adult romantic attachment. Main and colleagues (1985) developed the adult attachment interview (AAI) to assess how the categories found in infant-caregiver relationships might also be present in adults. Both of these models have been used to evaluate how adult attachment might affect adult functioning and couple relationships (Cohn, Silver, Cowan, Cowan, & Pearson, 1992; Haydon, Collins, Salvatore, Simpson, & Roisman, 2012; Holland, Fraley, & Roisman, 2012; Pedro, Ribeiro, & Shelton, 2015; Shaver, Belsky, & Brennan, 2000). The focus of the present studies is on adult attachment developed from early experiences in childhood instead of adult romantic attachment between partners.

The adult attachment interview (AAI) was developed to examine how the early caregiving relationships described by Bowlby and Ainsworth are organized into a state of mind in adulthood (Mary Main et al., 1985). This model purports that these early relationships continue to influence our behavior and expectations for relationship functioning well into adulthood (Mary Main et al., 1985). The AAI is a semi-structured interview in which participants are asked to recall and describe caregiving experiences with a focus on instances in which a caregiver's response may have been especially important, i.e. times of illness (Mary Main et al., 1985). Individuals are rated as secure if they can coherently discuss early childhood experiences, display appropriate perspectives on why caregivers behaved as they did, and report healthy functioning in current relationships (Main & Goldwyn, 1985). Wampler, Lin, Nelson, & Kimball

(2003) propose that the adult attachment interview can be used to comprehend how previous relationships may affect current family dynamics.

Research continues to emphasize the link between attachment style and adult health, especially relationship functioning. Relationship satisfaction, functioning in a relationship, and the likelihood of being in a relationship are all related to adult attachment style (Gleeson & Fitzgerald, 2014a; Holland et al., 2012; Mondor, McDuff, Lussier, & Wright, 2011). Further, adults with secure attachment styles report higher marital satisfaction compared to insecure attachment styles (Banse, 2004; Butzer & Campbell, 2008; Feeney, 1996). Security in adult attachment styles is also related to higher levels of resilience (Karreman & Vingerhoets, 2012). Comparatively, insecure attachment styles in adults have been found to be positively associated with health conditions like chronic pain, stroke, heart attack, and high blood pressure (McWilliams & Bailey, 2010) and poorer coping skills and emotional regulation (Axford, 2007). Attachment style is a vital component of human development and relationship functioning.

Family Systems Theory

The development and application of family systems theory expanded the unit of analysis beyond the individual into the family system and the patterns of behavior within that system (Minuchin, 1985; Cox & Paley, 1997). Family systems theory comes from general systems theory which emphasizes the whole is greater than the sum of its parts (Von Bertalanffy, 1972). Early family scholars translated Von Bertalanffy's ideas to the living system of the family creating family systems theory (Ackerman, 1984; Bateson, 1972; Bowen, 1985; P. Minuchin, 1985). The basic tenets of family systems theory are: families are systems, these systems are made up of interconnected elements, bidirectional relationships exist between elements of the systems, systems are maintained by circular and patterned behavior, and these systems are

governed by rules and regulations (Minuchin, 1985). Without these guiding principles of family systems theory, the focus in developmental science may have remained within the individual; thus, information vital for our understanding of human functioning may have continued to be ignored. Family systems theory changed how the field defined dysfunction, from a problem within an individual to a wider systemic pattern (Bowen, 1985; Minuchin, 1974), and thus changed our understanding of development and health.

One element of family systems theory that is especially relevant to a family attachment network is the notion that the whole of the family is greater than the sum of its parts. This tenet underscores how looking at individuals and relationships separately does not provide the same understanding as examining the whole system comprehensively (Minuchin, 1985; Cox & Paley, 1997). For example, looking at the mother-child relationship and the father-child relationship individually without moving to the triadic level restricts our understanding of the system (Talbot et al., 2009). Processes like attachment may function differently when examined at the family level, instead of the traditional dyadic level. There have been repeated calls in the field of family research to integrate family systems theory and attachment theory (Cowan, 1997; Kozłowska & Hanney, 2002; Marvin, 2003; Marvin & Stewart, 1990; Stevenson-Hinde, 1990). This is due to several similar shared priorities between the two theories including: focus on relationships over individual experiences, the circular nature of relationships, and attention to patterns of behavior to maintain relationships (Marvin & Stewart, 1990; Rothbaum, Rosen, Ujiie, & Uchida, 2002; Stevenson-Hinde, 1990). The present studies will work to integrate these two theories through the exploration of attachment concordance. By examining the similarity or differences between multiple attachment relationships within a family – and the determinants and outcomes of those

similarities or differences -- we can explore the notion that the whole of these attachment relationships is greater than the sum of the individual relationships.

Overview of Studies

Attachment relationships play a vital role in adult, child, and overall family functioning and outcomes. Research often examines these relationships independent of one another, despite a frequent plea to examine attachment at a wider family level and to integrate attachment theory with family systems theory. One suggested method for a more holistic examination of attachment is to assess the attachment concordance, or similarity between multiple attachment relationships. To address this plea, we will use concordance as both a predictor and an outcome of family processes. We will focus on the concordance of both mother-child and father-child attachment as well as mother adult attachment and father adult attachment styles. Specifically, manuscript one will explore how pre-birth marital satisfaction and the change in marital satisfaction over the transition to parenthood predicts attachment concordance of mother-child and father-child attachment. Manuscript two will examine how concordance of adult attachment predicts marital satisfaction and coparenting for new parents.

Conclusion

Attachment for both children and adults is an important variable for individual and family outcomes. Yet, research has been slow to include a family systems view of attachment to understand a family's attachment network. Examining the similarities and differences of attachment relationships within families will provide a more detailed understanding of child and family functioning. Attachment concordance is one step towards a more systemic view of attachment and has been shown to be predictive of child behavior (Boldt et al., 2014; van IJzendoorn et al., 1992; Verschueren & Marcoen, 1999). Moving towards the integration of

dyadic and triadic levels of analysis better reflects the family systems' foundation that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

CHAPTER 2

MARITAL SATISFACTION OVER THE TRANSITION TO PARENTHOOD AS
PREDICTORS OF ATTACHMENT CONCORDANCE¹

¹ Oed, M. M., Brown, G., Gale, & J., Oshri, A. To be submitted to *Attachment and Human Development*.

Abstract

The transition to parenthood can be a challenging and rewarding experience during which changes in marital satisfaction are common (Twenge, Campbell, & Foster, 2003). It is also during this time of change and adjustment that both parents are developing their relationship to the new baby. Research has shown a strong relationship between the health of the marital subsystem and the health of the parent-child subsystem (Erel & Burman, 1995; Twenge et al., 2003) as well as links between individual parents' marital satisfaction and parent-child attachment security (Isabella & Belsky, 1985; Lickenbrock & Braungart-Rieker, 2015). However, research tends to separate and examine mother-child and father-child relationships individually instead of exploring the concordance of attachment at the family level. Guided by family systems theory, this study explored how marital satisfaction before and after the transition to parenthood predicts attachment concordance between the mother-child and father-child relationships. Results demonstrated significant differences in both pre- and post-birth satisfaction levels between couples in which both partners are secure and couples with mismatching attachment relationships. Additional analyses indicated higher levels of marital satisfaction in families in which the mother was the only secure attachment and lower levels of marital satisfaction when the father was the only secure attachment. These results are discussed in terms of directions for future research as well as family interventions.

Introduction

The attachment between infant and caregiver has been the focus of decades of research. Attachment theory posits that early caregiving experiences lead to attachments between parents and children which then serve as a guide for subsequent relationship functioning throughout an

individual's life (Bowlby, 1969; Ainsworth, 1989). Consistent, positive, and sensitive caregiving interactions are some of the key contributors to the development of secure attachment relationships. Alternatively, inconsistent or insensitive responses from a caregiver are likely to lead to an insecure attachment relationship (Bowlby, 1969). Research has repeatedly demonstrated the benefits of a secure attachment relationship as well as the deficits created via attachment insecurity (Ainsworth, 1989; Ainsworth, 1990; Bowlby, 1969; Bretherton, 2005).

At its conception, attachment research focused exclusively on mother-child relationships, with other caregivers treated as incidental. Though it has always been purported that children can form multiple attachments, attachment theory and research have long privileged the mother-child relationship (Bowlby, 1969). However, more recent research has begun to explore how attachment relationships between child and mother, child and father, and even child and non-familial caregiver may each uniquely and collaboratively contribute to children's developmental outcomes (Al-Yagon, 2014; Belsky, Bridges, & Connell, 1988; Boldt et al., 2014; Braungart-Rieker, Courtney, & Garwood, 1999; Braungart-Rieker et al., 2014; Coyl-Shepherd & Newland, 2013; Fox et al., 1991; Furman & Simon, 2004; Monteiro, Verissimo, Vaughn, Santos, & Bost, 2008; Owen, 1981; Shill, Michigan Univ, & et al., 1981).

Despite acknowledging the importance of attachments to multiple caregivers, most research continues to examine these relationships in isolation. For example, the quality of the attachment relationship between a mother and child is thought to develop from the interactions between mother and child without much consideration for the role of broader family interactions (Bowlby, 1969). Yet, studying these relationships independent of one another limits our understanding of the wider family system and the possible bidirectional and reciprocal influences that occur between parents, children, and partners (Minuchin, 1974). Several authors have

proposed the need to further integrate attachment and family systems theories (Cowan, 1997; Marvin & Stewart, 1990; Rothbaum et al., 2002; Stevenson-Hinde, 1990). An integration of these theoretical perspectives would move attachment from a dyadic relationship variable into a multi-relationship network. Despite repeated calls for this integration and advancement, attachment research has been slow to move away from its focus on the dyadic relationship.

It is challenging to both conceptualize and measure multiple relationships and the bidirectional influences within each relationship. One possible approach to investigating this attachment network is considering the concordance of attachment relationships, or how similar attachment styles are across multiple caregiving relationships. The notion of attachment concordance – that is the similarity in quality of attachment between mother-child and father-child relationships -- may be critical for understanding family dynamics as well as aiding the successful integration of attachment and family systems theories. Though the notion of attachment concordance both answers the call for family systems and attachment theory integration and may provide possible value in predicting child outcomes, there is scant research devoted to what promotes or inhibits this concordance between family relationships.

It is the goal of this paper to investigate how elements of the family system, specifically marital satisfaction, may promote attachment concordance or discordance. Marital satisfaction has been studied extensively during the transition to parenthood, with associations between marital satisfaction and attachment security well documented (Christopher, Umemura, Mann, Jacobvitz, & Hazen, 2015; Cox, Paley, Payne, et al., 1999; Doss & Rhoades, 2017; Paley, Cox, Harter, & Margand, 2002; Shapiro, Gottman, & Carrère, 2000). Research to date, however, has not delved into how this satisfaction may affect the similarity between parent-child attachments. Guided by family systems theory, the present study examines how multiple relationships within a

family interact and crossover (Berlin & Cassidy, 1999) by examining how the marital relationship extends beyond the couple dyad and influences attachment concordance between mother-child and father-child relationships. We will examine dyadic satisfaction of mothers and fathers before birth and during the child's first year and the impact of this satisfaction on the concordance of attachment relationships within the family.

Concordance of Parent-Child Attachment Relationships

Early attachment research has long supported the idea that children may develop multiple attachment relationships with different caregivers (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970; Ainsworth et al., 1978 & Wall, 1978; Ainsworth, 1979; Bowlby, 1969). However, both Bowlby (1969) and Ainsworth (1979) believed a child's attachment relationships were hierarchical, with the mother-child relationship being particularly influential. This original model has not been empirically supported (van IJzendoorn et al., 1992) with research demonstrating multiple relationships can impact children differently (Al-Yagon, 2014; Belsky et al., 1988; Braungart-Rieker et al., 1999; Collins & Russell, 1991; Doyle & Markiewicz, 2009; Howes & Spieker, 2008). It has been suggested that each additional secure relationship benefits the child differently (Boldt et al., 2014; Bridges et al., 1988; Kochanska & Kim, 2013; van IJzendoorn et al., 1992). It is important to note that children regularly form a secure relationship with one caregiver and an insecure relationship with another (Cugmas, 2007; Fox et al., 1991 1991; van Ijzendoorn, 1995; van Ijzendoorn & De Wolff, 1997). It is this possible discrepancy or agreement between attachment relationships that is often disregarded in family research. To address concordance of these relationships, we must study a child's attachment network from a more holistic perspective. Examining what may predict attachment concordance may help us better understand this constellation of attachment relationships.

Preliminary research including mother-child and father-child attachment relationships within the same family has begun to shed light on attachment concordance. Classification of attachment concordance has coded families as: a) double-secure (secure with both mother and father), b) secure-insecure (secure with one parent and insecure with the other), and c) mismatched or double-insecure (insecure with both mother and father) (Kochanska & Kim, 2013). Most research to date has used these classifications to study child outcomes, observing that double-insecure networks confer the most risk and most negative outcomes including increased externalizing problems (Kochanska & Kim, 2013), decreased competence within peer groups (Boldt et al., 2014), and greater withdrawal behavior problems (Verschueren & Marcoen, 1999). While one secure relationship provides better outcomes compared to the double-insecure group. Despite the one secure relationship providing some benefits, it has been suggested that a single secure relationship does not provide the same resources as the double secure constellation (Verschueren & Marcoen, 1999). Results demonstrate higher academic and peer competence (Diener, Isabella, Behunin, & Wong, 2008) and stronger socioemotional development (van IJzendoorn et al., 1992) for children a secure relationship with both parents. This research stresses the value in examining multiple attachment relationships together.

As this research is still in its infancy, it is difficult to say with certainty how multiple attachments may coalesce to influence a child's outcomes. What is becoming clear is that to deepen our understanding of child and family development, we should explore concordance of attachment relationships to begin clarifying the processes by which multiple attachments are integrated and internalized within the child. While research has begun to explore the effects of concordance, it has not yet explored what factors contribute to the development of attachment concordance. As we discover how each attachment relationship contributes to overall

development, we must also examine the elements of a family system that may foster concordance or discordance between attachment relationships with multiple caregivers. One major influence on this concordance may be the marital subsystem.

Marital Subsystem and Parent-child Relationships

The transition to parenthood has been shown to be a potential period of stress and challenge for a couple (Shapiro et al., 2000; Talbot et al., 2009). It is also during this time that the attachment relationship between parent and child begins to form. Research has demonstrated consistently that the quality of the relationship between parents can affect the quality of the parent-child attachment relationship (Cox, Paley, Payne, et al., & Burchinal, 1999; Engfer, 1988; Gerard et al., 2006; Laurent et al., 2008). In particular, and consistent with family systems theory, research has documented that less marital conflict (Gerard et al., 2006; Lindsey, Caldera, & Tankersley, 2009 2009) and greater marital satisfaction (Kerig, Cowan, & Cowan, 1993 1993) are related to more optimal parent-child relationship functioning.

The influence of the marital dyad on parent-child relationships has been termed the “spillover hypothesis” (Erel & Burman, 1995). The major tenet of this theory is that the quality of the romantic dyad spills into the parent-child dyad; marriages with high levels of conflict are related to more insecure parent-child attachments (Frosch et al., 2000; Owen & Cox, 1997). Conversely, higher marital satisfaction is related to more sensitive parenting practices and thus greater attachment security between parent and child (Easterbrooks, 1989; Howes & Markman, 1989). The mechanisms by which marital conflict influences attachment security has been incorporated in the “emotional security hypothesis” (Davies & Cummings, 1994). Davies and Cummings (1994) explain:

children's emotional security also derives from the quality of the marital relationship. Marital conflict can cause family life to be emotionally unpleasant, threaten the child's emotional or even physical well-being, result in breakdown of discipline practices, and reduce the emotional availability or sensitivity of parents (pg. 389).

Thus, marital conflict is thought to influence children both indirectly via maladaptive parenting practices and directly in terms of children's lowered sense of felt security in the context of a conflictual marriage. Laurent et al. (2008) theorized that the energy and attention used within a high conflict relationship may leave parents less available within the parent-child dyad, leading to greater insecurity. Some authors have suggested that, for fathers specifically, withdrawal from the marriage may reflect a withdrawal from the parental relationship as well (Cox, Paley, Payne, et al., 1999; Frosch et al., 2000). Elements of the marital relationship can influence the quality of the parent-child relationship. Yet, it remains to be seen whether a healthy marriage before and following the birth of a child affects the concordance of attachment relationships within a family.

Marital Satisfaction, Attachment, and the Transition to Parenthood

It is no surprise that the birth of a child creates significant changes within a family. One variable that has received a considerable amount of attention is the change in marital satisfaction over the transition to parenthood (Belsky, Lang, & Rovine, 1985). This transition is important because there is a myriad of evidence that marital satisfaction is significantly related to child attachment (Cox, Paley, Burchinal, & Payne, 1999; Erel & Burman, 1995; Isabella & Belsky, 1985). As stated above, the health of the marital subsystem impacts the health of the parent-child system. However, this research has most often studied marital satisfaction as a single event in relationship to attachment relationships despite consistent research that new parenthood creates fluctuations in satisfaction (Christopher et al., 2015; Kohn et al., 2012; Lawrence, Nylén, &

Cobb, 2007; Lawrence, Rothman, Cobb, Rothman, & Bradbury, 2008). Also, the available research has only explored marital satisfaction and parent-child attachment for each parent individually. Research has not yet examined family-level attachment concordance and marital satisfaction. This limits our understanding of attachment as we may be missing how changes in the marital system over time influence attachment concordance. Further, if marital satisfaction is vital for secure parent-child attachment, interventions for family functioning should be addressing the needs of both the parent-child relationship and the romantic marital relationship.

Marital satisfaction and attachment relationships both undergo numerous changes in the first year of a child's life. A couple must adjust to the introduction of a new family member and the infant develops an attachment relationship with each significant caregiver. Research has begun to illuminate a link between parent-child attachment relationships and changes in marital satisfaction over the transition to parenthood (Gloger-Tippelt & Huerkamp, 1998; Isabella & Belsky, 1985; Lickenbrock & Braungart-Rieker, 2015) but the evidence is scarce. For example, Isabella & Belsky (1985) found that mothers who experienced a decline in marital satisfaction over the transition to parenthood were less likely to have infants rated as securely attached at one year. Similarly, couples who rated their partnership as having a smaller decline in tenderness after the birth of a child were more likely to have children rated as security attached (Gloger-Tippelt & Huerkamp, 1998). Research on the relationship between marital satisfaction and parent-child attachment may include only one time-point for marital satisfaction instead of examining changes across the transition to parenthood (Coyl-Shepherd & Newland, 2013; Lickenbrock & Braungart-Rieker, 2015). Up to this point, research has not analyzed how marital satisfaction may influence the concordance of attachment relationships. Current studies have only examined each attachment relationship in isolation from each other. If each parent plays a

unique role in child development, then encouraging concordance provides the greatest developmental resources for children. Thus, marital satisfaction may affect the similarity of mother-child and father-child attachment relationships and overall child outcomes. Developing our understanding of the mechanisms that encourage concordance may contribute vital information about family functioning and theory. Further, we may create new opportunities for family-level interventions.

Interventions to foster attachment security in infancy and childhood have traditionally focused exclusively on parenting behaviors (see Marvin, Cooper, Hoffman, and Powell (2002) and Bakermans-Kranenburg, Van Ijzendoorn, and Juffer (2003) for examples). Often these interventions also use only one parent, the mother (Bakermans-Kranenburg et al., 2003). Family support interventions may be missing a way to bolster attachment security at the family level. It may well be that interventions to promote healthy marital functioning have downstream consequences for not only individual attachment relationships but the network of relationships in which the child is embedded. Supporting marital satisfaction may increase the development of a double-secure network and thus provide the greatest developmental potential to children and families. Examining associations between marital quality and attachment concordance has the possibility to inform theory, research, and practice with parents and young children. It is with these goals in mind that this study seeks to examine the associations between changes in marital satisfaction and parent-child relationships. Specifically, this study will examine how is marital satisfaction is related to the concordance of attachment relationships within the family system.

The focus of this research is to assess how pre-birth and post-birth levels of marital satisfaction and changes in marital satisfaction over the transition to parenthood affect attachment security between parents and child as well as the concordance of these attachment

relationships. As research has constantly shown a strong link between higher marital satisfaction and dyadic attachment relationships, we hypothesize that couples with higher levels of initial satisfaction as well as those who experience the least amount of decline in marital satisfaction will demonstrate greater attachment security between parents and children as well as a greater likelihood of concordance between multiple attachment relationships. Further, as declines in marital satisfaction are associated with less secure attachment, we hypothesize that families with lower levels of pre-birth or post-birth satisfaction or steeper declines in satisfaction over the transition will also experience less security in individual parent-child attachment. However, there is little research examining how marital satisfaction may influence discordant attachment relationships, with some studies suggesting that mismatched couples experience the highest levels of distress (Talbot et al., 2009) and others suggesting that marital dissatisfaction would be highest in families with multiple insecure relationships (Maclean, 2002; Stapleton, Woodcroft-Brown, & Chatwin, 2016). Thus, the extent to which marital satisfaction predicts membership in discordant vs. double-insecure family attachment constellations is an exploratory question.

Methods

The data for this study were collected as part of a previous longitudinal investigation of the development of family relationships and attachment in a mid-sized Midwestern community by another team of research collaborators (see, e.g., Brown, Mangelsdorf, & Neff, 2012; Wong et al., 2009). Secondary data analysis was employed for the purposes of this study. One hundred and three heterosexual couples who were expecting a child participated in the study. Data were collected during the third trimester of pregnancy (Phase 1), at 3.5 months postpartum (Phase 2), and at 13 months postpartum (Phase 3). At 3.5 months postpartum, data from 95 mothers (96%) and 93 fathers (95%) were available. At 13 months postpartum, data from 64 mothers (65%) and

56 fathers (56%) were available. There were no significant differences in relationship satisfaction between those who completed all three phases and those who did not. Most expectant parents were married (96%) with a small percentage cohabiting (4%). Average length of relationship was for an average of 4.01 years ($SD = 3.23$ years). Over half (62%) of the couples were expecting their first child. Fifty percent of the newborn children were females. At the time of the Phase 2 assessment, the average age of infants was 3.61 months ($SD = 9.56$ days). At Phase 3, the average infant age was 13.5 months ($SD = 0.80$ days).

Data was collected through surveys and observations. Expectant parents were mailed a packet of questionnaires during Phase 1. After the birth of their child, both parents again completed measures of relationship satisfaction at Phase 2 and Phase 3. For Phase 3, families were observed in the laboratory to assess attachment between parent and child.

Measurements

Relationship satisfaction. Each couple member's relationship satisfaction was measured using the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS; Spanier, 1976). The DAS is a questionnaire consisting of 32 items that measure partners' agreement on issues such as intimacy, religion, friends, and life philosophies, as well as overall relationship adjustment. This measure was completed at all three phases so trajectories of change in couple relationship satisfaction could be examined.

Infant-Parent Attachment. Attachment security was assessed in the laboratory by the standard Strange Situation Procedure (Ainsworth et al., 1978), and coded from videos following Ainsworth et al.'s (1978) procedures. Children were observed with mothers at 12 months then fathers at 13 months. In brief, infants who use the parent as a secure base from which to explore and who are distressed by his or her departure but comforted by his or her return are classified as securely attached (Group B). Infants classified as insecure-avoidant (Group A) appear unaffected

by the departure and tend to avoid the parent upon return. Infants who are extremely distressed and not readily smoothed by the parent's return are classified as insecure-resistant (or anxious; Group C) and may exhibit angry and/or ambivalent behavior. The final classification, disorganized, (Group D) is applied to children who do not display a coherent attachment strategy (e.g., Main & Solomon, 1986). Given the modest sample size and to increase statistical power, analyses in the present study collapsed across insecure (A, C, D) categories to compare secure vs. insecure dyads.

Data Analysis

All analyses were performed using SPSS and MPlus. An "attachment concordance" variable was created by grouping couples based on the attachment configuration of mother-child and father-child attachment. A three-category system consisted of: double secure (child securely attached to both parents), mismatched (child securely attached to one parent and insecurely attached to the other parent), and double insecure (child insecurely attached to both parents). A four-category variable was also examined in the analyses. This grouping split the mismatched group into a) secure with mother/insecure with father and b) secure with father/insecure with mother while retaining the double secure and double insecure groups as well.

To assess the relationship between changes in marital satisfaction and concordance of attachment both ANOVA and latent growth curve (LGC) models were used. A univariate ANOVA was used to examine mean-level differences in marital satisfaction at each phase as a function of attachment classifications for both mothers and fathers. ANOVAs examined differences in marital satisfaction among each of the attachment concordance groups using both three and four category classifications. Demographics (age, race, number of years married) were used as control variables in ANOVAs as well. The inclusion of three time points of parallel data on marital satisfaction also

allowed for the examination of latent growth curve models examining starting points (pre-birth) and trajectories (from pre-birth to 12 months) of marital satisfaction. Specifically, in LGC analyses the intercept and slope of marital satisfaction were used to predict group membership into individual attachment categorization for mothers and fathers separately, as well as overall family attachment concordance classifications. As with the ANOVAs, covariates included age, race, and number of years married.

Results

Table 2.1 provides descriptive statistics for all study variables. Few partners reached the clinically significant level for marital distress (Phase 1 6.9% mothers, 7.1% father; Phase 2 5.2% mothers, 15.1% fathers, Phase 3 12.5% mothers, 9.3% fathers), suggesting that the sample as a whole was largely satisfied with their marriages. (See Table 2.2 for more detailed descriptions of husband and wives reports of marital satisfaction by each sub-scale.) The majority of child-parent dyads, 60.4% mothers and 66.3% of fathers, were rated as secure in the Strange Situation. A much smaller portion of children were rated as avoidant (9.9% with mothers, 6.1% with fathers), anxious (9.9% with mothers and 13.3% fathers), and disorganized (19.8% with mothers, 14.3% with fathers). For family attachment concordance 45.2% were double-secure (secure with both parents) and 16.0% double insecure (insecure with both parents). For mismatched groups with only one secure parent, 19.4% were secure with mother while 19.4% were secure with father.

To examine longitudinal trends among marital satisfaction, repeated measures t-tests and chi-square analyses were conducted. For mothers' dyadic satisfaction, phase one was significantly higher compared to phase two; $t(94) = 2.04, p < .05$. For fathers' dyadic adjustment scores phase one and phase two were significantly higher as well; $t(89) = 7.14, p < .001$. This

significant difference was also present in comparing phase two, 3 months postpartum, and phase three, thirteen months; $t(52) = -3.05, p < .001$.

Finally, to compare distributions of attachment classifications for mothers and fathers, a chi-square was conducted. This analysis explored if mother-child attachment and father-child attachment distributions were significantly different. This test was not significant $\chi^2(1, n = 103) = .766, p = .38$, indicating no difference in the distribution of attachment classifications as a function of parent gender.

ANOVA

To examine if dyadic adjustment scores were related to parent-child attachment security and concordance of attachment styles between parents, a series of analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted. These ANOVAs examined the following: if mothers' level of marital satisfaction differed among mother-child attachment classifications, if fathers' level of marital satisfaction differed among father-child attachment classifications, and if combined marital satisfaction differed as a function of attachment concordance between mother-child and father-child classifications. Each of these ANOVAs was conducted using dyadic adjustment scores from each of the three phases.

The first ANOVA analysis explored how mothers' dyadic adjustment scores at each of the three phases was associated with mother-child attachment style. Overall, higher marital satisfaction for mothers was related to a greater likelihood of secure classification [$F(3, 64) = 3.01, p = 0.04$], although post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated no significant contrasts among attachment categories. Phase 2 [$F(3, 64) = 2.76, p < .05$] showed similar results with the overall group differences being significant but the post hocs showed no significant difference between groups. Phase 3 DAS scores were not significantly different as a

function of mother-child attachment classification [$F(3, 95) = .88, p = 0.46$]. The second set of ANOVA analyses examined group differences in fathers' dyadic adjustment scores as a function of father-child attachment classificants. None of these analyses were significant for phase 1 [$F(3, 57) = 1.22, p = 0.32$], phase 2 [$F(3, 55) = 0.07, p = 0.10$], or phase 3 [$F(3, 74) = .87, p = 0.46$].

Finally, the relationship between the combined dyadic adjustment score of both mothers and fathers and family attachment concordance was examined. For these analyses, family attachment concordance classification was assigned based on both mother-child and father-child attachment classification. This resulted in a three group and four group structure. For the three group structure, the following groups were developed: double-secure, double-insecure, and mismatched. For the four group structure, the mismatched group was divided between secure with mother and secure with father. This resulted in the following four groups: double-secure, double-insecure, secure-with-mother, secure-with-father. For the three group analysis, there were significant differences in mean DAS scores among the three attachment classifications for both phase 1 [$F(2, 57) = 3.75, p < .05$] and phase 3 [$F(2, 73) = 3.75, p < .05$]. There were no differences at phase 2 [$F(2, 56) = 1.88, p = 0.16$]. For phase 1, post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for the double secure ($M = 246.46, SD = 12.61$) was significantly higher than the mismatch group ($M = 231.69, SD = 26.64$). Although the double insecure group did not significantly differ from the double secure and the mismatch groups, this group had the lowest average DAS score ($M = 229.364, SD = 21.979$). For phase 3, there was a significant difference again between the double secure ($M = 237.69, SD = 16.50$) and mismatch groups ($M = 225.63, SD = 21.49$) while the double insecure group ($M = 225.46, SD = 20.62$) was not significantly different from either, despite being very similar to the mismatched group. In general, results support a consistent pattern in which double-secure attachment status

conferred the highest levels of marital satisfaction, with marital satisfaction being similar among double-insecure and mismatched attachment constellations.

To further examine how DAS scores may differ in families with mother-secure or father-secure groups, a four-group classification system was analyzed. As with the three group structure, in the four group structure there were significant differences in combined DAS scores among attachment concordance classification for both phase 1 [$F(3, 55) = 3.65, p < .05$] and phase 2 [$F(3, 54) = 3.36, p < .05$]. At phase 3 there were no significant differences in average combined DAS scores among family attachment concordance groups [$F(3, 71) = 2.38, p = 0.08$]. For phase 1, post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for the double secure ($M = 246.46, SD = 12.61$) was significantly different than father secure group ($M = 224.54, SD = 32.65$). However, the double insecure group ($M = 229.36, SD = 21.98$) and the mother secure group ($M = 240.42, SD = 17.17$) did not significantly differ from the others. For phase 2, the results were similar with the father secure ($M = 217.19, SD = 28.84$) and double secure ($M = 235.81, SD = 14.23$) significantly different. Again, the mother secure ($M = 236.77, SD = 16.34$) and double insecure groups ($M = 226.10, SD = 14.81$) were not significantly different. Figure 2.1 provides a bar graph comparing these results. Notably, even though the differences were not statistically significant, families with mother secure only had relatively high combined DAS scores compared to families in which fathers were the only secure relationship. Specifically, mother-secure constellations were roughly similar to double-secure constellations in their levels of marital satisfaction (at phases 1 and 2), whereas father-secure constellations were similar to double-insecure constellations.

Structural Equation Model

To track change in dyadic satisfaction over time, a latent growth curve model predicting parent-child attachment security was also conducted. Latent variables for slopes (longitudinal trajectories) and intercepts (initial starting points) were specified as presented in Figure 1, using the three time points of mothers', fathers', and combined. Slope and intercept of mothers' and fathers' dyadic adjustment were first used to predict mother-child security and father-child security respectively. The slope and intercept of combined dyadic adjustment were used to predict family concordance, both three (double-secure, double insecure, and mismatched) and four group configurations (double-secure, double-insecure, secure to mother, secure to father).

For the models predicting mother-child and father-child security individually, neither model fit the data well. For mothers, the model fit was relatively poor ($\chi^2/df = 5.21, p < .001$; CFI= 0.958; RMSEA = 0.203). The model predicting father-child attachment security from dyadic adjustment produced similar results ($\chi^2/df = 16.22, p < .001$; CFI= 0.670; RMSEA = .386). Neither the models' slopes nor intercepts predicted parent-child attachment classification. Additional models were conducted to analyze how combined dyadic adjustment predicted concordance of attachment security for mothers and fathers. The first model used the three-group configuration (double-secure, mismatched, and double-insecure) as an outcome. The second model used the four-group configuration (double-secure, secure-mother, secure-father, and double-insecure) as an outcome. The model fit for both the three-group and the four-group failed to converge. See Figure 2.2 for statistical model. A series of unconditional latent growth curve models for mothers' DAS scores, fathers' DAS scores, and combined DAS scores were also conducted. The variance in the slope was not significant for mothers, nor was there significant variance in the slope for the model using the combined scores. The model using fathers' DAS

scores did find marginally significant variance in the slope, but overall model fit was still poor (see above). In general, the lack of variance around both initial starting points and trajectories of marital satisfaction may largely account for the inability to detect associations between intercepts/slopes and attachment concordance.

Discussion

Guided by family systems and attachment theories (Bowlby, 1969; Minuchin, 1985), this study examined the associations between marital satisfaction over the transition to parenthood and constellations of mother-child and father-child attachment. Although marital satisfaction did not predict mother-child or father-child attachment individually, patterns of attachment within families differed markedly as a function of both pre and post-birth marital quality. Results are discussed in detail in the sections that follow.

Marital Satisfaction and Family Attachment

Contrary to previous research (Coyle-Shepherd & Newland, 2013; Lickenbrock & Braungart-Rieker, 2015) neither mothers' nor fathers' dyadic adjustment before and after the birth of a new child predicted the security of the respective parent-child attachment relationship. One limitation in comparing our results to previous studies is differences in the populations studied and survey methods. Coyle-Shepherd and Newland (2013) assessed children between the ages of 7-13 years old. Lickenbrock and Braungart-Rieker (2015) examined families with infants, but they did not begin assessing marital health until after the child was born. Further, they assessed marital health using the Short Marital Adjustment Test. This survey tool may examine different elements of marital health and thus provide different results compared to the dyadic adjustment scale. Neither study examined the combination of parent-child attachment nor combined marital satisfaction. For the current study when examining variables at a family level,

marital satisfaction was significantly different based on the combination of parent-child attachment relationships within a family.

Families with both mother-child and father-child attachment rated as secure reported marital satisfaction that was significantly higher than families with one secure parent and one insecure parent. This pattern held true both pre-birth and one year after birth. In fact, at all three phases families in which both partners were categorized as securely attached to the child had the highest marital satisfaction for the three group analysis. This may be another example of the spillover hypothesis; research has consistently shown a link between marital health and high-quality parent-child interactions (Belsky, 1996; Erel & Burman, 1995; Gerard, Krishnakumar, & Buehler, 2006; Pedro, Ribeiro, & Shelton, 2012). Specifically, when parents report higher marital satisfaction, they also tend to engage in more positive parenting behaviors (Erel & Burman, 1995; Pedro et al., 2012) and develop more secure attachments with their children (Frosch, Mangelsdorf, & McHale, 2000; Lickenbrock & Braungart-Rieker, 2015; Lucas-Thompson & Clarke-Stewart, 2007). This study provides another element to consider, the combination of mother-child and father-child attachments. If both partners experience satisfaction with their relationship they may be better able to attend and care for the new baby, thus providing a more secure relationship. Additionally, the skills that promote a healthy marriage may also promote secure attachment between parent and child. As this pattern was found both pre-birth and at one year, this may also be an example of the bidirectional relationships within family systems (Minuchin, 1985). Results are suggestive of a positive feedback loop within a family: a couple that begins the transition to parenthood highly satisfied is better able to provide a secure attachment to their child. The development of a secure and healthy parent-child relationship for both parents may then increase the sense of marital alliance

and satisfaction across the first year (Nelson, Kushlev, English, Dunn, & Lyubomirsky, 2012; Rogers & White, 1998). Thus, marital satisfaction and a constellation of multiple secure parent-child relationships may have reciprocal relationships.

Conversely, a couple with lower marital satisfaction may be experiencing distress, and thus be less available for their new baby and the development of the attachment relationship. In this study, double insecure couples had the lowest marital satisfaction overall both pre and post birth. The decline in marital satisfaction surrounding the birth of a new child is a well-documented phenomenon (Adamsons, 2013; Christopher, Umemura, Mann, Jacobvitz, & Hazen, 2015; C. P. Cowan et al., 1985; Lawrence, Rothman, Cobb, Rothman, & Bradbury, 2008; Shapiro, Gottman, & Carrere, 2000). The present study provides further evidence that this decline may have multiplicative effects on attachment quality within families by leading to a greater likelihood of two insecure relationships. Alternatively, families in which both parent-child relationships are poor may be primed for marital struggles or may have these struggles exacerbated by the inability to form satisfying relationships one's infant.

Moreover, levels of marital satisfaction were significantly different between mismatched pairs and double secure pairs with the double secure pairs having significantly higher rates of satisfaction. Notably, these families in which attachment was discordant (one secure and one insecure relationship) were no more satisfied with their marital relationship than those with two insecure relationships. Couples who are part of a discordant attachment constellation may experience a unique kind of distress as one parent develops a sense of trust and emotional security within the parent-child relationship, whereas the other may be experiencing jealousy or a sense of competition (Talbot et al., 2009). The parent who is developing a close and secure relationship may be experienced as threatening to the insecurely attached parent. This jealousy or

feelings of threat may harm the marital relationship. It may also be that marital conflict or dissatisfaction leads to less cohesion in the family unit (Pedro, Ribeiro, & Shelton, 2015), creating greater differences in parent-child relationships. Specifically, one partner may seek comfort in his or her relationship with the infant and the other may become relatively more isolated from attachment-promoting interactions with their child. This again may point to the family systems theory idea of bidirectional relationships between family members and family subsystems. Thus, decreases in marital satisfaction may discourage attachment concordance by isolating a parent, and lack of attachment concordance may negatively impact marital satisfaction by creating feelings of jealousy between partners.

Past research examining patterns of attachment has suggested that one secure relationship may be a source of resilience for child development (Boldt, Kochanska, Yoon, & Koenig Nordling, 2014; Kochanska & Kim, 2013). As it relates to marital satisfaction, the current findings contradict this assertion by indicating that couple satisfaction is low when a child is securely attached to only one parent. While children may receive benefits from a single secure relationship, these benefits may not translate to the couple subsystem. The gap between outcomes for children and outcomes for the marriage highlight the need to examine these variables at multiple levels. Our results also showed that double-insecure families did indeed have low levels of marital quality; the lack of significant difference between families with two secure relationships and those with two insecure relationships appears to be a function of a small cell size within the double-insecure category. Notably, marital satisfaction within families with one secure relationship appears to be much more similar to double-insecure than double-secure family constellations. Research on child development often finds the experience of two insecure relationships conveys the most risk for child outcomes (Boldt et al., 2014; Kochanska & Kim,

2013). In this study, discordant attachment appears to convey similar risk for the marital relationship.

Variation in Attachment Discordance: Differing Effects by Child Gender

Although these findings paint an overall negative picture of attachment discordance, analyses examining whether the secure attachment was to mother or father paint a more nuanced picture. Specifically, the gap in marital satisfaction between double secure and discordant groups appears to only be true when the single secure relationship is to the father. Indeed, across all four groups, father-secure families had lower scores of marital satisfaction compared to both double-secure and mother-only secure. In general, a small body of past research has found a positive relationship between the quality of the father-child relationship and the quality of the marital relationship (Coyl-Shepherd & Newland, 2013; Holland & McElwain, 2013; Isabella & Belsky, 1985; Lickenbrock & Braungart-Rieker, 2015a). These studies often examine mother-child and father-child relationships separately. These results may emphasize that a secure father-infant attachment relationship in the context of an insecure mother-infant relationship may in fact be detrimental for the marital relationship. One reason is that a secure relationship to father only may be seen (by mothers) as invalidating maternal identity (Allen & Hawkins, 1999). Families in which traditional gender roles are ambiguous or even reversed may be more likely to experience stigma and stress (Dunn, Rochlen, & O'Brien, 2013), which may in turn take a toll on marital satisfaction. Additionally, research has suggested that mismatching attachment relationships may create feelings of competition (Talbot et al., 2009). These experiences of stress and competition may be more severe for mothers who face strong societal pressure to be children's primary caregivers. Thus, the changes in gender roles and subsequent stress and feelings of competition may create stress in the marital dyad and decrease marital satisfaction.

In contrast, when infants were securely attached to mothers only then couples reported the highest levels of marital satisfaction – even, at times, exceeding what was found in double secure families. This may support the idea that competition between parents may only be felt when gender roles within a family contradict traditional expectations. Despite shifting attitudes toward mothers' and fathers' parenting roles and expectations, a child who is securely attached only to mother may not elicit the feelings of jealousy or resentment found when the lone secure relationship is with the father. This result would also support maternal gatekeeping and the socially reinforced maternal identity (Allen & Hawkins, 1999). Indeed, both members of the couple may be satisfied with this arrangement, with mothers, in particular, finding comfort in aligning with the traditional role as the infant's primary source of trust and security within the infant-parent relationship.

Prior studies examined each parent-child attachment relationship and individual marital satisfaction separately; focusing on how father satisfaction predicts father-child attachment or mother satisfaction predicts mother-child attachment (Coyl-Shepherd & Newland, 2013; Howes & Markman, 1989). For example, Coyl-Shepherd and Newland (2013) explored many different family level variables (marital satisfaction, coparenting, discipline, etc.) and their associations with attachment security. While several mother-reported variables were related to mother-child security, and vice versa for fathers, the study did not explore how the combination of both parents' reports may influence both parent-child attachments. The present study is unique in that it examined combined couple satisfaction and the combination of parent-child attachments. The results emerging from this approach speak to the complex interplay of family attachment dynamics and marital quality within families. More broadly these results may underscore Talbot et al. (2009) explanation that moving to triadic interactions -- those considering mother, father,

and child together --provide different insights compared to when these variables are with just mothers or just fathers.

As none of the growth curve models effectively captured the data, it is difficult to determine whether change in marital satisfaction over time —or satisfaction at a single timepoint – is responsible for the observed associations. While couples did experience changes in marital satisfaction over time, most often these decreases were small in this sample, both in terms of average levels and variation in the patterns of change were relatively small. This may limit our ability to predict attachment outcomes based on change in couple satisfaction over time.

Limitations

Despite the contributions of these findings, this study is not without limitations. As mentioned previously, the couples being studied were mostly white, educated, and of a higher socioeconomic status. This limits the generalizability of the study, and future research should explore whether these patterns of association hold amongst other demographic groups. This homogeneity may have contributed to the lack significant change in marital satisfaction over time as race and socioeconomic status have both been found to be related to marital satisfaction (Bulanda & Brown, 2007; Dillaway & Broman, 2001). This may have also made it difficult to identify what if any impact change in marital satisfaction may have on attachment security between parent and child or the concordance of attachment between mother-child and father-child relationships. Future research with larger and more diverse samples is warranted.

The small sample size also created small cell sizes for each category of attachment. As with most attachment research on Western cultures (Ijzendoorn & Kroonenberg, 1988, 1990), many respondents were securely attached to their children. This leads to a smaller group of insecurely attached children. When looking at family level attachment concordance, this meant

fewer couples in the double insecure group as well as the father-only secure or mother-only secure pairs. These limitations in sample and cell size likely limited our power to detect significant findings.

Finally, we cannot say if these are causal relationships between family attachment concordance and marital satisfaction. We cannot say if it is high marital satisfaction that encourages both parents to develop a secure relationship to the child or if it is the concordance within these relationships that fosters higher marital satisfaction. Assessing pre-birth satisfaction does allow for comparison of marital satisfaction over time but it does not provide a definite answer to the direction of causality. Further, it is possible that other factors not included in this study may contribute to both higher marital satisfaction and secure parent-child attachments. The specific causal mechanisms explaining these relationships unknown.

Finally, this study was limited in its conceptualization of “marital satisfaction” and the quality of marital relationships that were included. Future research should use a larger sample with greater diversity; this would increase the power to detect significant results as well as possibly provide more variance in marital satisfaction over time. As this study was limited by having relatively satisfied and stable couples throughout all three phases, additional studies may need to recruit a sample that is experiencing clinically significant marital distress before the birth of the child. Furthermore, other aspects of marital quality may well produce a different set of results. For example, other studies have explored marital maintenance (Curran, Hazen, Jacobvitz, & Feldman, 2005) and conflict resolution (Cox, Paley, Payne, & Burchinal, 1999) in relation to parent-child attachment. More comprehensive assessments that triangulate multiple aspects of the marital relationship and multiple ways of assessing them could prove fruitful for further elucidating the study findings.

Implications for Practice

These results also have implications for practitioners in both areas of assessment and intervention. The most significant finding is the importance of attending to both mothers and fathers when conducting both family research and intervention. Focusing on only one parenting relationship does not adequately address the family process and prevents both researchers and practitioners from viewing the complete family system. Family scholars and interventionists must examine relationships in combination and concordance. Treating each attachment relationship separately both violates the foundation of systems theory and may lose some of the nuances occurring at the family level when relationships are assessed together.

For family practitioners, this research provides implications for both intervention and assessment and encourages therapists to consider changes in the family system during the transition to parenthood. Overall, this study reasserts the family systems theory tenet that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. This understanding is vital for both marital and parent-child interventions and assessment. This means clinicians, even those not specifically focusing on family intervention, should ensure they are considering how each element of the family is interacting with one another. Frequently, parent-child attachment interventions focus on mothers only. This may be a mistake. Instead, interventionists would be well-served by examining how both parents are interacting with and attaching to the child. For example, clinicians must consider how intervening with mothers to improve a parenting relationship may also influence the father-child relationship and the marital relationship. This is especially important in interventions aimed at improving father-child relationships as our results show families in which fathers develop more secure relationships compared to mothers have lower rates of marital satisfaction. If a clinician promotes the development of a strong father-child relationship without consideration

for the mother-child or marital subsystems as well, he or she may unwittingly create a sense of competition or stress between partners. When considering marital interventions, therapists should also attend to how marital health may support parent-child relationships. Clinicians may be wise to encourage marital health before the arrival of a new child as a way to ensure not only the health of the marriage but the health of the developing parent-child systems as well.

This study also provides some direction for the assessment of families. Therapists should be encouraged to assess all three subsystems (mother-child, father-child, marital) in a family even if working with an individual or seeing a couple without a child present in session. This study elucidates the interconnected relationships of these multiple systems; thus an appropriate assessment would consider the health and strength of all three subsystems not simply the one that is the focus of treatment. Throughout treatment a clinician should consider how changes in the health and patterns of one system may promote health in the others. Additionally, thought should be given to how distress in one subsystem may create distress in another. Finally, it is important for clinicians to be aware of how health in one subsystem may result in distress in another. As this study shows how a positive father-child relationship without a corresponding strong mother-child relationship may be related to lower levels of marital satisfaction. Clinicians must assess how parents are relating to both the child and each other. This assessment is especially vital for families with discordant relationships. These assessments should be used to inform interventions. For example, if a therapist recognizes a couple in which the father is more readily establishing security with the child, he or she may want to pay special attention to the health of marital subsystem. Although secure father-child relationships, in general, have good outcomes for children, there may well be unintended consequences for marital quality if this security is not matched in the infant-mother dyad.

To understand families, we must look at the whole system. This study provides a small step towards family-level attachment research. Findings underscore the relationship between the concordance of parent-child attachments and marital satisfaction. For practitioners, this research is a call to include both parents in attachment interventions and treatment and to examine both concordance and discordance in attachment security. In doing so we may ultimately be able to better understand how to support the health of the family as a system.

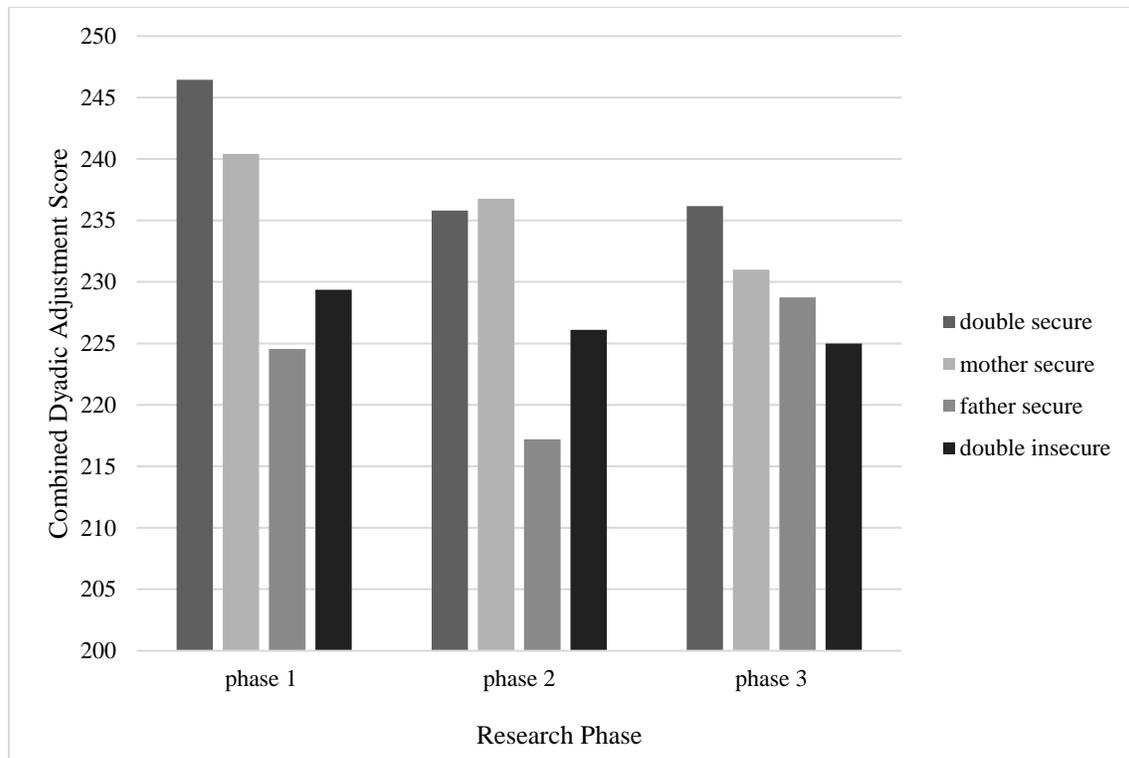


Figure 2.1: *Dyadic Adjustment over Three Phases by Parent-Child Attachment Concordance*

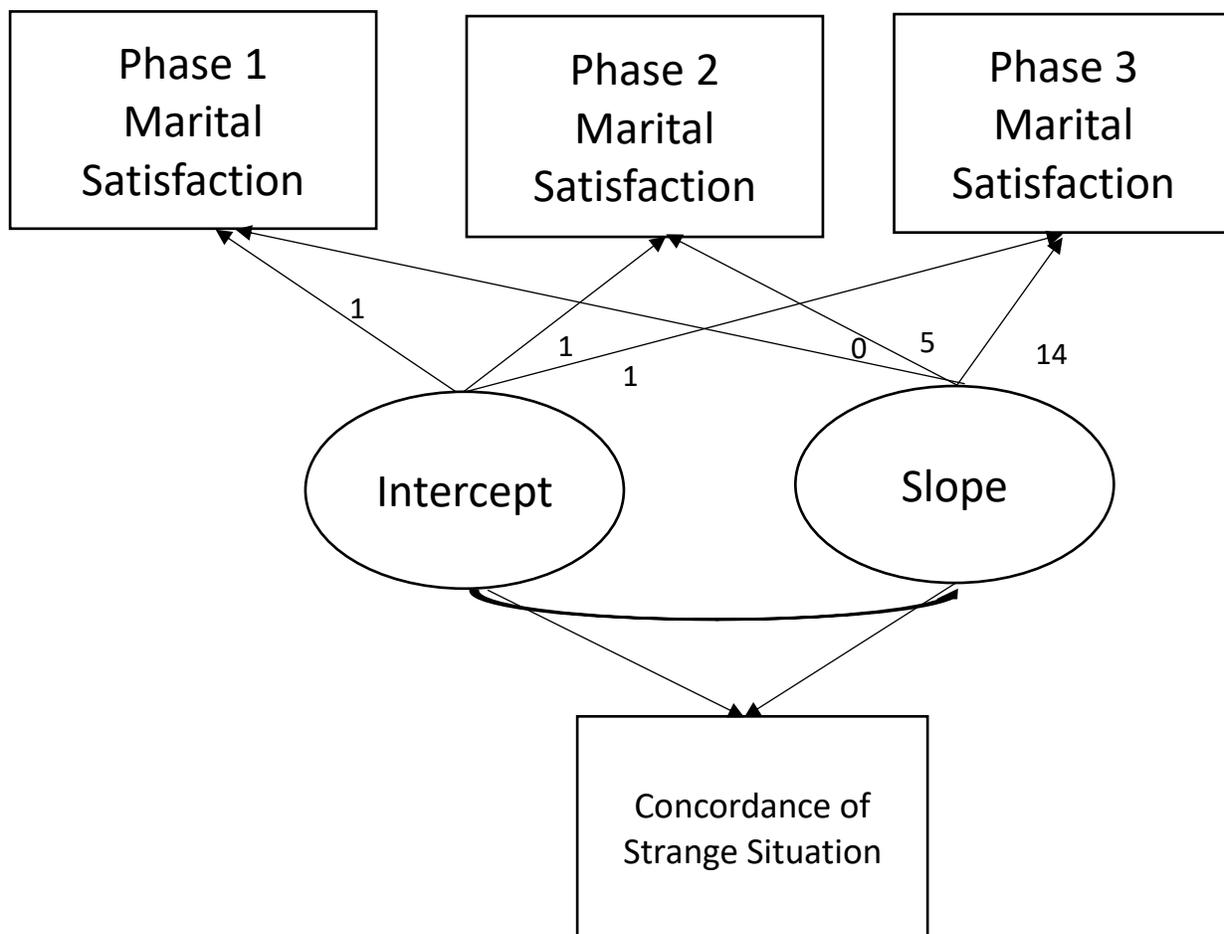


Figure 2.2: *Structural Equation Model*

Table 2.1. *Descriptive of Study Variables*

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Mother DAS Phase 1	101	81.00	144.00	119.9703	11.26007
Father DAS Phase 1	99	80.00	141.00	118.2626	11.35542
Combined DAS Phase 1	99	165.00	282.00	238.3131	20.54979
Mother DAS Phase 2	96	79.00	143.00	118.5052	10.36225
Father DAS Phase 2	93	72.00	133.00	111.3978	10.96822
Combined DAS Phase 2	93	166.50	267.00	230.1559	18.36481
Mother DAS Phase 3	106	44.00	143.00	116.1981	13.20474
Father DAS Phase 3	90	72.00	134.00	115.3111	10.89546
Combined DAS Phase 3	89	177.00	272.00	232.3596	19.57459

Table 2.2. *Descriptive Statistics of Dyadic Adjustment Subscales for Mothers and Fathers*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Mother DAS Phase 1	101	81.00	144.00	119.9703	11.26007
subscale affect	101	3.00	12.00	9.2871	1.82941
subscale cohesion	101	12.00	24.00	17.4752	2.87609
Subscale consensus	101	34.00	64.00	50.8812	5.41902
subscale satisfaction	101	29.00	49.00	42.3267	3.73392
Father DAS Phase 1	99	80.00	141.00	118.2626	11.35542
subscale affect	99	3.00	12.00	8.9495	1.78642
subscale cohesion	99	8.00	23.00	17.2576	2.80975
Subscale consensus	99	37.00	60.00	50.3737	4.93961
subscale satisfaction	99	26.00	49.00	41.6818	4.61832
Mother DAS Phase 2	96	79.00	143.00	118.5052	10.36225
subscale affect	96	4.00	12.00	8.7187	1.71497
subscale cohesion	96	11.00	23.00	17.3542	2.81342
Subscale consensus	96	36.00	62.00	50.6563	4.96690
subscale satisfaction	96	27.00	50.00	41.7760	4.05285
Father DAS Phase 2	93	72.00	133.00	111.3978	10.96822
subscale affect	93	1.00	12.00	8.4624	1.94243
subscale cohesion	92	9.00	23.00	17.0489	2.65721
Subscale consensus	93	32.00	56.00	45.3817	3.96136
subscale satisfaction	93	20.00	48.00	40.6882	5.03785
Mother DAS Phase 3	106	44.00	143.00	116.1981	13.20474
subscale affect	106	3.00	12.00	8.6981	2.02447
subscale cohesion	105	4.00	23.00	16.6190	3.29373
Subscale consensus	106	24.00	65.00	50.0047	5.49913
subscale satisfaction	106	13.00	48.00	41.0330	4.82072
Father DAS Phase 3	90	72.00	134.00	115.3111	10.89546
subscale affect	90	1.00	12.00	8.6000	2.03232
subscale cohesion	89	8.00	24.00	16.7247	2.78899
Subscale consensus	90	33.00	59.00	49.3167	4.78554
subscale satisfaction	90	25.00	48.00	40.8556	4.17271

Appendix 2

Appendix 2A: Dyadic Adjustment Scale

Most persons have disagreements in their relationships. Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list.

	Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Occa- sionally Disagree	Fre- quently Disagree	Almost Always Disagree	Always Disagree
1. Handling family finances	0	0	0	0	0	0
2. Matters of recreation	0	0	0	0	0	0
3. Religious matters	0	0	0	0	0	0
4. Demonstrations of affection	0	0	0	0	0	0
5. Friends	0	0	0	0	0	0
6. Sex relations	0	0	0	0	0	0
7. Conventuality (correct or proper behavior)	0	0	0	0	0	0
8. Philosophy of life	0	0	0	0	0	0
9. Ways of dealing with parents or in- laws	0	0	0	0	0	0
10. Aims, goals, and things believed important	0	0	0	0	0	0
11. Amount of time spent together	0	0	0	0	0	0
12. Making major decisions	0	0	0	0	0	0
13. Household tasks	0	0	0	0	0	0
14. Leisure time interests and activities	0	0	0	0	0	0
15. Career decisions	0	0	0	0	0	0
	All the time	Most of the time	More often than not	Occa- sionally	Rarely	Never
16. How often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separation, or terminating your relationship?	0	0	0	0	0	0
17. How often do you or your mate leave the house after a fight?	0	0	0	0	0	0
18. In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?	0	0	0	0	0	0
19. Do you confide in your mate?	0	0	0	0	0	0
20. Do you ever regret that you married? (<i>or lived together</i>)	0	0	0	0	0	0

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

- O I want desperately for my relationship to succeed, and *would go to almost any length* to see that it does.
- O I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and *will do all I can* to see that it does.
- O I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and *will do my fair share* to see that it does.
- O It would be nice if my relationship succeeded, but *I can't do much more than I am doing now* to help it succeed.
- O It would be nice if it succeeded, but I *refuse to do any more than I am doing now* to keep the relationship going.
- O My relationship can never succeed, and *there is no more that I can do* to keep the relationship going.

CHAPTER 3
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRE-BIRTH CONCORDANCE OF ADULT ATTACHMENT
AND POST-BIRTH MAIRTAL SAITSFACTION AND COPARENTING²

² Oed, M.M., Brown, G., Gale, J., & Oshri, A. To be submitted to *Attachment and Human Development*.

Abstract

Families contain multiple attachment relationships: romantic attachment between partners, parent-child attachments, and adult attachment styles. Much attention has been given to the relationship between parent-child attachment security and marital satisfaction (Isabella & Belsky, 1985; Twenge et al., 2003). Less focus has been given to how adult attachment styles may influence marital satisfaction, especially changes in marital satisfaction over the transition to parenthood. According to Bowlby (1969), early attachments help individuals develop an internal working model which then becomes the schema for all future intimate relationships. Thus, the concordance of adult attachment styles may influence how partners adjust to the arrival of a new baby and in turn the health of the marital subsystem and coparenting cooperation. This study examined how pre-birth adult attachment styles, as assessed by the AAI, are related to self-reported marital satisfaction and coparenting quality before and after birth. Results did not show a significant relationship between individual timepoints nor overall trajectories of marital satisfaction and concordance of adult attachment. Implications for future research are discussed.

Introduction

Whereas attachment research began with a focus on infant and caregiver relationships (Ainsworth, 1989; Bowlby, 1969), the application of attachment theory to adult relationships has been widely studied over the last several decades (Ainsworth, 1989; Bakermans-Kranenburg & Van IJzendoorn, 1993; van IJzendoorn, 1995). Main and colleagues (1985) were central to these efforts by developing the adult attachment interview (AAI) to examine adults' state of mind with respect to their early attachment experiences. Though arising from different traditions, some work from an adult attachment perspective has also been used to assess couple relationship quality (Cohn et al., 1992; Cowan, & Pearson, 1992; Fraley, Roisman, Booth-LaForce, Owen, &

Holland, 2013; Haydon et al., 2012; Simpson, & Roisman, 2012; Pedro et al., 2015; Shaver et al., 2000) as well as parent-child relationships (Bernier & Dozier, 2003; Cohn, Cowan, Cowan, & Pearson, 1992; Cowan, Cohn, Cowan, & Pearson, 1996; Eiden, Teti, & Corns, 1995; van Ijzendoorn, 1995). Exploring the impact of adult attachment on parent-child relationships has been a focus of numerous prior studies (Benoit & Kevin, 1994; Bernier & Dozier, 2003; Bernier, Matte-Gagné, Bélanger, & Whipple, 2014; Bernier & Miljkovitch, 2009; Cassibba, Coppola, Sette, Curci, & Costantini, 2017; Miljkovitch, Danet, & Bernier, 2012; Sette, Coppola, & Cassibba, 2015). However, these studies often examine each parent in isolation and fail to examine the interplay between mothers' and fathers' attachment styles and family functioning.

The attachment relationship between parent and child is not the only attachment relationship in a family. In fact, families consist of attachment networks (Riggs & Riggs, 2011) which include parent-child attachment, romantic attachment between partners, and the parents' adult attachment styles. Despite repeated calls for a more holistic view of attachment in families (Cowan, 1997; Marvin & Stewart, 1990; Rothbaum et al., 2002; Stevenson-Hinde, 1990), research has limited data on how this wider network impacts family functioning. Assuming that dyadic processes (i.e. parent-child attachment) function the same in a triadic system (i.e. whole family functioning) is a mistake (Paley et al., 2005; Talbot et al., 2009). For example, traditionally a secure adult attachment style is associated with better parenting outcomes. Yet, Paley and colleagues (2005) suggest one parent's security could create a sense of threat to an insecure parent. The insecure parent may be intimidated by the other's secure relationship with the child. If true, this family-level process would contradict the notion that one secure relationship offers better outcomes than no secure relationships (Verschueren & Marcoen, 1999).

To truly understand how attachment functions in a family system, we must move beyond dyadic processes into considerations of whole family and triadic functioning. With this understanding, we could better tailor interventions for families across the transition to parenthood that incorporate not only individual and couple relationship functioning, but also triadic dynamics including the coparenting relationship. The transition to parenthood is a vital time for couple functioning and change in family relationships. Thus, we will investigate how the degree of similarity between mothers' and fathers' adult attachment styles – which we refer to as AAI concordance -- may influence family functioning following the birth of a child. Specifically, we will examine how AAI concordance is related to marital satisfaction and coparenting.

Adult Attachment

The value of attachment relationships has been documented throughout the lifespan (Sroufe, 2005; Waters, Merrick, Treboux, Crowell, & Albersheim, 2000; Crowell, & Albersheim, 2000) and the organization of attachment relationships is relatively stable over time (Fraley, Vicary, Brumbaugh, & Roisman, 2011; Fraley, 2002; Pinquart, Feussner, & Ahnert, 2013). For example, early caregiving relationships have been linked to subsequent relationship functioning in childhood, adolescence, and adulthood (Englund, Kuo, Puig, & Collins, 2011; Main et al., 1985; Waters et al., 2000). Based on Bowlby's concept of the Internal Working Model (IWM), early attachment experiences are thought to coalesce into a general state of mind with respect to close relationships.

The study of adult attachment has led to several methodological gains, one of which is the adult attachment interview (AAI; Main et al., 1985), which was developed to assess how early caregiving experiences are organized into a state of mind of attachment in adulthood (Main et al., 1985). This model is grounded in the idea that our attachment needs do not stop once we

reach adulthood; instead, early attachment experiences continue to influence our behaviors, beliefs, and expectations in the context of intimate relationships (Main et al., 1985). During the AAI, individuals complete a semi-structured interview in which they are asked about early caregiving experiences, specifically those moments when caregiving may have been particularly salient i.e. times of illness (Main et al., 1985). Responses are coded based on how coherently an individual discusses early childhood experiences, perspectives on why caregivers behaved as they did, and functioning in current relationships (Main & Goldwyn, 1985). Based on these responses individuals are coded: secure, dismissing, preoccupied, or unresolved (Main et al., 1985). Individuals are rated as secure or autonomous if they can articulately discuss early caregiving experiences, appropriately reflect on their caregiver's behaviors, and describe current relationships (Main & Goldwyn, 1985). Conversely, individuals rated as dismissing recount caregiving as positive but provide few specific examples and/or later contradict this explanation; overall, these individuals minimize or report forgetting attachment experiences. Individuals rated as pre-occupied display excessive emotion during the interview and may often be angry and confused (Main & Goldwyn, 1985). Finally, an unresolved categorization indicates an individual who was subjected to trauma or loss that leads to incoherence in their description of attachment experiences (Main & Goldwyn, 1985). AAI ratings have been shown to be stable over time (Scharfe & Bartholomew, 1994) and are related to individual and family functioning, with secure/autonomous individuals showing more adaptive outcomes.

Impact of Adult Attachment on Individuals and Families

Since Main and colleagues (1985) proposed and defined adult attachment categories, research has found these categories to be related to important life-long outcomes for individuals in both romantic and parent-child relationships. Ranging from mental health outcomes (Bradley

& Cafferty, 2001) to parenting styles (Adam, Gunnar, & Tanaka, 2004), AAI categorization can clearly impact an individual's functioning in many different domains. For example, AAI ratings have been correlated to physical health with insecure individuals reporting the greatest rates of illness (Puig, Englund, Simpson, & Collins, 2013) and individuals with secure scores less likely to report symptoms of depression and generalized anxiety (Marganska, Gallagher, & Miranda, 2013). Conversely, individuals with insecure attachment styles were more likely to have a history of suicidal ideation and attempts (Palitsky, Mota, Afifi, Downs, & Sareen, 2013). As secure attachment style has even been linked to an individual's commitment to their job (Scrima, Di Stefano, Guarnaccia, & Lorito, 2015) and lower likelihood of experiencing workplace burnout (Leiter, Day, & Price, 2015). The impact of this attachment style is seen for young adults (Fraley et al., 2013) to those over 65 years old (Bradley & Cafferty, 2001). The AAI is clearly influential for individual outcomes but also continues to affect an individual's relationship functioning both romantically and in the parenting role.

Individuals' AAI classifications have often been linked to relationship quality among romantic partners. Results demonstrate that secure adult attachment style predicts positive conflict resolution in romantic relationships (Wampler et al., 2003) and observed couple functioning is greater in partners with a secure AAI style (Cohn et al., 1992). These studies delineate the long-term influence of attachment; an individual's representations of early caregiving experiences matter for current adult couple functioning. Adult attachment has also been directly linked to an individual's perceptions of romantic relationships (Holland & McElwain, 2013; KazMierczak & Blazek, 2015) and functioning in those intimate relationships (Haydon et al., 2012); specifically individuals with a secure autonomous style have a more favorable perception of their relationships and report healthier functioning as well.

Wampler et al. (2003) proposed that the adult attachment interview can be used to comprehend how previous relationships may also affect current family dynamics. This is often seen in the study of how adult attachment styles impact parent-child relationships (Benoit & Kevin, 1994; Cohn et al., 1992; Kouvo, Voeten, & Silvén, 2015; Madigan, 2011; Main et al., 1985; Steele, Steele, Croft, & Fonagy, 1999). A parent's state of mind with respect to attachment can be used to predict the security of parent-child attachment (Bernier & Dozier, 2003; van Ijzendoorn, 1995). Studies have also shown how attachment transmission can occur across three generations with mothers', grandmothers', and children's attachment styles all being related in the expected directions (secure predicting secure, insecure predicting insecure). Individuals' AAI classifications have also been related to other family characteristics that influence the parent-child relationship such as coparenting cohesion and conflict (Talbot et al., 2009) and parents' mental state regarding the child (Bernier & Dozier, 2003). For fathers, AAI security is linked to more sensitive caregiving while insecure styles are related to hostility with their children (McFarland-Piazza, Hazen, Jacobvitz, & Boyd-Soisson, 2012). For mothers, preoccupied classification is related to negative emotional affect and anxiety as well as higher observed rates of angry/intrusive parenting behaviors (Adam et al., 2004). Both mothers and fathers who were rated as secure were more likely to display warmth and structure during observations with their preschool children (Pearson, Cohn, Cowan, & Cowan, 2008). Though AAI classification is consistently predictive of parent-child attachment, most previous studies have used only one parent's AAI classification within a family and focused almost exclusively on individual outcomes or individual parent-child outcomes as opposed to family-level outcomes. There is also an interesting gap in the research concerning AAI classifications and early family dynamics.

While AAI security has been related to more positive marital outcomes (Alexandrov et al., 2005; Maclean, 2002; Treboux et al., 2004), parent-child outcomes (Adam et al., 2004; Steele et al., 1999; Tarabulsky et al., 2005; van Ijzendoorn, 1995), and attachment security between parents and children (Adam et al., 2004; Benoit & Kevin, 1994; Kouvo et al., 2015; McFarland-Piazza et al., 2012; Steele, Steele, & Fonagy, 1996; Waters et al., 2000), there is scant research exploring how coparenting is related to AAI. This oversight is especially interesting as coparenting has been studied in relation to these same variables: marital health (Christopher et al., 2015; Holland & McElwain, 2013), parent-child outcomes (Schoppe-Sullivan, Mangelsdorf, Brown, & Szewczyk Sokolowski, 2007; Schoppe et al., 2001; Teubert & Pinquart, 2010), and attachment security (Brown et al., 2010; Caldera & Lindsey, 2006).

Coparenting is defined as the extent to which partners cooperate, communicate, and avoid disagreements regarding the care of their child (McHale, 1995). Coparenting has been shown to be related to – but distinct from – the marital relationship (Schoppe-Sullivan, Mangelsdorf, Frosch, & McHale, 2004). Thus, one could argue that coparenting is a blend of marital health and parent-child relationships both of which can be heavily influenced by adult attachment style. Exploring the relationship between coparenting and adult attachment seems an obvious next step for those interested in merging family systems and attachment theoretical perspectives.

Adult Attachment Concordance and Family Functioning

Assessing triadic systems instead of dyadic ones may also clarify the differences in attachment security within family relationships. Consistently, the AAI is related to both parenting outcomes as well as romantic relationships within families; this is especially true during the transition to parenthood. For example, husbands rated as secure reported more positive marital perceptions postnatally (Paley et al., 2002) and anxious adult attachment is

related to a need for more support from a partner during the transition to parenthood (Kohn et al., 2012). Despite evidence that AAI categories are related to family adjustment, research often only tests one parent's AAI style at a time instead of the concordance of these styles. When examining studies of AAI concordance, the focus is usually the marital dyad. For example, newlyweds in which both partners were rated as secure exhibited better marital adjustment compared to couples with one or both partners rated as insecure (Senchak & Leonard, 1992). Further, couples with mismatching AAI styles express more distress during a conflict (Beck et al., 2013) while overall relationship satisfaction is highest among couples with two secure partners (Lele, 2008; Maclean, 2002).

These prior studies provide important information regarding the constellation of attachment styles in couples but may or may not be as relevant for functioning among new parents. The transition to parenthood is often a time of upheaval in the marital relationship (Belsky, Lang, & Rovine, 1985; Belsky, Spanier, & Rovine, 1983). It remains to be seen whether adult attachment styles – and the concordance of these attachment styles in particular – established before parenthood are equally predictive of absolute marital satisfaction and/or changes in marital satisfaction following childbirth. The present study is unique in attempting to link pre-birth concordance of adult attachment styles to post-birth marital quality and changes in marital quality across the transition to parenthood.

Moreover, the exclusive focus on the role AAI plays within the romantic dyad ignores its potential contributions to triadic (mother-father-child) family dynamics. In accordance with family systems theory, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Thus, adult attachment may function differently at individual, dyadic, and family levels:

the significance of mothers' and fathers' attachment status for triadic functioning may differ from that for dyadic relationship functioning. Whereas it is easy to view the other parent's security as an asset ...security and the greater parenting confidence it may breed may threaten insecure partners and evoke negative reactions (Talbot et al., 2009, p. 5)

Often studies fail to explore how parents' attachment styles may interact and influence each other when examining the marital and parental systems. This lack of research again demonstrates how attachment relationships are often assessed in isolation of each other, losing some of the rich knowledge likely present at the family-level of assessment. As Talbot et al. (2009) explain "though the construct of adult attachment has a wealth of data illuminating its significance...the formative influence of adult attachment status in the establishment of a coparental alliance has yet to be addressed extensively" (pp. 58).

Available research from Paley et al. (2005) investigated changes in marital withdrawal and emotional escalation over the transition to parenthood and found the best overall adjustment in couples where both parents were rated as secure. Another study by Talbot et al. (2009) tested the relationship between pre-birth AAI styles, pre-birth marital satisfaction, and observed coparenting outcomes. Results indicated that which parent was rated as secure influenced the coparenting relationship with secure mothers having more positive coparenting than fathers rated as secure (Talbot et al., 2009). Paley et al. (2005) found similar results in that insecure fathers showed more negative interactions after birth compared to insecure mothers. Overall, both studies found complex interactions between AAI styles, marital functioning, and parenting behaviors (Paley et al., 2005; Talbot et al., 2009). This may provide support for the idea that security within AAI styles creates different outcomes for couples compared to families. However, both these studies have limitations. Paley et al. (2005) examined only specific marital

behaviors (escalation and withdraw) and did not examine coparenting. Talbot et al. (2009) only examined pre-birth marital satisfaction without regard to the often cited change in marital quality over the transition to parenthood. Talbot's study also used coparenting scores based solely on observation. Brown et al. (2010) noted that observed and self-reported coparenting are only moderately related, and thus, these two methods may measure different' elements of the coparenting relationship. These complex results demonstrate the value of exploring AAI concordance for both marital satisfaction and coparenting.

In this study, we seek to investigate the longitudinal changes in marital satisfaction over the transition to parenthood in concert with parent's adult attachment style and reported coparenting. This information will help us to better understand the function of individual security when a dyadic system becomes triadic. By testing how AAI concordance is related to coparenting, we continue to move towards a family systems approach within attachment research. These findings could provide insight into the timing of family interventions (before or after birth) as well as the need to discuss a parent's own attachment experiences as a couple develops a coparenting relationship.

We expect couples with both partners rated as secure to report the most stable rates of marital satisfaction over the transition to parenthood. We also hypothesize that families with two secure parents will report the most positive coparenting, as research has consistently shown a positive relationship between multiple secure relationships and family outcomes. There is limited data available for couples with discordant AAI styles (one parent secure, one parent insecure). Research that does exist provides two possibilities. One, having at least one secure partner acts as a buffer and provides better outcomes than a relationship in which both partners are insecure (Verschueren & Marcoen, 1999). Alternatively, discordant relationships may create a sense of

competition or distress between partners creating more challenges to these families compared to double insecure pairs where such competition would not exist (Paley et al., 2005). Given the lack of data on the relative predictive ability of these family constellations, this question is exploratory.

Methods

Participants were families in the Midwestern United States that took part in an ongoing longitudinal study of family relationships and attachment. This study utilizes secondary data analyses to test hypotheses with this data set (e.g., Brown et al., 2012; Wong et al., 2009). Data were originally collected from expectant parents who were mailed a packet of questionnaires and interviewed in their homes during the third trimester of pregnancy (Phase 1). Included in these questionnaires were questions pertaining to the couple members' relationship satisfaction, personality, depression, and demographic characteristics. Both mothers and fathers were instructed to complete these questions independently. Following the birth of the child, both parents again completed measures of relationship satisfaction and coparenting at 3.5 months (Phase 2) and 13 months (Phase 3) postpartum.

Measures

Adult Attachment. Both mothers and fathers completed the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI). This is a semi-structured interview during which a participant is asked to about early caregiving and parenting experiences. Specifically, it explores how an individual recounts past relationships with parents, specific supportive or inconsistent memories, and accounts of current relationships. Participants are asked specific questions concerning attachment needs and parental caregiving (i.e. how a parent reacted when the child was hurt or upset, if they ever felt rejected by a parent, if they felt close to a parent). In addition to questions, participants were asked to

reflect on the impact of these caregiving experiences in their current lives, parents' reasons for caregiving, and how their relationship with the parents had changed. Interviews were coded by trained researchers who classified interviews as secure/autonomous, dismissing, preoccupied, or unresolved (see descriptions of classifications on p.12). The insecure categories were collapsed to allow for comparisons between insecure and secure attachment styles.

Coparenting. Self-reported coparenting support was assessed by having mothers and fathers independently complete the Parenting Alliance Inventory (PAI; Abidin & Brunner, 1995). The PAI assesses parents' beliefs towards the working relationship with the other parent to determine if there is a sound parental alliance. The thirty-item questionnaire assesses for beliefs about each partners relationship as parents (i.e. "My child's other parent and I communicate well about our child"). Items are rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree), and total scores for both mother and father were computed by averaging across all PAI items. This measure has been well-validated and shows convergent validity with assessments of child and marital adjustment, as well as parental behavior (see Abidin & Brunner, 1995; Bearss & Eyberg, 1998; Floyd et al., 1998). A pre-birth measure was included in which parents reported expectations for the coparenting relationship. This allows for the examination of changes in coparenting quality across all three-time points. This scale had excellent reliability for both mothers ($\alpha=.94$) and fathers ($\alpha = .93$).

Marital Satisfaction. Each couple member's relationship satisfaction was measured using the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS; Spanier, 1976). This questionnaire consists of 32 items that measure partners' agreement on issues such as communications, intimacy, religion, and life philosophies, as well as overall relationship adjustment and satisfaction. This measure was completed during all three phases allowing for the trajectory of change to be calculated and

explored. Dyadic adjustment scores were found to be highly reliable for all three phases for both mothers (phase one $\alpha = .89$, phase two $\alpha = .88$, phase three $\alpha = .89$) and fathers (phase one $\alpha = .87$, phase two $\alpha = .85$, phase three $\alpha = .89$).

Data Analysis

Data were assessed using SPSS and MPlus. To assess for the impact of parent AAI categorization on marital satisfaction a univariate ANOVA was used to examine mean-level differences in marital satisfaction at each phase as a function of adult attachment classifications for both mothers and fathers. Additionally, groups were created based on couple constellations of attachment styles. Due to small cell size, attachment classifications were simply secure and insecure. A three-group structure of double-secure, discordant, and double-insecure was used as well as a four-group structure of double-secure, secure-mother/insecure-father, secure-father/insecure-mother, and double insecure. These groups were used to test how the family attachment network predicts marital satisfaction. Additionally, a latent growth curve model was run to examine the extent to which individual and couple concordance of adult attachment predicts both the pre-birth starting point (intercept) and longitudinal trajectory (slope) of marital satisfaction over the transition to parenthood.

The second set of analyses were conducted to assess how AAI styles are related to coparenting. As with the first set of analyses, a univariate ANOVA was run compared mean-level differences in coparenting scores based on adult attachment, followed by ANCOVAs controlling for relevant demographic covariates. These analyses examined the relationship between individual adult attachment style as well as concordance of adult attachment style as predictors of post-birth coparenting assessments. When assessing concordance of AAI both the three and four group structures were assessed. As with the models predicting marital satisfaction,

attachment concordance was also used to predict the intercept and slope of supportive coparenting in the context of latent growth curve models.

Results

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics for all study variables. Few partners met the clinically significant level for distress (Phase 1 6.9% mothers, 7.1% father; Phase 2 5.2% mothers, 15.1% fathers, Phase 3 12.5% mothers, 9.3% fathers). See Appendix 1 for more detailed descriptions of mothers' and fathers' reports of marital satisfaction by each sub-scale. Mothers and fathers reported similar levels of supportive coparenting at phase 1 ($M = 3.12$, $SD = .961$ for males; $M = 3.23$, $SD = 1.01$ for females) as well as phase 2 ($M = 3.12$, $SD = .961$ for males; $M = 3.23$, $SD = 1.01$ for females). 71.4% mothers and 65.3% of fathers rated as having secure adult attachment styles. A much smaller portion of parents was rated as dismissing (22.4% of mothers, 29.6% of fathers) and preoccupied (6.1% of mothers and 5.1% of fathers). For adult attachment concordance 48.4% of couples were double-secure and 10.5% rated double insecure. For mismatched groups with only one secure parent, in 25.3% of cases the secure parent was the mother whereas in 15.8% of cases the secure parent was the father. A chi-square comparing distributions of mothers' and fathers' adult attachment style was conducted. This test was also not significant $X^2(1, n = 95) = .102, p = .75$, suggesting similar distributions for mothers and fathers.

Scores of dyadic satisfaction for each phase were compared using t-tests, a full descriptive on these results can be found on p. 26. An additional t-test was completed comparing mothers' and fathers' coparenting scores. Mothers' coparenting scores ($M = 135.83$, $SD = 9.97$) were not significantly different from fathers' scores ($M = 134.86$, $SD = 11.73$); $t(55) = .543, p = .59$

ANOVA

To analyze if adult attachment style predicted dyadic adjustment scores across the three phases an ANOVA was conducted. These associations were examined for both mothers' adult attachment style predicting dyadic adjustment score, as well as fathers' adult attachment predicting dyadic adjustment. These associations were also assessed at the family level by examining concordance of adult attachment styles, using both three group (double-secure, double-insecure, and mismatched) and four group (double secure, double insecure, mother only secure, father only secure) configurations predicting combined dyadic adjustment. All analyses were performed examining DAS scores at phases 1, 2, and 3.

The first ANOVA analysis explored how mothers' adult attachment style predicted dyadic adjustment at each of the three phases. Mothers' DAS scores did not differ by adult attachment classification at phase 1 [$F(2, 93) = .48, p = 0.62$], phase 2 [$F(2, 89) = .37, p = 0.69$], or phase 3 [$F(2, 60) = .22, p = 0.81$]. The second set of ANOVA analyses examined fathers' adult attachment style predicting dyadic adjustment scores. None of these analyses were significant at phase 1 [$F(2, 92) = .99, p = 0.38$], phase 2 [$F(2, 85) = 1.11, p = 0.34$], or phase 3 [$F(1, 50) = .90, p = 0.35$].

When examining dyadic adjustment and adult attachment at the family-level, combined dyadic adjustment scores were predicted from three group and four group configuration of adult attachment. These analyses were conducted at all three phases. For the three group configuration (double-secure, double-insecure, and mismatched), DAS scores did not differ among these concordance groups at phase 1 [$F(2, 89) = .30, p = 0.74$], phase 2 [$F(2, 83) = .42, p = 0.66$], or phase 3 [$F(2, 47) = 1.59, p = 0.22$]. A similar pattern was found for the four group configuration

for phase 1 [$F(3, 88) = .93, p = 0.83$], phase 2 [$F(3, 82) = 1.50, p = 0.22$], or phase 3 [$F(3, 46) = 1.49, p = 0.23$].

A final series of ANOVAs were conducted to examine adult attachment styles as predictors of supportive coparenting. Neither ANOVA was significant for mother [$F(2, 63) = .894, p = 0.414$] or fathers [$F(1, 53) = 1.30, p = 0.260$]. Combined coparenting scores were not significantly different among AAI concordance for three [$F(2, 92) = .226, p = .80$] or four group [$F(3, 91) = 2.57, p = .06$] constellations.

Latent Growth Curve Analysis

To explore variation among trajectories of marital satisfaction over time, an unconditional growth curve model was assessed for dyadic adjustment for mother, father, and combined dyadic adjustment. The variance of the slope for all dyadic adjustment variables was not significant. The variance of the intercept for each of these variables was also not significant. Despite this lack of variability, the following models were run to examine exploratory associations between adult attachment and change in marital satisfaction over time. To track changes in dyadic adjustment over time, a latent growth curve model with adult attachment style predicting DAS scores was conducted. The model consisted of using adult attachment style to predict the intercept (starting point) and slope (trajectories) of the three phases of dyadic adjustment. This was conducted individually for both mothers and fathers. Finally, the slope and intercept of combined dyadic adjustment as outcomes of concordance of adult attachment were analyzed.

For the models predicting mother and father dyadic adjustment from adult attachment individually, neither model was well fit to the data. For mothers, the model fit was poor ($\chi^2/df = 12.27, p < .001$; CFI = 1.00; RMSEA = .00). The model predicting fathers' dyadic adjustment

scale from adult attachment produced similar results ($\chi^2 / df = 15.87, p < .001$; CFI= 0.64; RMSEA = 0.41). Additional models analyzed how combined dyadic adjustment was predicted by intercept and slope of adult attachment concordance. The model testing these associations failed to converge, suggesting poor fit to the data.

Finally, the combined coparenting score of mother and father were predicted from dyadic satisfaction at the three times points. This model had adequate fit ($\chi^2 / df = 2.33 p = .10$; CFI= .952; RMSEA = .114), however, never slope or intercept of marital satisfaction were significant predictor of combined coparenting scores.

Discussion

Family systems theory supports the idea that our earliest relationships with family later impact our functioning in our adult romantic relationships (Munichin, 1985). While there has been prior research exploring how adult attachment styles influence the marital relationship (Kohn et al., 2012; Maclean, 2002; Treboux, Crowell, & Waters, 2004), this study expanded on previous research by examining how pre-birth adult attachment styles may influence dyadic satisfaction over the transition to parenthood and the development of the coparenting relationship. Specifically, the present study examined how the concordance of adult attachment may influence couple dyadic adjustment and the quality of the coparenting partnership post-birth. In general, results suggest few significant associations between study variables for both coparenting and dyadic adjustment. This may indicate that that prenatal adult attachment styles and the similarity of those styles between partners are largely independent of relationship variables following the birth of the child.

Our study did not find a relationship between individual adult attachment style and mother or father reported levels of dyadic adjustment over the transition to parenthood. These

relationships were not present in both separate phases and trajectories of marital satisfaction over time. This is in contrast to previous research which has found that anxious and avoidant adult attachment styles may increase marital distress following the birth of a child (Curran et al., 2005; Rholes, Simpson, Campbell, & Grich, 2001). It is worth noting that Curran et al. (2005) found a link between adult attachment style and declines in marital maintenance, behaviors that maintain marital closeness. Adults rated as dismissing had the lowest rates of prenatal marital maintenance and adults rated as anxious experienced the steepest declines in maintenance during the postpartum period. Additionally, the final phase of Curran and associates' (2005) study was completed at twenty-four months compared to our final phase of one year.

In other studies, the association between adult attachment and marital satisfaction is only evident when additional contextual factors are considered. For example, Rholes et al. (2001) found that wives who were rated as preoccupied only experienced a decline in satisfaction when they perceived low support from their partners. It may be that attachment styles as assessed in the present study were influencing other marital factors (beyond dyadic adjustment) that could contribute to changes in marital satisfaction much like Rholes' (2001) and Curran and colleagues' (2005) studies. Rholes (2001) also examined separate variables for men and women, focusing on husbands' reports of providing support and wives' reports of feeling supported. It may be that men and women experience the transition to parenthood differently; thus, research may need to assess men and women on different variables to fully examine the family-level response to the birth of a new child. Overall, the differences in findings may be due to different methods of assessment and length of assessment.

This study also sought to extend prior research that focused solely on individual attachment to individual marital satisfaction by exploring the relationship between adult

attachment concordance and combined dyadic adjustment. The analyses did not support the hypothesized connection between concordance of attachment and marital satisfaction over the transition to parenthood. These results were found for analyses focused on marital satisfaction at a single time point, as well as for those focused on trajectories of marital satisfaction across several time points. This is also in contrast to the limited prior research. Talbot et al. (2009) found that mismatched couples experienced greater marital distress compared to couples who were both rated as secure or insecure. While Talbot, Baker, and McHale (2009) examined pre-birth marital satisfaction, we were unable to replicate their results with phase one data and attachment concordance.

Talbot and associates (2009) also used marital observations with a focus on negative marital interactions. The current study instead used self-report of dyadic satisfaction; most couples did not report clinically significant distress on the dyadic adjustment scale. While marital satisfaction is related to marital conflict with conflict often considered an element of marital quality, (Emerman, 2018; Klaus & Anna-Katharina, 2002; Thomas, Frank, & Steven, 2000), these variables do not completely overlap. This may account for the difference between Talbot's results and the current study. The lack of association between the trajectories of marital satisfaction, adult attachment, and coparenting may be due to the relative stability in the dyadic adjustment scores across the three time points. Further, very few of the couples assessed met the clinical cutoff for distress. As Talbot's study focused on negative marital conflict it may be associations between marital functioning and adult attachment or coparenting are more evident in distressed couples. With both the relative stability and lack of distress it may have been difficult to detect a relationship between changes in marital satisfaction and adult attachment.

The final set of analyses tested the relationship between AAI concordance and coparenting. These results are also in contrast to Talbot et al. (2009) results which found mismatched couples experienced the lowest level of coparenting cohesion, even when compared to double insecure pairs. By contrast, these results did not detect any significant differences in coparenting scores for three group (double-secure, double-insecure, or mismatched) concordance nor four group (double-secure, double-insecure, mother-secure, father-secure) concordance. One prominent difference between Talbot's (2009) study and this current research is how coparenting was measured. This research used self-reported coparenting while Talbot and colleagues focused exclusively on observed coparenting. Brown, Schoppe-Sullivan, Mangelsdorf, and Neff (2010) have found observed and self-reported coparenting to be only moderately correlated. These two forms of measurement may be assessing different aspects of the coparenting relationship. Thus, observed coparenting cohesion may relate to AAI categorization, as found by Talbot, but self-reported coparenting may not.

Limitations

This study provided an attempt to analyze attachment and family functioning at a wider systemic level. It is vital for our understanding of family health and process to move beyond a dyadic (mother-child or father-child) analysis of attachment. Our use of family concordance is one possible avenue for this more systemic approach. However, this study is not without limitations. Overall, the sample was homogenous with the majority of the participants being white, highly educated, and of a higher socioeconomic status. It is also important to note that most of our sample did not meet the clinical cut-off for marital distress, as set by the dyadic adjustment scale, at any phase in the research. This may limit our ability to find significant

results. This lack of variability was also reflected in the analysis of the paths of marital satisfaction over the three phases.

Another limitation of this research is the small cell size, this is especially true for the four-group concordance structure. As secure was the most common attachment style found for both mothers and fathers, the double insecure group and the mismatched group were both considerably smaller. These cells sizes decrease even more when assessing for insecure mother and secure father pairs or secure mother and insecure father pairs as opposed to grouping all mismatched pairs together. This may make detection of small yet significant effects more difficult. This small sample size also made it problematic to analyze more than one attachment relationship at a time such as including both adult attachment and parent-child attachment. Research has found a strong and consistent link between marital satisfaction and parent-child attachment, (Davies & Cummings, 1994; Laurent, Kim, & Capaldi, 2008). With a larger sample, it would be possible to run models that included both adult attachment and parent-child attachment variables in a single model.

Finally, the study chose to focus on marital satisfaction and coparenting as potential outcomes of adult attachment concordance. Previous research has found a significant link between marital quality and adult attachment (Banse, 2004; Jarnecke & South, 2013; Kohn et al., 2012; Maclean, 2002) as well as adult attachment and coparenting. These findings are in contrast to the current findings. It is important to recognize that these prior studies used different constructs of both marital quality and coparenting. For example, Talbot et al. (2009) examined observed coparenting, whereas this study used self-reported coparenting. The difference in construct may have led to the differences in findings.

It is also important to note that family systems theory supports the notion that there may be many variables within both the marital or parent-child subsystems that may be influenced by adult attachment concordance. For example, we examined dyadic satisfaction and coparenting; additional variables such as types of parenting styles, the division of household labor, or division of childcare responsibility may be associated with the concordance of adult attachment. These variables also change and develop during the transition to parenthood and are worthy of further study.

Implications and Future Research

Future research would benefit from a larger and more diverse sample. This would provide a better opportunity to find small but significant effects. It would also allow for the analysis of how demographic variables, like race or education level, may impact the relationship between adult attachment and family processes such as dyadic adjustment and coparenting. Additionally, as the sample becomes larger, the less common attachment configurations would increase in cell size. This may allow for a better analysis of how mismatching or double insecure pairs differ from double secure pairs. A larger sample size may also allow for a more detailed analysis of how mother-only secure or father-only secure couples differ from each other and the matching pairs of double secure and double insecure. If Paquette (2004) is correct that mothers and fathers play a different role in promoting child development, then the parent with a secure adult attachment style may provide different resources. It may also be important for research to recruit a sample experiencing marital distress during the transition to parenthood as attachment relationships may function differently in distressed couples. As Davies and Cummings (1994) emotional security hypothesis states, high marital conflict may limit available family resources.

Thus, adult attachment and coparenting may be more important indicators for overall family health when marital distress is high.

A final area for future exploration would be additional ways of assessing both marital satisfaction and coparenting. Both these variables used self-report data, it is possible observation data may provide different results. Prior studies using observation data have found links between AAI and marital satisfaction (Paley, Cox, Harter, & Margand, 2002) as well as AAI and coparenting (Talbot et al., 2009). Perhaps additional ways of measuring these variables would yield a different pattern of associations.

While our research did not find significant results, other research has found links between adult attachment states of mind and marital quality (Paley, Cox, Burchinal, & Payne, 1999; Talbot et al., 2009). Those working to support families during the transition to parenthood should still consider how an individual's experiences in his or her family of origin, and therefore his or her adult attachment orientation, may influence how the marriage adjusts to the new baby as well as how partners develop a committed relationship with one another and a supportive coparenting relationship toward their child. For both intervention and assessment, clinicians should consider adult attachment. In terms of assessment, research has shown a link between early attachment experiences and later parenting behaviors. Thus, clinicians should assess new or soon-to-be parents' adult attachment styles and the possible influence on planned and early parenting practices. Additionally, clinicians should be mindful of the similarity or differences in the adult attachment styles as other research has shown discordant couples to experience unique distress in the co-parenting relationship compared to concordant couples (Talbot et al., 2009). For interventions, practitioners should consider how to support both parents in developing parenting and coparenting skills. While this research did not find significant results, prior research has

supported the importance of both coparenting for overall child and family outcomes (Schoppe, Mangelsdorf, & Frosch, 2001; Teubert & Piquart, 2010; Morrill, Hines, Mahmood, & Cordova, 2010). By providing support and guidance to both parents we adhere to the principles of family systems theory and provide families with the greatest possible resources.

Conclusion

This study represents the use of attachment concordance to assess family process and attachment with a systemic lens. Neither coparenting nor marital satisfaction, both cross-sectionally and longitudinally, were significantly related to adult attachment style. Use of self-report data and limited sample size may have negatively affected our ability to detect small or moderate effects. To continue answering the call for a family system view of attachment, we believe further research into this area is warranted.

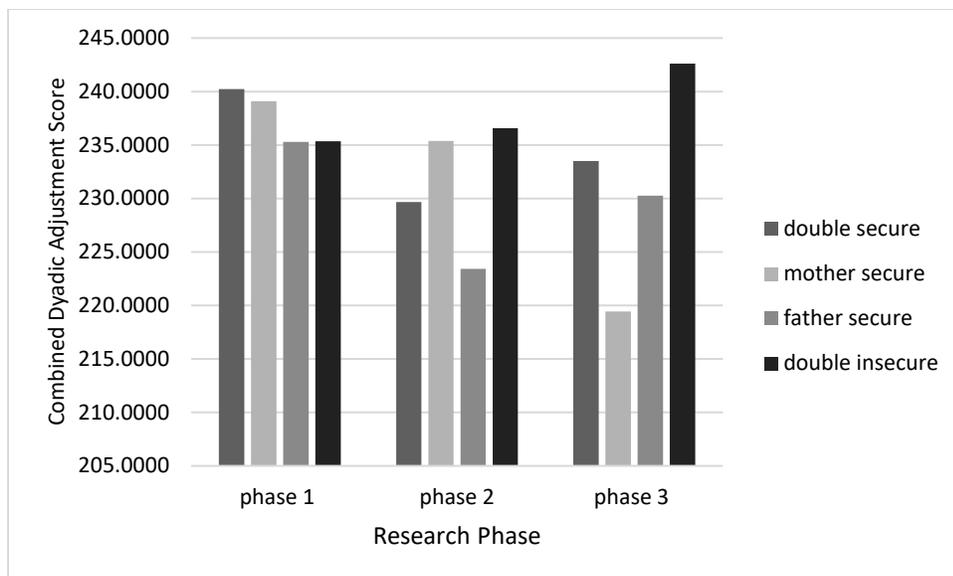


Figure 3.1: *Dyadic Adjustment over Three Phases by Adult Attachment Concordance*

Appendix 3A: Parenting Alliance Intervention

DIRECTIONS: The questions listed below concern what happens between you and your child's other parent, or the other adult most involved in the care of your child. While you may not find an answer which exactly describes what you think, please circle the answer that comes closest to what you think. **YOUR FIRST REACTION SHOULD BE YOUR ANSWER.**

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	My child's other parent enjoys being alone with our child.	5	4	3	2	1
2.	During pregnancy, my child's other parent expressed confidence in my ability to be a good parent.	5	4	3	2	1
3.	When there is a problem with our child, we work out a good solution together.	5	4	3	2	1
4.	My child's other parent and I communicate well about our child.	5	4	3	2	1
5.	My child's other parent is willing to make personal sacrifices to help take care of our child.	5	4	3	2	1
6.	Talking to my child's other parent about our child is something I look forward to.	5	4	3	2	1
7.	My child's other parent pays a great deal of attention to our child.	5	4	3	2	1
8.	My child's other parent and I agree on what our child should and should not be permitted to do.	5	4	3	2	1
9.	I feel close to my child's other parent when I see him/her play with our child.	5	4	3	2	1
10.	My child's other parent knows how to handle children well.	5	4	3	2	1
11.	My child's other parent and I are a good team.	5	4	3	2	1
12.	My child's other parent believes I am a good parent.	5	4	3	2	1
13.	I believe my child's other parent is a good parent.	5	4	3	2	1
14.	My child's other parent makes my job of being a parent easier	5	4	3	2	1

15	My child's other parent sees our child the same way I do.	5	4	3	2	1
16	My child's other parent and I would basically describe our child in the same way.	5	4	3	2	1
17	If our child needs to be punished, my child's other parent and I usually agree on the type of punishment.	5	4	3	2	1
18	I feel good about my child's other parent's judgement about what is right for our child.	5	4	3	2	1
19	My child's other parent tells me I am a good parent.	5	4	3	2	1
20	My child's other parent and I have the same goals for our child.	5	4	3	2	1

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

General Discussion

Attachment research is one of the foundational areas of relational exploration. This theory has been used to explore parent-child relationships, romantic relationships, and adult attachment. Despite this lifespan perspective and research, much research into attachment treats each attachment relationship and style as separate and distinct. Failing to consider how the concordance of these unique relationships within the same family system may influence family functioning is a major shortcoming of the field to date. Family systems theory advocates that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts (Minuchin, 1985); in accordance with this theory a more holistic view of attachment relationships is warranted. By examining the concordance of multiple attachment relationships, both parent-child and adult attachment styles, in relation to other variables of family functioning, these studies have begun to shed light on the whole of family attachment rather than its component pieces.

The first study sought to examine how dyadic satisfaction and attachment concordance may be linked as a couple welcomes a child. The findings for concordance of parent-child attachment painted a nuanced picture of the relationship between marital satisfaction and attachment concordance. Prior studies into concordance have examined how multiple secure relationships impact child outcomes (Boldt et al., 2014; Kochanska & Kim, 2013). This study chose to focus on the possible antecedents of attachment concordance between mother-child and father-child relationships. Both pre-birth and post-birth combined dyadic adjustment scores were

significantly related to attachment concordance. First analyses, in which all mismatched couples were combined, showed the mismatched group to have significantly lower marital satisfaction compared to the double secure couples. This aligns with van IJzendoorn, Sagi, and Lambermon (1992) assertion that a single secure relationship may not provide all the benefits of two secure relationships. It also may support Talbot et al. (2009) hypothesis that mismatched couples may experience stress due to feelings of competition or jealousy. However, upon further analysis, the role of attachment concordance became more distinct within the mismatched groups as a function of which parent was in a secure relationship.

Couples in which the father was the only secure relationship had the lowest marital satisfaction scores at all three time points out of all four attachment concordance configurations. In sharp contrast, when the mother was the only secure relationship, couples reported the highest level of marital satisfaction. These results demonstrate the importance of considering family variables as a whole instead of individual pieces. This unique relationship was not apparent until both attachment relationships were considered at the same time.

The second study analyzed adult attachment styles, coparenting, and marital satisfaction. Again, guided by family systems theory, this study looked at both attachment styles in predicting marital satisfaction and coparenting. While adult attachment concordance did not significantly predict marital satisfaction nor coparenting, other studies have found it to be predictive of family functioning (Paley et al., 2005; Talbot et al., 2009). The difference in study results may be due to small cell sizes and lack of clinically significant changes in levels of marital satisfaction over time. To continue understanding how multiple attachment relationships function in families, further exploration of attachment concordance should continue to receive focus.

Both studies explored couples during the transition to parenthood which provides an opportunity to see how a marital system adjusts and responds to the development of attachment relationships. Study one elucidated how the combination of parental security may be related to overall couple functioning, yet this relationship appears to be influenced by the parent's gender and the socio-historical weight attached to traditional gender role ideology. Study two did not find the hypothesized relationship between marital satisfaction and adult attachment styles but does provide some promising ideas for future research. Overall results show that the relationship between these factors is complex and worthy of further examination and analysis.

Implications for Future Research and Practice

Implications for Research

Future research should seek to better understand the family process that creates the relationship between marital satisfaction and parent-child attachment concordance. These studies can examine if the relationship is a feedback loop, as theorized by family systems theory, in which happier couples experience greater attachment concordance which in turn reinforces couples' happiness. Special attention should be given to the factors that cause mismatched couples to differ by mother-only secure and father-only secure. It has been suggested that both maternal gatekeeping and expectations and conformation to gender norms may play a role.

Without dedicated information on these variables, we cannot draw firm conclusions.

As both studies were limited by the lack of serious decrease in marital satisfaction over the transition to parenthood and the lack of clinically distressed couples overall, attention should be given to examining how more severe marital distress may be related to attachment concordance. This research should consider both parent-child attachment concordance and adult attachment style concordance. The experience of mismatched couples may differ for families

experiencing distress before a child is born as well as for families who experience a clinically significant decrease in marital satisfaction following the birth of a child.

Research should also explore how attachment concordance may influence couples who have older children as well as multiple children. As stated previously, we gain new understanding when we consider multiple relationships at once. Exploring how parents develop concordant or discordant relationships with siblings would provide new insight into how the difference in relationships may influence family functioning. Additionally, the transition to parenthood provides a time of great change and possible stress. The value of attachment concordance for marital satisfaction may increase or decrease as parents become more accustomed to the new roles and responsibilities of raising a child.

Implications for Practice

For clinicians, these results encourage the consideration of the whole family system for both assessing and intervening. These studies also encourage intervention at multiple time points and ongoing assessment over the transition to parenthood.

Focusing on assessment, these results should be seen as encouragement to include fathers and multiple family systems in all family assessments. The results of the first study suggest the importance of considering how each parent is managing the transition to parenthood. As significant differences were found in levels of marital satisfaction both pre- and post-birth, clinicians should assess for marital health throughout a child's first year. When evaluating the health of a family, clinicians need to consider each family subsystem (mother-child, father-child, marital) as well as how those subsystems are interacting. Family systems theory underscores bidirectional relationships between all parts of a system. Thus, parenting may influence marital health and vice versa. Therapists should be directed to assess for these influences. Practitioners

should be especially aware of families in which parents are developing discordant parent-child attachment relationships. As the first study demonstrates, couples in which fathers develop a more secure parent-child relationship compared to mothers may experience a decrease in overall marital satisfaction. These results encourage the assessment of not just each relationship within a family, but the influences between relationships. In following Paley's (2005) hypothesis discordant relationships may create jealousy and competition. Thus, therapists should assess for how each parent is responding to his or her partner's success with parenting. This information may be vital for discordant pairs. It may also be wise to assess for how each parent is providing care for and attending to division of child care within the family. While this research did not focus on these variables, attachment theory stresses parent involvement and proximity (Bowlby, 1969) as important elements for the development of secure attachment. As these results suggest a difference in mother-child and father-child attachment security and overall marital health, the way in which each parent is providing care may provide clinicians insight into overall family functioning.

Assessment should also attend to adult attachment styles. While the second study did not produce the expected results between marital satisfaction, coparenting, and adult attachment concordance, other studies have demonstrated how these variables may be related (Talbot et al., 2009). As with assessment of the multiple subsystems suggested by study one, clinicians can also assess for adult attachment style and concordance of these styles when supporting families expecting children. Both Paley (2005) and Talbot's (2009) results suggest the utility of considering the combination of adult attachment styles and overall marital adjustment to parenthood and family health.

These results can also promote improved family interventions. Clinicians should provide interventions that support both parents in developing secure parent-child relationships. There should be special consideration if a mother is struggling to attend or respond to a new baby. Additionally, interventions should be aimed at supporting the health of the marital system even if the focus is on the parent-child relationship. These studies provide evidence that interventions with the marital system may support the parent-child subsystem. Practitioners should use interventions that target the possible feedback loop between the parent-child subsystems and the marital subsystem. Specifically, therapists can provide marital interventions as an additional way to strengthen parenting practices and parenting interventions to strengthen marriages. Finally, for timing of interventions this research highlights the importance of both pre- and post-birth care. As both prenatal and postpartum dyadic satisfaction was related to parent-child attachment at one year, clinicians should be directed to provide clinician care for families throughout the transition to parenthood.

Conclusion

To understand family functioning family systems theory calls us to look at the whole. By moving away from treating attachment relationships as distinct pieces, research can begin to uncover the complex relationships between multiple family attachments and family functioning. This study has taken one step towards understanding how families develop multiple attachment relationships and how the concordance of those relationships may be related to other family variables like coparenting and marital satisfaction. These studies show some of the complex interactions between multiple attachments and marital health. More research is needed to understand families from a fully holistic perspective. The examination of attachment

concordance is one step towards better understanding attachment within the context of the entire family.

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