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Avoidant Parental and Self Conflict-Resolution Styles and Marital Relationship

Self-Regulation: Do Perceived Partner Attachment Behaviors

Play a Moderating Role?

Erin L. Rackham

A thesis submitted to the faculty of  
Brigham Young University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science

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## ABSTRACT

### Avoidant Parental and Self Conflict-Resolution Styles and Marital Relationship Self-Regulation: Do Perceived Partner Attachment Behaviors Play a Moderating Role?

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Master of Science

Relationship self-regulation (RSR) refers to the “work”, or effort and strategies, that partners put into keeping their relationships healthy. Past RSR research has not taken into account distal and proximal variables that may affect RSR, such as parental and current relationship avoidant conflict-resolution style (CRS). In this study, we examine the relationships between parental avoidant CRS and current relationship avoidant CRS, as well as self-report of RSR in the relationship. Additionally, the perception of one’s partner’s attachment behaviors consisting of responsiveness, engagement, and accessibility is included in the model to test for moderation of the relationship between current relationship avoidant conflict-resolution style and RSR. Using data from 2,228 males and 2,228 females who were in their first marriages and completed the RELATionship Evaluation (RELATE) (Busby et al., 2001), we found that there was a high positive correlation between parental avoidant CRS and current avoidant CRS. Avoidant CRS was also significantly negatively correlated with RSR. Finally, we found that perception of partner’s attachment behaviors did not moderate the negative relationship between avoidant CRS and RSR. Implications for future research and clinicians are discussed.

Key Words: conflict resolution style, accessibility, responsiveness, engagement, relationship self-regulation.

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## Chapter 1

### **Introduction and Purpose of the Study**

Relationship self-regulation (RSR) refers to the effort and strategies an individual uses to improve an intimate relationship in order to make it better (Halford, Lizzio, Wilson, & Occhipinti, 2007). Some have called it “working at a relationship” (Halford, Lizzio, Wilson, & Occhipinti, 2007). Much has been studied about the positive effects of RSR on marital satisfaction since the concept was first introduced by Halford, Sanders, and Behrens (Wilson, Charker, Lizzio, Halford, & Kimlin 2005). Very little research has been conducted, however, on the factors that predict who is most likely to implement RSR in their relationship and why or why not.

Conflict-resolution style is a term coined by Gottman (1994) to describe how couples resolve conflict in their relationships. There are four different styles: validating, volatile, hostile, and avoidant. This study focuses on avoidant couples, who typically “agree to disagree” and have peaceful, but less-intimate relationships (Gottman, 1994) than the other types. An avoidant CRS may be negatively related to RSR because those who avoid conflict typically are unaware of what their partners want them to change because they avoid these types of conversations altogether (Gottman, 1994).

This study also looked at partner’s attachment behaviors to see if it would moderate the relationship between avoidant CRS and ability to do RSR by creating a safe environment that allows a conflict-avoider to feel safe enough to work on the relationship. Attachment behaviors were originally proposed by Bowlby in 1973 and have been expanded upon since then. The two

original key behaviors are accessibility and responsiveness (Mikulincer & Goodman 2006), while Johnson added engagement as a third and final behavior (Johnson, 2004). These attachment *behaviors* (not styles) facilitate attachment *bonds* in couples. Couples with partners who actively employ these attachment behaviors tend to have more secure attachments, and therefore, happier marriages. Whereas, those who fail to implement the attachment behaviors tend to be insecure in their attachment styles and have less marital satisfaction (Sandberg, Busby, Johnson, & Yoshida, 2012).

Along with studying partner attachment behaviors and RSR, we also studied the relationship between parental CRS learned in the FOO on current couple CRS and RSR success. We propose that since couples learn most of their marital behaviors from watching their parents, i.e. one's parents' marriage serves as a blueprint, if people grow up in a conflict-avoidant family, they will more likely become conflict-avoiders themselves in their own marriages (Bandura, 1986). Gottman's avoidant conflict style is characterized by couples "agreeing to disagree", rarely confronting their differences head-on, and low levels of friendship and intimacy (Gottman, 1993).

It is our thesis that perceived partner secure attachment behaviors create the emotional safety and support in marriage that helps conflict-avoidant individuals feel safe enough to be vulnerable with their partners to the point of doing RSR. RSR requires that partners be willing to allow for ambiguity and change in marriage without knowing definitively what the outcome may be. In 2002, Johnson noted more securely attached individuals feel safer to explore ambiguities in their relationships, and a partner exhibiting secure attachment behaviors would likely contribute to the security of their partner's attachment in the relationship. Therefore, if a

conflict-avoidant partner is in a relationship with a partner who exhibits the three important attachment behaviors, we propose that the secure attachment bonds created by the spouse in the current relationship will empower the conflict-avoider to overcome his or her fears and dislike of conflict learned in the FOO, and feel safe enough to engage in RSR rather than doing the opposite and avoid working on the relationship. This model of parental CRS and current CRS and their relationship to current RSR in marriage as moderated by one's perceived partner's attachment behaviors has never been studied.

## Chapter 2

### **Definitions and Theoretical Context**

#### **Definition of Terms**

**Avoidant CRS.** Gottman's (1999) typology of conflict resolution in marriage defines "avoidant couples" as agreeing to disagree with each other rather than trying to convince each other of their perspective or coming to compromises together about differences. Of the other four styles defined by Gottman (1993), the relationship between conflict-avoiders is the most peaceful, but least intimate, of all the CRSs with little emotional disruption. These couples do not value working through their differences explicitly, so they usually just ignore them or learn to adapt. Gottman emphasizes that couples who have a conflict-avoidant CRS still have the potential to have happy relationships—but they have less intimacy, intimate knowledge of their partners' needs, knowledge of each other's lives, and friendship. When important conflicts arise such as disagreeing on how to raise children or how often to have sex, these couples tend to struggle to solve the problem and often remain stuck, anxious, and frustrated (Gottman, 2002). This frustration typically leads to ending the discussion before needs and feelings can be adequately addressed and understood by each other and before changes in self or partner can be considered or executed.

**Relationship self-regulation (RSR).** RSR is defined as one's ability to use different strategies as well as effort as needed to improve a relationship (Halford, Lizzio, Wilson, & Occhipinti, 2007). It consists of four meta-cognitive skills: self-appraisal, self-directed goal setting, self-change, and self-evaluation of change efforts. Self-appraisal is being aware of the state of one's relationship and the influences on it. Self-directed goal setting involves using self-

appraisal to recognize the effect one's own behaviors have on the relationship and set goals to change the behaviors that inhibit relationship satisfaction. Self-change is the ability to successfully use strategies or behaviors to implement the goals for the relationship. And self-evaluation of change efforts happens when one examines the effectiveness of the change in behavior on relationship satisfaction (Halford, 2001). For example: If a wife continuously overspends the monthly budget set for the marriage, she might self-appraise by acknowledging that not staying within the budget causes stress and tension in her relationship. Then she may set a goal to stay under the budget for the next month. Using different strategies than before (such as a spreadsheet of expenses and mini-budgets for herself), she may successfully implement this change. Her final step in RSR is evaluating her efforts and deciding what effects staying under budget has had on improving her relationship with her husband.

**Attachment behaviors.** Strong attachment behaviors create a safe environment for risking, learning, and becoming vulnerable (Johnson, 2003; Sandberg, Busby, Johnson, & Yoshida, 2012). Attachment behaviors are key behaviors that strongly affect whether a person feels secure, insecure, anxious, or avoidant in an intimate relationship (Johnson, 2003).

One aspect of attachment behaviors is accessibility, which refers to whether or not a partner is reachable or approachable. To be considered accessible, the partner needs to be available—for example reachable by telephone or email, intentionally being in the same room, or available through some other form of communication. (Sandberg, Busby, Johnson, & Yoshida, 2012). A second attachment behavior, responsiveness, refers to whether or not one's partner answers, responds, or acknowledges you when you reach out to him or her. For example, engaging in dialogue with a partner would be considered being responsive, but ignoring a spouse

attempting to have a conversation would be nonresponsive. The final attachment behavior, engagement, involves partners discussing a serious topic together with mutual sharing of vulnerable thoughts and feelings, or sharing bonding moments of pleasurable activities or emotional connections. Discussing important and intimate topics such as when to start a family, hopes or goals for the future, and other vulnerable subjects is considered engaging with a partner (Sandberg, Busby, Johnson, & Yoshida, 2012).

### **Theoretical Context**

Three theories underlie this proposed model to be tested: social cognitive theory, self-regulation theory, and attachment theory with an emphasis on attachment behaviors rather than attachment styles (i.e. secure or insecure).

**Social cognitive theory.** Social cognitive theory (Bandura 1986) suggests that the behaviors exhibited in adulthood are mostly learned from our FOO experiences. The theory emphasizes, in particular, that we model much of our own behavior in relationships after the examples we observe at an early age—primarily in the FOO. Many studies have supported the validity of Bandura’s theory and found his assumptions to be supported—especially in terms of relational skills such as self-regulation (Zimmerman, 2000).

Operating under the behavioral premise that social cognitive theory provides, we can assume that romantic relationship skills are developed by watching and trying to emulate one’s parents’ marital behaviors since this is the first romantic relationship most people experience. According to Marks (1986), our parents’ marriage provides “a set of procedures for normal marital practice, complete with a vision of model problems and their typical solutions” (Marks,

1986 p. 13). Social cognitive theory suggests that our parents' modus operandi for conflict-resolution is most comfortable and becomes the "normal" that offspring aspire to.

In avoidant families, there is little chance an offspring will learn how to successfully communicate openly, resolve issues, and self-evaluate enough to set goals to change in a relationship like marriage. Thus, parental avoidant conflict style may be important to consider when determining who will more likely be successful with RSR and who will likely require partner attachment behaviors to help them overcome their initial difficulty and anxiety with it.

**Self-regulation theory and RSR.** The concept of self-regulation was first conceptualized in the context of individual self-regulation, and was only just recently expanded to couples. One of the most comprehensive definitions of self-regulation was given by Karoly (1993, p. 25) when he wrote:

"Self-regulation refers to those processes, internal and/or transactional, that enable an individual to guide his/her goal-directed activities over time and across changing circumstances (contexts). Regulation implies modulation of thought, affect, behavior, or attention via deliberate or automated use of specific mechanisms and supportive meta-skills. The processes of self-regulation are initiated when routine activity is impeded, or when goal directedness is otherwise made salient (e.g. the appearance of a challenge, the failure of habitual action patterns, etc.)."

While individual self-regulation has been studied extensively (Bandura, 1977; 1986; Catania, 1975; Karoly, 1993; Mahoney & Thoreson, 1974), the idea of self-regulation within a relationship (RSR) has yet to reach its full potential. Because the theory of individual self-regulation was born out of the curiosity to discover what motivated people to act of their own

volition, it's no wonder that relationship self-regulation was born out of a desire to help people accept responsibility for their effect on relationships (Halford, Sanders, & Behrens, 1994).

These researchers felt that in behavioral therapy for couples there was too much emphasis on trying to change the partner. The unhealthy blaming pattern implicit in asking one's *partner* to change in the hopes of improving *one's own* relationship satisfaction automatically takes his or her own responsibility out of the relationship. In an RSR perspective, however, each partner is mainly responsible for nothing except self-evaluating and changing their *own* behavior in the hopes of improving the relationship rather than waiting for the partner to change. RSR is such an important construct because it changes the emphasis of clinicians' work from attempting to force partners to change for each other to teaching skills to individuals and asking them to implement them on their own. All of a sudden, the impossible becomes something not only possible, but entirely logical (Halford 2001).

RSR has been incorporated into couple relationship education programs like the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP), Couple Commitment and Relationship Enhancement (Couple CARE) (Halford, Sanders, & Behrens, 2001; Halford et al., 2004), and outcome studies of this program that teaches the basic skills of RSR show statistically significant increases in marital satisfaction over time (Halford et al., 2004). Such studies demonstrate that people can learn the skills needed to work at their relationships and working on a relationship can increase overall relationship satisfaction.

**Attachment theory and behaviors.** The attachment behaviors—accessibility, responsiveness, and engagement—are behaviors that help determine whether someone's attachment style is insecure anxious, insecure avoidant, or secure (Sandberg, Busby, Johnson, &

Yoshida, 2012). Because “strong attachment bonds can provide a safe haven and a secure base for a person, which help to ‘buffer against the effects of stress and uncertainty,’ as well as ‘promote the confidence necessary to risk, learn, and continually update models of self, others, and the world’ (Johnson, 2003, p. 5)” (Sandberg, Busby, Johnson, & Yoshida, 2012), someone who is insecure in their attachment style is not as likely to do attachment behaviors, whereas a secure individual will be more likely to use all three behaviors successfully in their relationships.

As explained by Roundy and Larson (2014), attachment theory is, in a sense, a type of self-regulation because one first feels the need for attachment security, then assesses how likely they are to achieve that secure attachment and depending on how great the discrepancy is between the needed attachment and the likelihood of achieving it, they employ behaviors that will likely protect them from feeling rejected. If attachment is thought to be achievable, an individual will more likely employ accessibility, responsiveness, and engagement to foster the relationship and create more intimacy with their partner. If attachment feels unattainable, however, one will be more likely to disconnect from the relationship and become more inaccessible, unresponsive, and disengaged from the partner, or sabotage the relationship by being overly accessible, needy, and emotionally dependent on the partner (Roundy, 2014).

## Chapter 3

### Review of Literature

#### **Avoidant CRS and Close Relationships**

While no study has directly focused on intergenerational transmission of CRSs and their relationship to RSR, a longitudinal study (Van Doorn, Branje, VanderValk, & De Goede, 2011) looked at the spillover effects of parent-adolescent conflict style and adolescent-friend conflict style over the course of three years. They found significant positive relationships for every conflict style which showed that the same conflict style used with parents was used with friends—thus, supporting Bowlby’s social cognitive theory that CRS behaviors may be learned in the FOO. Adolescents who used withdrawal strategies with their friends were also likely to use these with their parents as well (Van Doorn, Branje, VanderValk, & De Goede, 2011).

#### **Attachment Behaviors and RSR.**

Since the Brief Accessibility, Responsiveness, and Engagement (BARE) Scale was only published two years ago, little research has been published yet on the relationships between these behaviors and RSR or other key variables in couple relationships (Sandberg, Busby, Johnson, & Yoshida, 2012). In one recent study, Knapp (2014) and colleagues found that attachment behaviors fully mediated the relationship between family-of-origin quality and ability to do RSR. However, there is more research on attachment *styles* and RSR. In Roundy and Larson’s study (2014), they used a sample of 912 married females and 589 married males. All participants were in their first year of marriage. Their model tested attachment *style* as a predictor of RSR. They found a significant negative correlation between insecure attachment and RSR for both males and females. They postulated that because securely attached individuals feel safer to explore

their relationships and more comfortable with ambiguity (Johnson, 2002), they may be less anxious to try changing their relationship with their partner by doing RSR. In contrast, insecurely attached individuals may seek soothing and comfort from their partners as their top priority is keeping the relationship stable—whether it's entirely satisfying or not.

In the most recent study (Corcoran & Mallinckrodt, 2000) of attachment styles and RSR, 124 adults assessed their attachment styles and CRSs. The results of the study showed a significant negative correlation between secure attachment style and avoidant CRS and a significant positive correlation between secure attachment and an integrating (what Gottman (1994) might call “validating”) CRS (Corcoran & Mallinckrodt, 2000). The significant correlations between attachment styles and CRS were explained by noting that because conflict may be seen as a threat to security and stability in romantic relationships, adult attachment behavior is likely to be activated in a manner similar to how it is in children who perceive a threat to the security of an attachment bond meant to provide safety and comfort. Additionally, Hamilton (2014) recently conducted a study to test which of the three stable CRSs was able to do RSR best in their marriage and she found that avoidant couples were significantly lower than both validating and volatile couples on RSR strategies in a pairwise comparison analysis.

While Gottman (2002) claims that the different CRSs are no better or worse than the others in terms of ultimate relationship quality (Gottman, 2002), it seems likely that children who have parents with avoidant CRS and thus frequently do not exemplify effective problem solving will grow up to be more anxious when conflict is expressed in their marriage. In fact, Holman and Jarvis (2003) found conflict-avoiders to be less happy in their marriage when compared to hostile couples which Gottman stresses is a negative form of CRS. According to Corcoran and

Mallinckrodt (2000), those who feel insecure in their relationships resort to avoidant CRSs because they perceive a threat to their relationship homeostasis and their natural tendency is to disengage and not let themselves become too attached—the same way insecure avoidant children behave when their caregivers are inconsistent or absentee.

Roundy and Larson (2014) suggested that those who feel insecure have less ability to do RSR because their top priority is keeping their relationship calm so that their partner can continue to soothe and comfort them. They likely avoid putting the relationship in jeopardy by changing their own behavior patterns, even if the relationship is not satisfying (Corcoran & Mallinckrodt, 2000), (Roundy and Larson, 2014). If those with a secure attachment style exhibit attachment behaviors, it stands to reason that those attachment behaviors of accessibility, responsiveness, and engagement create the safe place Johnson (2002) talks about for their partner to feel more confident in engaging in RSR, and thus, taking risks in the relationship.

### **Summary and Model to be Tested**

The proposed model, therefore, combines a distal variable (conflict-avoidant parental CRS) with the more proximal variables of current marriage conflict-avoidance and partner's attachment behaviors to predict RSR in marriage. If partner attachment behaviors have the proposed positive moderating effect on the relationship between avoidant CRS and current relationship RSR, self-efficacy in doing RSR may be improved through clinical treatment with conflict-avoidant types of couples by helping them increase their attachment behaviors of accessibility, responsiveness, and engagement to create enough emotional safety in the relationship to overcome the negative effects of avoidant RSR improve RSR in marriage (Bandura, 1977; Halford, 2001), and ultimately, more marital satisfaction (Halford, 2001).

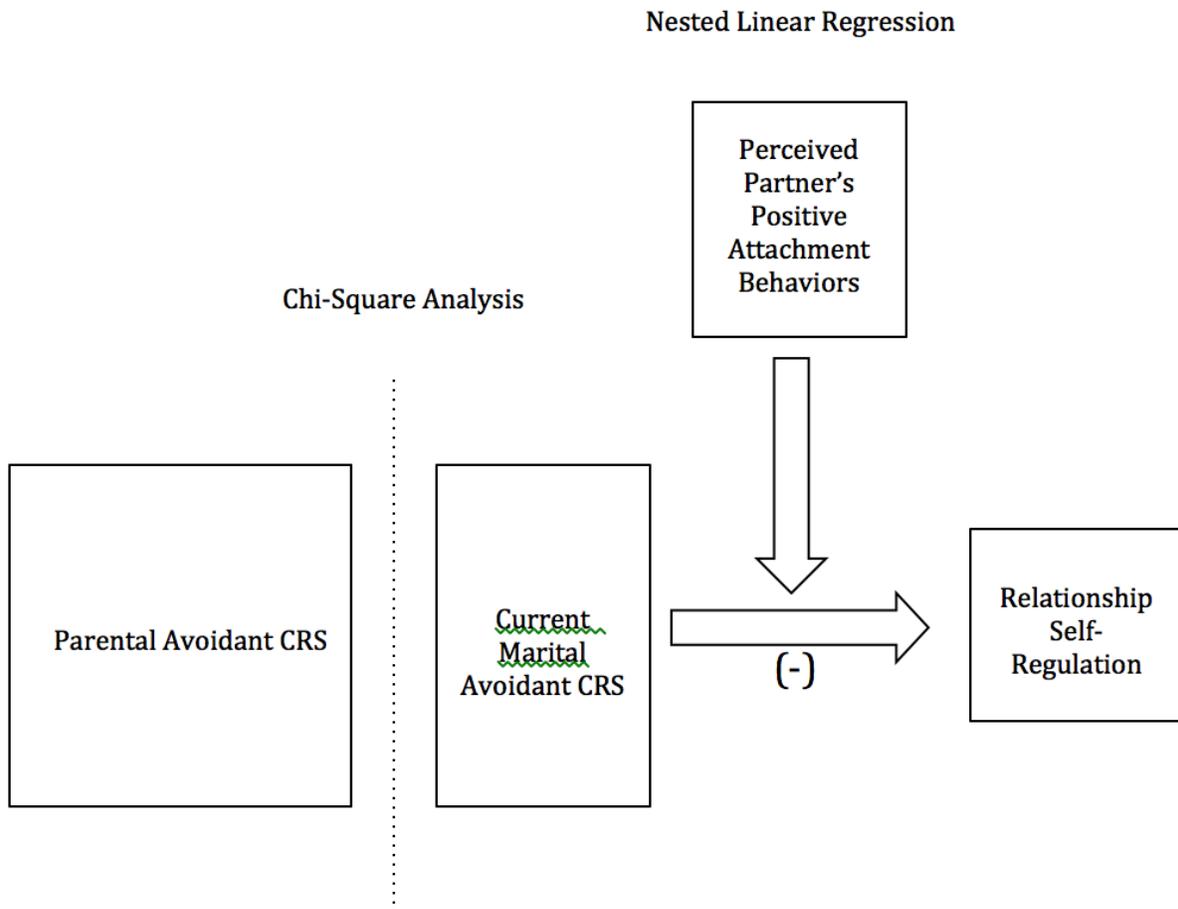
The model to be tested is shown below (see figure 1). We propose that:

- 1) Parental avoidant CRS will be positively related to current marital avoidant CRS for both male and female offspring.
- 2) Marital avoidant CRS will be negatively related to RSR.
- 3) One's perceived partner's positive attachment behaviors will moderate the negative relationship between the avoidant CRS and RSR, such that avoidant CRS will have less or no significant relationship to current RSR when the perceived partners' positive attachment behaviors are entered into the theoretical equation (see figure 1).

**Model To Be Tested**

Figure 1

*Avoidant Conflict-Resolution Styles and Relationship Self-Regulation as Moderated by Perceived Partner's Attachment Behaviors*



## Chapter 4

### Methods

#### Description of Sample

The sample consisted of 2228 males and 2228 females who completed the RELATionship Evaluation (RELATE) (Busby et al., 2001) between the years of 2001 and 2013. The average length of marriage spanned from 0-3 months to more than 40 years. Each individual in the sample completed the RELATE measures of parental conflict-resolution style, self conflict-resolution style, relationship self-regulation, and the brief accessibility responsiveness and engagement subscales in the RELATE questionnaire.

Fifty eight percent of all participants reported themselves as Caucasian. The sample's education was also relatively high with only 1.3 % of females and 2.3 % of males reporting no college. The mean age of the sample was 33.89 for females and 34.59 for males, with a standard deviation of 9.93 and 9.97 respectively. The means and standard deviations for age, as well as frequency distributions for race, religion, education, and income are presented for females and males in Table 1; the frequency distribution for length of marriage is presented in Table 2.

#### Procedures

The data for this study came from the RELATE database (Holman, Busby, Doxey, Klein, & Loyer-Carlson, 2014). RELATE is a 271-item online assessment questionnaire created to provide a comprehensive measurement of romantic relationships. It assesses multiple variables shown to be predictive of relationship satisfaction and variables related to satisfaction as theorized by ecosystemic theory (Busby, Holman, Taniguchi, 2001). RELATE has been used in a variety of applications, like classroom, counseling, and clergy settings to help couples and

professionals better understand the factors that contribute to relationship satisfaction.

Participants were asked to answer most items on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1=never/strongly disagree, 5=very often/strongly agree) as well as answer basic demographic questions. The subscales in RELATE have demonstrated high internal consistency reliability (alpha) (between .70 and .90), test-retest reliability, and concurrent validity (Busby et al., 2001). This study will use the following four subscales on RELATE: the RSR scale for self, the Brief Accessibility, Responsiveness, and Engagement scale (Sandberg, Busby, Johnson, & Yoshida, 2012) for partner, the parental CRS scale, and the current CRS scale.

The majority of the participants in this study were referred to RELATE by an instructor in a college class, their therapist, or a clergy person. The remaining participants were sent to the site by a friend or family member, online advertisements, or web searches for relationship assessments.

## Measures

**Relationship self-regulation.** The RSR subscale on RELATE consists of eight items taken from the Behavioral Self-Regulation for Effective Relationships Scale (BSERS) (Wilson et al., 2005). The BSERS was developed and tested with three different samples. Factor analysis showed a 2 factor structure comprised of relationship strategies and effort. The scale showed high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's Alpha  $>0.80$  in both newly married samples (Wilson et al., 2005). Concurrent and convergent validity were also reasonably established. For a more detailed description of the development and psychometric properties of the scale, see Wilson et al. (2005). In this study, participants' rating of their own RSR is scored by taking the sum total of the items in the Relationship Self-Regulation Scale of RELATE to create the RSR

variable. Responses are given on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from (1) “not at all” to (5) “very true”. The following items compose the RSR *strategy* subscale: (1) “I try to apply ideas about effective relationships to improve our relationship”, (4) “I actually put my intentions or plans for personal change into practice”, (7) “I give my partner helpful feedback on the ways she/he can help me achieve my goals”, and (8) “If the way I’m approaching change doesn’t work, I can usually think of something different to try.” These items compose the RSR *effort* subscale: (2) “If things go wrong in the relationship I tend to feel powerless”, (3) “I tend to fall back on what is comfortable for me in relationships, rather than trying new ways of relating”, (5) “Even when I know what I could do differently to improve things in the relationship, I cannot seem to change my behavior”, (6) “If my partner doesn’t appreciate the change efforts I am making, I tend to give up.” Items 2, 3, 5, and 6 are reverse coded to control for response bias. Total scale scores may range from 8-40, with higher scores indicating a higher level of RSR. For the current sample, the Cronbach’s Alpha=.79 for both males and females.

While the RSR subscale of RELATE provides the option to separate relationship effort and relationship strategies from one another, the current model will combine the two constructs to create an overall RSR total score. Our main reason for keeping RSR effort and strategies combined is that we don’t see how a partner’s attachment behaviors could affect one of these variables without affecting the other. For example, if an avoidant partner begins to feel more safe due to their spouse being accessible, responsive, and engaged with them, they are most likely going to feel safe enough to put extra effort into their relationship behaviors because they know their spouse will still be there in case something goes wrong. By the same token, if that partner feels safe enough to put more effort into their relationship, their strategies are probably

going to improve because they have had the chance to explore change in a relationship with a spouse who is accessible, responsive, and engaged. Keeping effort and strategies separate in our analyses would measure something we are not interested in exploring in this paper, as we are interested in seeing the effect on RSR as a whole that a spouse's attachment behaviors can have.

**Parental and Self CRS.** According to Busby and Holman (2009), the CRS items on RELATE were developed from research conducted by Holman and Jarvis (2003). They defined conflict-resolution types by creating four short conflict scenarios—each describing a volatile, avoiding, validating, or hostile CRS. After collecting their data, Holman and Jarvis conducted a nonhierarchical cluster analysis to determine if they could empirically identify Gottman's four CRSs using the four scenarios. The results of the cluster analysis support the validity of their constructs for determining Gottman's four CRSs. These four scenarios have been used in the RELATE Questionnaire ever since. In this study, we are only interested in the conflict-avoiding couples and so are only concerned with those participants who selected that specific scenario to describe parents' CRS and their own CRS.

When asked to select one of the following four options as the most accurate description of their mother or father's *usual* CRS, participants responded positively that the following statement sounded the most similar to the way their parents handled conflict in their marriage: "My mother/father avoided conflict. She/he didn't think there was much to be gained from getting openly angry with others. In fact, to her/him a lot of talking about emotions and difficult issues seemed to make matters worse. She/he thought that if people would just relax, problems would have a way of working themselves out." By checking the above statement as the most

accurate description of how their parents typically resolved conflict, participants indicated that the three alternative CRSs did not fit their perception of their parent's CRS.

Individuals who took RELATE reported on both their father and their mother's conflict style separately, but to ensure that those participants included in the sample had a strong background history of conflict-avoidance, we included only those who marked both their mother *and* their father as being conflict-avoidant.

**Current CRS.** When asked to select one of the same four options as the *most accurate description of their own CRS*, participants in the study similarly identified conflict-avoidant as their most usual CRS.

Individuals who took RELATE reported on both their own and their partner's CRSs separately, but this study used only the report on oneself because we were only interested in whether the one partner was avoidant. The other partner's CRS was irrelevant. If there were participants who perceived both parents as conflict-avoidant, but then perceived themselves as a validating, volatile, or hostile CRS, we excluded them from the sample. However, to test hypothesis #1, we calculated the percentage of persons who came from avoidant families who also reported avoidance as their current CRS in marriage, so we calculated this percentage before we excluded those participants who had mismatched parental and self CRSs. We also did this to present initial evidence of how many couples report CRSs that are the same as their parents used in their marriages.

**Partner's attachment behaviors.** Attachment behaviors of one's partner are a moderating variable in this study and were measured with the Brief Accessibility, Responsiveness, and Engagement Scale (BARE; Sandberg et al., 2012) which is part of

RELATE. Participants responded to 12 statements from three different subscales (accessibility, responsiveness, and engagement) that measured their perception of their partners' attachment behaviors (Cronbach's alpha for this scale for males was .684, and for females it was .738). The scores from each of the three domains were summed to create an overall rating of attachment behaviors. Responses to statements were chosen from five-point Likert scales, where answers varied from "Never True" to "Always True." Sample items from this scale include: "It is hard for my partner to get my attention" (reverse scored), "I am confident my partner reaches out to me," and "It is hard for me to confide in my partner" (reverse scored). The BARE has demonstrated high alpha reliability with test-retest scores ranging from .60 to .75.

While the BARE subscale of RELATE makes it relatively easy to measure accessibility, responsiveness, and engagement separately, we combined the scores to create an overall attachment behavior score for the partner. We wanted an overall BARE score because we do not feel that any of the three behaviors alone is more likely than another to increase a partner's safety and security in a relationship, but rather an overall experience with secure attachment behaviors will provide the necessary solid foundation for RSR to begin.

### **Control Variables**

RSR has been shown to vary with relationship length and type (e.g., married versus unmarried) (Halford et al., 2007; Meyer, Larson, & Busby, & Harper, 2012). Therefore, in this study we included only couples in their first marriages and assumed that married couples are generally in more stable relationships where CRSs, RSR, and attachment behaviors have started to develop compared to those who are in other types of relationships (e.g., cohabitating, or seriously dating). The length of the marriage relationship was controlled for statistically using

the following question from RELATE: “How long have you and your partner been married?”. Responses were coded as follows: 0 to 3 months (1), 4 to 6 months (2), 7 to 12 months (3), 1 to 2 years (4), 3 to 5 years (5), 6 to 10 years (6), 11 to 15 years (7), 16 to 20 years (8), 21 to 30 years (9), 31 to 40 years (10), and more than 40 years (11). Values on this scale may range from 1 to 11, with higher values indicating longer relationships.

We also argue that RSR will be more difficult for couples with lower SES. Considering that couples in the lower SES sector are more prone to struggling financially, they are often under more fatigue and stress than couples in the higher SES sector. These couples who are overwhelmed are much less likely to spend the time and energy or have the fundamental knowledge to learn about RSR and implement it in their marriage. We statistically controlled for SES using the following question from RELATE: “Your current personal yearly gross income (before taxes & deductions)”. Responses were coded as follows: None (0), Under 20,000 (1), 20,000-39,999 (2), 40,000-59,999 (3), 60,000-79,999 (4), 80,000-99,999 (5), 100,000-119,999 (6), 120,000-139,999 (7), 140,000-159,999 (8), 160,000-199,999 (9), 200,000-299,999 (10), and 300,000 or above (11). Values on this scale ranged from 0 to 11, with higher values indicating higher SES.

Self-identified religious affiliation and race were included as controls and measured with dichotomous variables. Respondents also specified how much education they had completed by selecting a response ranging from 1 = “less than high school” to 9 = “graduate or professional degree completed.

## Analyses

We used SPSS 17 (2013), a statistical package, to manage data and conduct the following analyses. All analyses were run separately for males and females to avoid nonindependence that could occur with a married sample. We first calculated the mean scores and standard deviations for all continuous variables: age, partner BARE score (perception of partner's attachment behaviors), and current self RSR. We then calculated a frequency distribution for religion, race, income, education level, length of marriage, and parental conflict resolution style as descriptive statistics of the sample, as well as frequency distributions for the number of individuals who reported conflict avoidant parents and who are also conflict avoidant in their own marriages. If both parents reported as avoidant, we calculated them as a 1 and if either or both parents were not avoidant, we calculated them as a 0. We also looked at the frequencies of partners from avoidant families (i.e. both parents were scored as avoidant) who were *not* avoidant in their own marriages to provide an initial estimate of how frequently this pattern may happen in a large sample of couples.

We conducted diagnostic tests regarding the assumptions of a linear regression model. To test for collinearity, we used VIFs, tolerance intervals, and condition indices as diagnostics (Hoffman, 2005). To test whether the residuals of the dependent variable are normally distributed, we created a residual normal probability plot. We performed a graphical test to identify heteroskedasticity. We ran a Cook's D to identify any influential observations. The tests showed that all of the assumptions of the regression held.

The self-report of current CRS scale is the dependent variable in the model used to test hypothesis 1. To test the relationship between parental avoidant CRS and current use of avoidant

CRS a chi-square analysis was conducted with parental CRS types, as well as self-report of CRS in current marriage.

In hypothesis 2, we explored the relationship between current CRS (Avoidant CRS=1, all other CRS=0) and RSR with the bi-variate correlations between current CRS and RSR. Correlations were again run separately for males and females. In order to explore if there is a relationship between avoidant CRS and RSR, as well as if there is a moderating effect with partner attachment behaviors, we first calculated Univariate Pearson correlations for partner attachment behavior scores, RSR scores, and current avoidant CRS coded as 0 or 1. Zero indicated use of a different CRS in current marriage while one meant the use of avoidance. We kept subjects in the data set who scored as non-avoidant so this correlation could be calculated. Correlations had a level of significance set at 0.05.

We next ran separate Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) nested linear regression analyses to determine the relationships between the independent (avoidant CRS) and dependent variables (RSR). An interaction term for partner BARE score was added to the regression as a measure of its moderating effect on RSR. Self-RSR was regressed onto the control variables (gender, parental CRS, income, education,) first, then onto current avoidant CRS and attachment behaviors of partner. In the last step we tested for attachment behaviors as a moderator between current avoidant CRS and self-RSR.

The self-reported RSR scale is the dependent variable used for each of the first two models tested above. The test of moderation was performed as the last step in the hierarchical multiple regression (Ingham, 1984). To test the moderating effect of a partner's BARE score on an individual's report of current RSR we created an interaction term by including the product of

either high or low BARE scores multiplied by current RSR in the respective regression equations. To account for and preemptively decrease collinearity that is likely when the product of scales is also included in the equation, we mean centered all continuous variables

## Chapter 6

### Results

The descriptive statistics for the sample are presented in Table 1. The mean scores and standard deviations for perceived partner BARE score and current RSR are presented in Table 2 for females and males. These couples reported relatively high RSR (about a 3.30 on a scale of 1-5). Their perceptions of their partners' accessibility scores were relatively high as well (about a 3.50 on a scale of 1-5). The frequency distributions for the number of individuals who reported conflict avoidant parents and who are also conflict avoidant in their own marriages are presented in Tables 3 and 4. Chi square analyses found significant differences for both males ( $\chi^2(1) = 20.79, p < .001$ ) and females ( $\chi^2(1) = 12.41, p < .001$ ). We found the chances of a male having an avoidant CRS in his marriage was 235% more likely when both of his parents were reported as avoidant, while the chances of a female having an avoidant CRS in her marriage was 285% more likely if both of her parents were reported as avoidant. This finding supports hypothesis 1, which proposed that parental avoidant CRS would be positively related to current marital avoidant CRS for both males and females.

Bi-variate Pearson correlations for RSR scores, partner BARE scores, and current avoidant CRS scores are presented in Tables 5 and 6 for males and females. There was a negative correlation with both male and female avoidant CRS and report of doing RSR (Males  $r = -0.311, p < 0.01, n = 775$ ; Females  $r = -0.223, p < 0.01, n = 776$ ) which supports hypothesis 2. Perception of partner BARE scores significantly positively correlated with ability to do RSR (Males  $r = .436, p < 0.01, n = 280$ ; Females  $r = .412, p < 0.01, n = 284$ ).

There were also significant negative correlations for both genders between parental avoidant CRS and ability to do RSR, and length of marriage and perceived partner attachment behaviors. We expected to see less ability to do RSR with parents who avoided conflict. This finding supported our hypothesis that people who only saw their parents avoiding conflict never learned to risk and be vulnerable in their relationships and try to make changes for the better. Length of marriage was negatively correlated with perceived partner attachment behaviors and this supports what Halford (2007) found when he found that relationship effort declined over time. Perhaps couples stop putting as much work into their relationship as time goes on, which includes reaching out and continuing to create safety by being a secure partner.

Hypothesis three stated that the perception of a partner's secure attachment behaviors would moderate the negative relationship between avoidant CRS and RSR. Males and female models were tested separately using Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) multiple linear regression analyses. Both models used self-report of RSR scores as the dependent variable and avoidant CRS scores and perception of partner BARE scores as the independent variables, with education, income, race, religion, length of marriage, and parental avoidant CRS added as control variables (Tables 7 and 8). The model at step 1 with only parental CRS was significant for females only, but the parental avoidant CRS coefficient was not significant for either gender. ( $R^2=.034$ , Adjusted  $R^2=.011$ ,  $F(6, 259)=1.504$ ,  $p=.177$  for males;  $R^2=.058$ , Adjusted  $R^2=.037$ ,  $F(6, 267)=2.760$ ,  $p=0.013$  for females). We can conclude from this that education, income, race, religion, length of marriage, and parental avoidant CRS do not account for a significant portion of RSR in these couples' marriages. Current avoidant CRS and partner's attachment behaviors both improved the prediction of the model and regression coefficients suggested a significant and

negative association for both males and females (Current Avoidant CRS:  $R^2=.109$ , Adjusted  $R^2=.085$ ,  $F(2, 265)=4.637$ ,  $p=.000$  for females; BARE score:  $R^2=.221$ , Adjusted  $R^2=.198$ ,  $F(1, 264)=9.420$ ,  $p=0.000$  for females), (Current Avoidant CRS:  $R^2=.120$ , Adjusted  $R^2=.097$ ,  $F(1, 258)=5.049$ ,  $p=.000$  for males; BARE  $R^2=.290$ , Adjusted  $R^2=.268$ ,  $F(1, 257)=13.138$ ,  $p=0.000$  for males). A slope beta increase in current avoidant CRS is associated with a decrease in RSR ( $\beta= -.275$ ,  $p<0.001$  for males;  $\beta= -0.19$ ,  $p>0.001$  for females), while a slope beta increase in partner's attachment behaviors is associated with an increase in RSR ( $\beta=.428$ ,  $p<0.001$  for males;  $\beta=.358$ ,  $p<0.001$  for females) for both genders. The model for females accounts for roughly 20% of the total variance of RSR, and for males, the model accounts for roughly 27% of the total variance of RSR.

To test the possible moderating effects of partner's attachment behaviors on the negative relationship between avoidant CRS and RSR, an interaction term consists of both avoidant CRS and partner's BARE score was created. Another multiple linear regression analysis was then conducted. The first two steps of the model were good predictors for females, but the interaction term and the step used to test for a moderator effect of partner attachment behaviors on RSR were not significant (Model 1, Controls:  $R^2=.058$ , Adjusted  $R^2=.037$ ,  $F(6, 267)=2.760$ ,  $p=.013$ ; Model 2, Current Avoidant CRS and BARE score:  $R^2=.221$ , Adjusted  $R^2=.198$ ,  $F(2, 265)=9.420$ ,  $p=0.000$ ; Model 3, Interaction Term:  $R^2=.221$ , Adjusted  $R^2=.195$ ,  $F(1, 264)=8.343$ ,  $p=.943$ ). For males, the only significant step was step 2, current avoidant CRS and partner BARE score (Controls:  $R^2=.034$ , Adjusted  $R^2=.011$ ,  $F(6, 259)=1.504$ ,  $p=.177$ ; Current Avoidant CRS and BARE score:  $R^2=.290$ , Adjusted  $R^2=.268$ ,  $F(2, 257)=13.138$ ,  $p=0.000$ ; Interaction Term:  $R^2=.292$ , Adjusted  $R^2=.267$ ,  $F(1, 256)=11.723$ ,  $p=.449$ ). Thus, hypothesis three was not

supported. That is, the perception of one's partner's attachment behaviors does not moderate (lessen) the relationship between an avoidant CRS and RSR in first marriages.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion

The general purpose of this study was to explore the associations between avoidant conflict resolution-style and the ability to do RSR in a marriage relationship. This study provides preliminary answers to the questions: 1) “Does avoidant parental CRS from one’s FOO predict offspring’s CRS in marriage?”, 2) “Does current avoidant CRS in marriage predict current RSR?”, and 3) “Does the perception of one’s partner being accessible, responsive and engaged moderate the potentially negative effect of an avoidant CRS on RSR?”.

One of the main findings of this study was that avoidant conflict-resolution style is significantly negatively related to RSR. This fits with previous research suggesting that avoidant couples will struggle with RSR because those who avoid conflict typically are unaware of what their partners want them to change because they avoid these types of conversations altogether (Gottman, 1994; Hamilton, 2014).

Another finding of the study was that parental avoidant CRS observed in the family of origin strongly predicted current avoidant CRS in marriage. For males, there was a 2.3 times stronger likelihood of being conflict avoidant if both parents were avoidant than if one of both parents were a different CRS. And for females, there was a 2.8 times stronger likelihood of being conflict avoidant if both parents were avoidant than if one of both parents were a different CRS. This result fits with social cognitive theory, which suggests that our parents’ marriage provides “a set of procedures for normal marital practice, complete with a vision of model problems and their typical solutions” (Marks, 1986 p. 13). If one grows up in a home where there has been no model for how to openly resolve conflict or come up with solutions, there is

little chance that they will spontaneously begin exhibiting these behaviors in their own marriage (Bandura, 1986).

Surprisingly, for both genders, there were more participants who came from avoidant families who exhibited a different CRS currently than there were participants from avoidant families who also exhibited an avoidant CRS currently. Only 40% of males with avoidant parents were also avoidant, and only 23% of females with avoidant parents were also avoidant. Transgenerational theory (Napier & Whitaker, 1988) suggests that most participants would carry their parents' CRS with them into their own marriage, but our results showed that there were more transitional characters than non-transitional characters. We speculate that this might be because, according to Broderick's theory of the transitional character (1984), some people can see the toxicity that exists in their families and actively *choose* whether or not to pass it on to their children. There may be something about the avoidant CRS that these children did not like about their families and they are making an effort to be different. It would be intriguing to analyze how many children from all three different CRS-types become transitional characters away from their parents' type to understand if this phenomenon is more pronounced in the avoidant families or if it is stable throughout all three CRS-types.

We also found that the perception of one's partner's secure attachment behaviors had a significant and strong relationship with ability to do RSR overall. This new finding is congruent with attachment theory, which proposes that when one feels safe in a relationship, they feel free to take risks and be vulnerable because they know they have a partner who will stay with them and support them (Johnson, 2003). This relationship was present for both males and females,

suggesting that gender was not related to whether or not safe attachment behaviors led to better RSR in the relationship.

When we tested for whether the perception of one's partner's attachment behaviors moderated the negative relationship with avoidant CRS and RSR, however, we found that it did not. The step in the model that included the test for moderation was not significant, which leads us to conclude that even though perceived attachment behaviors on their own should help increase RSR in a relationship, perceived attachment behaviors do not change the negative relationship between avoidant CRS and RSR. This does not support our hypothesis that adding attachment-types of safety to the relationship would help with ability to do RSR in a conflict-avoidant marriage, and we propose that this might be because avoidant partners may not be as impacted by their partner's attachment behaviors as partners who are willing to be vulnerable in their relationships. Attachment behaviors open the door for vulnerability and risk as they draw their partner in (Johnson, 2003), but avoidant partners may not be as interested in risking and being vulnerable because they keep the relationship peaceful by doing the exact opposite—staying distant and aloof around difficult parts of the relationship. So their partner's attempts to draw them in may be essentially “falling on deaf ears” because avoidant partners are made more anxious by someone asking for closeness than by someone keeping their distance. There is also the possibility that there is some facet of safe emotional attachment that could moderate the relationship, but which is not measured by the BARE, and therefore, would not have created a moderation effect in this study.

## Limitations and Future Research

The main limitation of this research was that the sample was not completely representative of the U.S. population of couples in their first marriage. Most of the participants were recruited in a college setting so the sample was more highly educated than the general population. There was also a high percentage of Caucasian individuals as compared to other ethnicities. The average length of marriage was also relatively short, which we know affects ability to do RSR and could possibly affect attachment behaviors and conflict resolution-style as well.

Additionally, partner's attachment behaviors were assessed through the eyes of the self, not the partner. It is important in the future research to test a moderating relationship by using the couple's *paired data* to understand how the *partner's* report of their attachment behaviors may impact their avoidant partner's RSR.

Also, this study used the BARE scale to measure attachment behaviors, but did not differentiate between which items assessed for a partner actually reaching out (i.e. "I am confident my partner reaches out to me") rather than a partner simply responding to a bid for connection. It would be more powerful to understand if a safe partner actually *reaching out* to their avoidant partner would moderate the negative relationship between avoidant CRS and RSR rather than a safe partner just responding to an avoidant partner.

Finally, CRS was assessed using only one self-report question about individuals' CRS, while Gottman's research on CRS was based primarily on behavioral observations (Gottman, 1993). Third-party observable data may be an important next step to being sure we understand the partner's CRS through a more objective lens rather than using just self-report.

## **Implications for Clinicians and Couple Educators**

This research has several implications for clinicians and couple education. We first found that partners who use an avoidant CRS are at risk for using less RSR in their marriage. It is important for clinicians and couple educators alike to be able to help couples identify their CRS-type and be aware of the particular challenges an avoidant type might present for their relationship. This awareness can facilitate conversations with couples about the strengths of their CRS-type, but also when they can borrow from other CRS-types to help bolster their relationship. Hamilton (2014) found that validating couples do very well with RSR, and Gottman (1994) has suggested that couples are the strongest when they can borrow from other styles to complement their weaknesses and strengths. Clinicians would do well to help couples understand the value of RSR and how to practice it by adopting a different CRS temporarily that could help them empathize with their partner and clearly communicate their needs.

As research has suggested that teaching RSR skills has been helpful in relationship education (Halford et al., 2011), and that RSR leads to increased marital satisfaction (Hamilton, 2014), it will be important for clinicians and couple educators to incorporate teaching these skills to couples who lack them. Our research has shown that high attachment behaviors may improve ability to do RSR overall, and attachment behaviors are specific and simple skills a clinician can help couples learn to foster the right environment for RSR to occur. Regardless of the couples' CRS, a clinician can help a spouse recognize when a partner is reaching out for connection and then coach them how to respond to their spouse's needs. It may be easier to teach someone to pick up their phone when their spouse calls, than to change CRS-type and immediately begin to openly discuss scary topics with their spouse. Attachment behaviors may be the first step to

helping spouse's respond to one another in a non-threatening way to foster an environment where teamwork and problem solving can occur to better the marriage.

This study also found a positive relationship between parental avoidant CRS and current CRS and we suggest that transgenerational (Napier, 1988) and insight-based therapy may be useful to help partners be aware of what they were taught in their family-of-origin, thereby empowering them to make a choice about whether or not they want to perpetuate the same culture in their marriage and family. This would give them the choice to become a transitional character with their CRS or not (Broderick, 1992). Sometimes simple awareness of where their behaviors come from can help partners have more control over how they want to respond to difficult marital situations.

### **Conclusion**

As social cognitive theory postulates, people learn how to respond in relationships from watching the main relationship they witnessed as children—their parents' (Bandura, 1986). The purpose of this study was to explore how well this theory held for conflict-resolution style as well as how those conflict-resolution styles impacted ability to do RSR. The study was also proposing the hypothesis that a partner's secure attachment behaviors would change that relationship between CRS and RSR. We found that parental avoidant CRS was a strong predictor of current avoidant CRS for both males and females. We also found that avoidant CRS was strongly negatively associated with ability to do RSR. Partner attachment behaviors on their own strongly correlated with ability to do RSR in a relationship, but when a partner had an avoidant CRS, it could not moderate the negative relationship with RSR.

These findings emphasize the importance of clinicians and educators helping couples identify the weaknesses that accompany an avoidant CRS and teaching ways to reach out and accept reaching out from their partner in an effort to connect and foster a safe relationship. It seems that RSR is easier to do in a safe relationship (Johnson, 2004), so the first step to helping couples learn how to work on their relationship is to teach them the behaviors that make it safe. Some of these behaviors are the simple attachment behaviors as outlined in the BARE scale (Sandberg et. al, 2012). Before an avoidant partner can be impacted by these attachment behaviors, however, it looks like there will need to be some coaching on why it is important to reach out and connect in vulnerable moments with a partner and how it can lead to higher marital satisfaction. These insights into the behaviors of an avoidant partner may be crucial to the success of a clinician attempting to teach RSR.

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## Appendix

Table 1

<i>Descriptives of the sample</i>	Female (n=2288)	Male (n=2288)
Mean Age (SD)	33.89 (9.93)	34.59 (9.97)
Range	17-75	18-73
Race/Ethnic Origin		
Caucasian (White)	57.8 %	57.7 %
Other	28.9 %	28.9 %
African (Black)	3.8 %	3.8 %
Latino	3.8 %	3.8 %
Asian	3.5 %	3.5 %
Mixed/Biracial	1.2 %	1.2 %
Native American	0.7 %	0.7 %
Religious Affiliation		
Catholic	12.5 %	12.5 %
Protestant	27.9 %	27.9 %
Jewish	3 %	3 %
Latter-day Saint (Mormon)	6.1 %	6.1 %
Hindu	0.4 %	0.4 %
Buddhist	0.4 %	0.4 %
Other	34.1 %	34.1 %
None	14.5 %	14.5 %
Education		
Less high school	0.5 %	1.1 %
High school diploma or equivalency (GED)	0.8 %	1.2 %
Some college	11.3 %	26.2 %
Associate's degree	8.7 %	6.3 %
Bachelor's degree	26.2 %	25.4 %
Graduate or professional degree, not completed	11.5 %	8.6 %
Graduate or professional degree, completed	20.8 %	25.5 %
Income (Personal gross yearly)		
None	7.4 %	2.6 %
Under 20,000	8.1 %	10.4 %
20,000-39,999	7 %	14.3 %

40,000-59,999	6.1 %	15.8 %
60,000-79,999	3.8 %	12.9 %
80,000-99,999	2.4 %	10.4 %
100,000 or above	5.6 %	33.7 %
Length of Marriage		
0-3 months	10.9 %	10.7 %
4-6 months	5 %	5.9 %
7-12 months	7.4 %	6.5 %
1-2 years	14.8 %	14.5 %
3-5 years	14.9 %	15.2 %
6-10 years	12.4 %	12.9 %
11-15 years	8.8 %	8.3 %
16-20 years	9.1 %	9.6 %
21-30 years	13.3 %	13.2 %
31-40 years	2.7 %	2.6 %
More than 40 years	0.6 %	0.6 %

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Table 2

*Characteristics of study variables*

	Female	Male
Total RSR	3.36 (0.56) n=776	3.27 (0.57) n=775
Perception of Partner BARE Score	3.28 (.567) n=284	3.71 (.805) n=280

Note: Values are mean scores, with standard deviations in parentheses

Table 3

*Parental CRS relationship to current CRS for females*

<i>n=800</i>	Current Not Avoidant CRS (90.9% of sample)	Current Avoidant CRS (9.1% of sample)
Parents Not Avoidant CRS (94.2% of sample)	91.8	8.2
Parents Avoidant CRS (5.8% of sample)	76.6	23.4

Note: Presented as the percentages

Table 4

*Parental CRS relationship to current CRS for males*

<i>n=800</i>	Current Not Avoidant CRS (80.9% of sample)	Current Avoidant CRS (19.1% of sample)
Parents Not Avoidant CRS (92% of sample)	82.7	17.3
Parents Avoidant CRS (8% of sample)	59.4	40.6

Note: Presented as the percentages

Table 5

*Bi-variate Pearson-r correlations for all study variables for males*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. RSR Score	---								
2. Education	.132*	---							
3. Income	.065	.364**	---						
4. Race	-.096	-.010	-.030	---					
5. Religion	.057	.131*	-.067	.002	---				
6. Length of Marriage	-.062	.041	.128*	.032	.114*	---			
7. Parents Avoidant CRS	-.025	-.022	.009	.083	.014	.104*	---		
8. Current Avoidant CRS	-.311**	-.109*	-.006	.026	-.062	.022	.130	---	
9. Partner Attachment Behaviors	.436**	.095	-.061	-.019	-.011	-.224**	.007	-.069	---

\*\* p&lt;.01

\*p&lt;.05

Table 6

*Bi-variate Pearson-r correlations for all study variables for females*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. RSR Score	---								
2. Education	-.029	---							
3. Income	-.073	.255**	---						
4. Race	.044	-.051	.044	---					
5. Religion	.044	-.072	-.093	-.034	---				
6. Length of Marriage	-.209**	-.059	-.009	.115*	.076	---			
7. Parents Avoidant CRS	-.052	.014	.053	.098	.051	.165	---		
8. Current Avoidant CRS	-.223**	-.012	.081	.008	.168**	.029	.086	---	
9. Partner Attachment Behaviors	.412**	.002	-.055	.087	-.020	-.293**	.021	-.114*	---

\*\* p&lt;.01

\*p&lt;.05

Table 7

*Multiple linear regression analyses results for perceived RSR for males.*

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	$\beta$	$\beta$	$\beta$
Constant	3.309	3.407	3.405
Education	0.115	0.026	0.023
Income	0.033	0.076	0.077
Race	-0.091	-0.097	-0.092
Religion	0.052	0.043	0.039
Length of Marriage	-0.073	0.026	0.027
Parental Avoidant CRS	-0.008	0.012	0.013
Current Avoidant CRS	---	-0.275**	-0.271**
Partner Attachment Behaviors	---	0.428**	0.408**
Interaction Term (BARE*CRS)	---	---	0.046
Adjusted R	0.011	0.268	0.267
R-Squared Change	0.034	0.257**	0.002

\*p < .05; \*\*p < .01

Table 8

*Multiple linear regression analyses results for perceived RSR for females*

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	$\beta$	$\beta$	$\beta$
Constant	3.266	3.337	3.337
Education	-0.016	-0.023	-0.023
Income	-0.068	-0.025	-0.025
Race	0.076	0.033	0.033
Religion	0.057	0.090	0.090
Length of Marriage	-0.220**	-0.105	-0.106
Parental Avoidant CRS	-0.022	-0.032	-0.032
Current Avoidant CRS	---	-0.190**	-0.191**
Partner Attachment Behaviors	---	0.358**	0.359**
Interaction Term (BARE*CRS)	---	---	-0.004
Adjusted R	0.037	0.198	0.195
R-Squared Change	0.058*	0.163**	0.000

\*p &lt; .05; \*\*p &lt; .01