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Gratitude in relationships: A study on gratitude, attachment, and relationship satisfaction

Brittany D. Dioszeghy
James Madison University

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Gratitude in Relationships: A Study on Gratitude, Attachment, and Relationship
Satisfaction

Brittany D. Dioszeghy

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JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

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FACULTY COMMITTEE:

Committee Chair: Deborah Sturm, PhD

Committee Members/ Readers:

Lennis Echterling, PhD

Anne Stewart, PhD

Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	ii
List of Tables	iii
List of Figures	iv
Abstract.....	v
I. Introduction	1
II. Literature Review	2
III. Methodology.....	7
IV. Results.....	15
V. Discussion	22
References.....	26

List of Tables

Table 1.....	8
Table 2.....	8
Table 3.....	9
Table 4.....	10
Table 5.....	11
Table 6.....	12
Table 7.....	13
Table 8.....	21

List of Figures

Figure 1.....	15
Figure 2.....	16
Figure 3.....	17
Figure 4.....	18
Figure 5.....	19

Abstract

This study utilized Pearson correlations to assess for relationships between dispositional gratitude, attachment type, and relationship satisfaction. The survey was completed by 599 participants (77.57% female; 21.64% male; 0.63% other; 0.16% decline to state). Three separate instruments were used to assess for dispositional gratitude, attachment type (anxious/avoidant), and relationship satisfaction, respectively. First, it was hypothesized that anxious attachment would be negatively correlated with dispositional gratitude. Second, it was hypothesized that avoidant attachment types would be negatively correlated with dispositional gratitude. Third, it was hypothesized that anxious attachment would be negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction. Fourth, it was hypothesized that avoidant attachment would be negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction. Finally, it was hypothesized that dispositional gratitude and relationship satisfaction would be positively correlated. The null hypotheses was rejected for all hypotheses and each correlation was significant. Implications for the relationship between these three constructs are discussed in relation to romantic relationships and the counseling relationship.

Keywords: attachment, gratitude, relationship satisfaction, counseling, relationships

Researchers have examined attachment and gratitude in a plethora of contexts. The aim of this study was to analyze attachment and gratitude in relation to one another in order to add further dimension to the literature in counseling, counseling psychology and social psychology. Specifically, the goal of studying attachment and gratitude was to identify whether or not there is a relationship between them. It is the hope of the researcher that the results of this study reveal more information about the role of gratitude in the makeup of secure and satisfying relationships in adulthood.

According to Bowlby's attachment theory (1980), this initial relationship between a child and a caregiver is where the attachment relationship is formed. Attachment behavior is what flows from the biological imperative to attain or maintain proximity (e.g. physically, emotionally, etc.) to the primary caregiver (i.e. attachment figure). The attachment relationship of the individual can be categorized as indicating either a secure attachment style or an insecure attachment style, with the primary caregiver. Two types of insecure attachment styles are anxious (Crittenden, 1992; Butner, Diamond, & Hicks, 2007; Wei, Russell, Mallinckrodt, & Vogel, 2007) and avoidant (Butner et al., 2007; Wei, et al., 2007). According to Butner et al. (2007), anxious attachment styles are typically characterized by an uncertainty that the attachment figure will be available to help with regulating affect. Individuals who have an avoidant attachment style view attachment figures as unreliable in terms of providing security and, as a result, they typically turn to themselves for comfort. In contrast, children are securely attached when they know that their caregiver will respond to them and aid them in regulating their affect (Crittenden, 1992; Butner et al., 2007). When distressed, a child who is securely attached exhibits behaviors (e.g. crying, etc.) to gain support from his or her caregiver. If his or her plea for

support is not successful, the child may develop anxious or avoidant strategies to gain support (Cassidy & Shaver, 2016).

Literature Review

For this study on attachment and gratitude in adults, it is important to give support for the phenomenon that attachment in childhood is extended to close relationships as an adult. Bowlby (1980) supported that the child's attachment behavior and the bond formed with the caregiver (i.e. attachment figure) is not isolated to that relationship. In addition to the attachment from childhood lasting into adulthood, research also documents that attachment transfers from childhood caregivers to adulthood romantic partners (Feeney, 2004). Hazan and Shaver (1987) stated that the patterns people enact in their romantic relationships are often developed in infancy based on the relationship with the primary caregiver. According to Crittenden (1992), it is typical for anxiously attached children to grow up to have anxious romantic relationships with their partners. A recent study conducted by Afshari (2017) examined whether or not there was a relationship between early maladaptive schemas, attachment styles, and social intimacy in high school students. Early maladaptive schemas are defined by Cockram, Drummond, and Lee (2010) as beliefs that an individual has about his or her inner and outer world which originate from unmet needs (e.g. emotional, etc.) in his or her early years of life. The findings revealed that early maladaptive schemas were negatively correlated with a secure attachment style (Afshari, 2017). In this same study, insecure attachment styles were positively correlated with early maladaptive schemas.

Furthermore, a study conducted by Fraley and Davis (1997) found that factors which support the development of secure attachments in infancy (e.g. caregiving, trust, and

intimate contact) have a positive relationship with developing secure attachments in adult relationships. The majority of the literature supports the notion of attachment portability from childhood relationships to relationships in adulthood.

Although the knowledge of the impact that attachment types have on relationships may be helpful insight, it does little to identify factors that may contribute to increasing attachment security. According to a seminal article by Main, Kaplan, and Cassidy (1985), adult parents who experienced insecure attachments with their primary caregivers were able to develop mental schemas of relationships that were more common among individuals who have secure attachments by working through the adverse experiences they had with their primary caregivers. They hypothesized that it might be due to participating in relationships that disconfirm negative features of experience-based mental models but they suggested that further research be conducted. They showed that it is possible for individuals to create a more secure conceptualization of relationships. The study goes on to reveal that, as a result, the children of these individuals had more secure attachments than their parents did with their primary caregivers. This shows that improving the security of an individual's attachment is not only possible, but can improve the attachment security of the next generation. As suggested by Sbarra and Hazan (2008), there is also further research needed to work towards identifying emotional interactions that increase or decrease attachment security in partners.

A secure attachment is associated with higher levels of relationship satisfaction, trust, dedication, and interdependence (Pistole, 1989; Simpson, 1990). Conversely, avoidant and anxious attachments are associated with less frequent positive emotions and

less relationship satisfaction. A quantitative study conducted by Simpson (1990) examined the impact of attachment type on relationship satisfaction. One hundred and forty-four dating couples were involved in a longitudinal study that examined three attachment types (secure, anxious, and avoidant). Individual analyses revealed that each attachment style tended to correlate with qualitatively different romantic relationships. Individuals who fell into the secure attachment category “tend to be involved in relationships characterized by higher levels of interdependence, trust, commitment, and satisfaction” (p. 978). Individuals who fell into the categories of the insecure styles, especially those with highly avoidant attachments, were shown to be in relationships with characteristics that are the opposite of the aforementioned factors. In addition to differing characteristic differences in relationships, secure and insecure attachment types experienced different emotional experiences. Individuals who fell into the category of having a secure attachment experienced “more frequent occurrences of positive emotion and less frequent occurrences of negative emotion, whereas those who display anxious and avoidant styles experience the opposite pattern” (p. 977). The participants were assessed for the occurrence of the following fourteen positive emotions: excited, elated, surprised, joyful, happy, delighted, and passionate...calm, needed, serene, satisfied, wanted/cared for, content, and optimistic” (p. 973). There was a significant positive correlation between secure attachment and experiencing these positive emotions. Conversely, there was a significant negative correlation between these positive emotions and anxious and avoidant attachment types. More recently, Algoe, Gable, & Maisel (2010) stated that gratitude is an additional element that strengthens the bond between partners. It does this by reminding the partners of their feelings toward one another and

increasing reciprocation (Algoe, Gable, & Maisel, 2010). Even though the research did not explore correlations between secure attachments and gratitude, the literature on gratitude suggests that it contributes to this bond between romantic partners. Perhaps by looking more specifically into an element such as gratitude, we can get closer to determining the elements of relationships that provide emotionally-corrective experiences for individuals who have experienced insecure attachments.

The grateful disposition is defined by Mccullough, Emmons, and Tsang (2002) as “a generalized tendency to recognize and respond with grateful emotion to the roles of other people’s benevolence in the positive experiences and outcomes that one obtains” (p.112). The same study “confirmed that the disposition toward gratitude is empirically distinct from constructs such as life satisfaction, vitality, happiness, hope, and optimism” (p. 115). As such, examining gratitude in the context of relationships, as some of these emotions have been (Simpson, 1990), may reveal correlations that are unique between gratitude and attachment types. In a quantitative study conducted by Algoe, Haidt, and Gable (2008) which focused on the social and relational implications of gratitude, they found that “gratitude is about more than repaying benefits; it is about building relationships” (p. 7). They went on to say that when gratitude is present in relationships, it has the capacity to ameliorate relationship. As for the more interpersonal aspects of gratitude, Mccullough, Emmons, & Tsang (2002) found that gratitude is correlated with “prosocial traits such as empathy, forgiveness, and willingness to help others” (p. 115). Given this positive orientation towards the social dimension, this study posits that it is possible that “sensitivity and concern for others” are catalysts for the grateful disposition (Mccullough, Emmons, & Tsang, 2002, p. 114). The orientation towards

empathizing with others sounds quite similar to how a securely attached individual would respond to those they care for. As such, exploring the relationship between gratitude and attachment may provide further insight into the factors that contribute to secure attachment.

In a three-month study conducted by Algoe et al. (2010), 67 heterosexual cohabiting couples were asked to provide a daily report of whether or not they did something thoughtful for their partner and whether or not they were the recipient of a thoughtful action from their partner. They found that, regardless of gender, “a partner’s feeling of relationship quality was predicted by the participant’s gratitude from interactions that day” (p. 225). This is supported by findings regarding perceptions and beliefs by Gable, Reis, and Downey (2003) as is related to a partner’s behavior. Beliefs and perceptions combine to affect both “daily mood and relationship satisfaction” of partners (Gable, Reis, and Downey, 2003, p. 100). In addition, Algoe et al. (2010) found that participants with “grateful partners felt more connected to the partner and more satisfied with the romantic relationship than they had the previous day” (p. 228). As such, they posited that instances of gratitude can act as “booster shots” for relationships because these occasions assist the partners in remembering their feelings toward one another and “inspire mutual responsiveness, which serves to increase the bond between the couple” (p. 221). Each of these studies contributes to the case for the connection between gratitude and secure and satisfying relationships. The aim of the current study was to examine the relationship between the grateful disposition, attachment type, and relationship satisfaction. Implications for the relationship between these three constructs will be discussed in relation to romantic relationships and the counseling relationship.

The researcher stated five hypotheses. First, it was hypothesized that anxious attachment would be negatively correlated with dispositional gratitude. Second, it was hypothesized that avoidant attachment types would be negatively correlated with dispositional gratitude. Third, it was hypothesized that anxious attachment would be negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction. Fourth, it was hypothesized that avoidant attachment would be negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction. Finally, it was hypothesized that dispositional gratitude and relationship satisfaction would be positively correlated.

Methods

Participants

Participants were undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty, and staff at James Madison University. Participants were convenience sampled through mass email sent to all enrolled students, as well as all faculty and staff. The email went out to 4,077 faculty/staff and 20,385 students. It contained a questionnaire link where participants were prompted to answer questions regarding dispositional gratitude, attachment style, and relationship satisfaction, as well as demographic questions. No incentives were offered. There were 599 participants who completed the survey (49.29% faculty/staff; 50.71% students). None of the survey items were mandatory, so the number of participants who answered each item varied. See Tables 1-7 for sample population demographic information.

Table 1		
<i>Gender of participants in order of frequency</i>		
<u>Gender</u>	<u>Percentage of sample</u>	<u>N</u>
Female	77.57	491
Male	21.64	137
Other	.63	4
Decline to state	.16	1
Total		633
<i>Note.</i> Participants were permitted to select only one response for this item.		

Table 2		
<i>Sexual attraction of participants in order of frequency</i>		
<u>Sexual attraction</u>	<u>Percentage of sample</u>	<u>N</u>
Heterosexual	85.44	540
Homosexual	4.11	26
Bisexual	6.17	39
Other	3.32	21
Decline to state	.95	6
Total		632
<i>Note.</i> Participants were permitted to select only one response for this item.		

Table 3		
<i>Current relationship status of participants in order of frequency</i>		
<u>Current relationship status</u>	<u>Percentage of sample</u>	<u>N</u>
Committed relationship	30.81	195
Married	30.81	195
Engaged	2.69	17
Divorced	2.69	17
It's complicated	2.53	16
In an open relationship	1.42	9
In a domestic partnership	1.26	8
Other	.95	6
Separated	.47	3
Widowed	.16	1
Civil Union	0	0
Decline to state	0	0
Total		633

Note. Participants were permitted to select only one response for this item.

Table 4		
<i>Duration of current relationship of participants from least to greatest duration</i>		
<u>Duration of current relationship</u>	<u>Percentage of sample</u>	<u>N</u>
Less than 1 month	3.52	16
6-11 months	12.75	58
1-2 years	20.22	92
3-5 years	16.04	73
6-9 years	10.11	46
10-14 years	8.35	38
15-19 years	7.47	34
20-24 years	6.59	30
25-29 years	5.27	24
30+ years	9.67	44
Total		455
<p><i>Notes.</i> Participants were permitted to select only one response for this item. Qualtrics was programmed to skip this question for participants who indicated that they were single, widowed, or separated. The 2-5 month duration was left out of this question in error (see limitations).</p>		

Table 5		
<i>Age of participants from youngest to oldest</i>		
<u>Age</u>	<u>Percentage of sample</u>	<u>N</u>
Under 18	0	0
18-24	52.15	327
25-34	12.76	80
35-44	11.96	75
45-54	9.57	60
55-64	10.85	68
65-74	2.71	17
75-84	0	0
85 or older	0	0
Total		627

Note. Participants were permitted to select only one response for this item.

Table 6		
<i>Race of participants in order of frequency</i>		
<u>Race</u>	<u>Percentage of sample</u>	<u>N</u>
White or Caucasian	85.69	557
Asian	4.31	28
Black or African American	3.85	25
Hispanic or Latino	2.77	18
Other	2.31	15
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.62	4
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.46	3
Total		650
<i>Note.</i> Participants were permitted to select multiple responses for this item.		

Table 7		
<i>Ethnicity of participants in order of frequency</i>		
Please indicate the ethnicity/ies with which you identify (i.e. peoples' ethnicity describes their feeling of belonging and attachment to a distinct group of a larger population that shares their ancestry, language or religion).		
<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Percentage of sample</u>	<u>N</u>
White or Caucasian	82.48	532
Asian	4.03	26
Black or African American	3.41	22
Hispanic or Latino	3.41	22
Other	3.10	20
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1.09	7
Middle Eastern	0.78	5
African	0.62	4
Caribbean	0.62	4
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.47	3
Total		650
<i>Note.</i> Participants were permitted to select multiple responses for this item.		

Materials

Dispositional gratitude.

The Gratitude Questionnaire-6 (GQ-6) (McCullough, Emmons, & Tsang, 2002) assessed for dispositional gratitude. They define the grateful disposition as “a generalized tendency to recognize and respond with grateful emotion to the roles of other people’s benevolence in the positive experiences and outcomes that one obtains” (p.112). This instrument consists of six items for which the participant ranks his or her agreement

on a Likert scale. The instrument has good internal reliability ($\alpha = .82$) and good external validity. It is positively correlated with instruments that assess for constructs such as forgiveness, hope, life satisfaction, prosocial behavior and empathy and it is negatively correlated with constructs like anxiety, depression, and envy.

Attachment type.

Experiences in Close Relationships-Short Form (ECR-S) (Wei, Russell, Mallinckrodt, & Vogel, 2007) assessed for attachment type. The two dimensions of attachment that this instrument assess for are the anxious type and the avoidant type. This instrument looks at anxious attachment as “a fear of interpersonal rejection or abandonment, an excessive need for approval from others, and distress when one’s partner is unavailable or unresponsive” (p. 188). Avoidant attachment is described as “fear of dependence and interpersonal intimacy, an excessive need for self-reliance, and reluctance to self-disclose” (p. 188). Low scores on both of these dimensions indicated a more secure attachment and high scores indicate a more insecure attachment (Wei, Russell, Mallinckrodt, & Vogel, 2007). This instrument consists of nine items for which the participant ranks his or her agreement on a Likert scale. This instrument has high reliability ($\alpha = .65$) and validity, especially among college students.

Relationship satisfaction.

The Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) (Hendrick, 1988) assessed for relationship satisfaction. Relationship satisfaction is defined by Hendrick (1998) as having needs and expectations met, a low level of problems, a feeling that the relationship is good compared to others, and a high level of love and satisfaction in the relationship. This instrument consists of seven items for which the participant ranks his or

her agreement on a Likert scale. Cronbach's alpha for this instrument is high ($\alpha = .86$) and the external validity is good.

Procedures

This study was conducted by using a 30-question survey administered through Qualtrics. The Qualtrics survey was taken on whatever device the participants opted. The survey included informed consent, demographic questions, and the three instruments that assessed for dispositional gratitude, attachment, and relationship satisfaction. If the participant indicated that he or she did not consent, Qualtrics skipped to the end of the survey. The informed consent was followed by eight demographic items (see Participant section). The last 27 items were comprised of the instruments that assessed for dispositional gratitude, attachment type (anxious/avoidant), and relationship satisfaction (see Materials section).

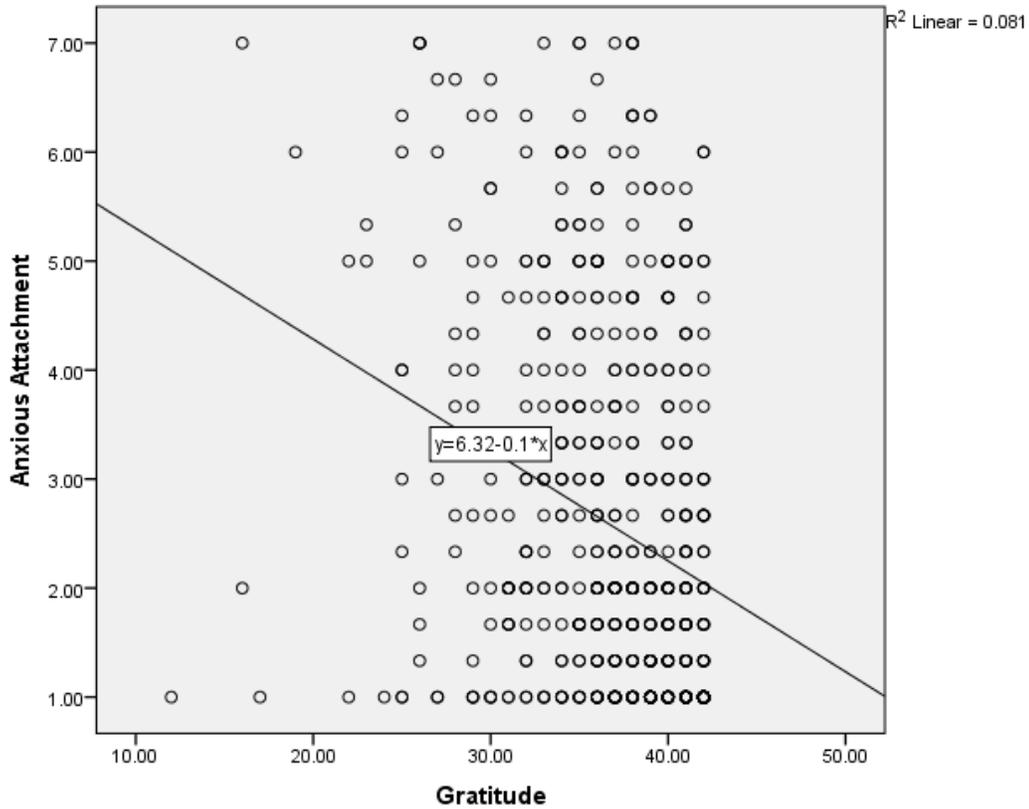
Results

Through multiple Pearson correlations, the researcher examined the relationships between dispositional gratitude, anxious attachment, avoidant attachment, and relationship satisfaction. The age of participants in this study ranged from 18 to 74 with the mean between 25 and 34 years of age. The participants in this study reported lengths of relationships from one month, or less, to over 30 years with the mean being between 6-9 years.

Results for the researcher's first hypothesis suggested a negative correlation between anxious attachment and dispositional gratitude. A weak, negative correlation was found between the two variables, $r(595) = -.285, p < .001$. Figure 1 and Table 7 summarize the results.

Figure 1

Anxious Attachment and Dispositional Gratitude

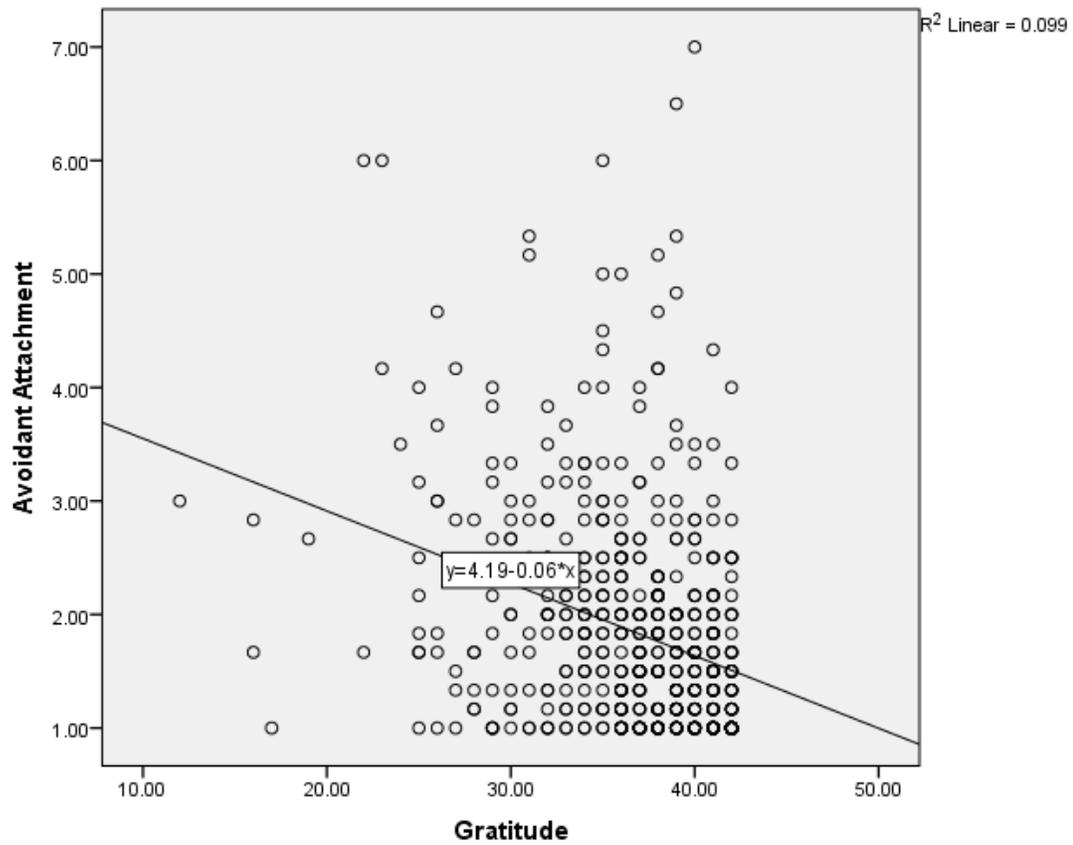


Overall, there was a weak, negative correlation between anxious attachment type and dispositional gratitude. Increases in anxious attachment type were correlated with decreases in dispositional gratitude.

Results for the researcher’s second hypothesis suggested a negative correlation between avoidant attachment and dispositional gratitude. A moderate, negative correlation was found between the two variables, $r(595) = -.314, p < .001$. Figure 2 and Table 7 summarize the results.

Figure 2

Avoidant Attachment and Dispositional Gratitude

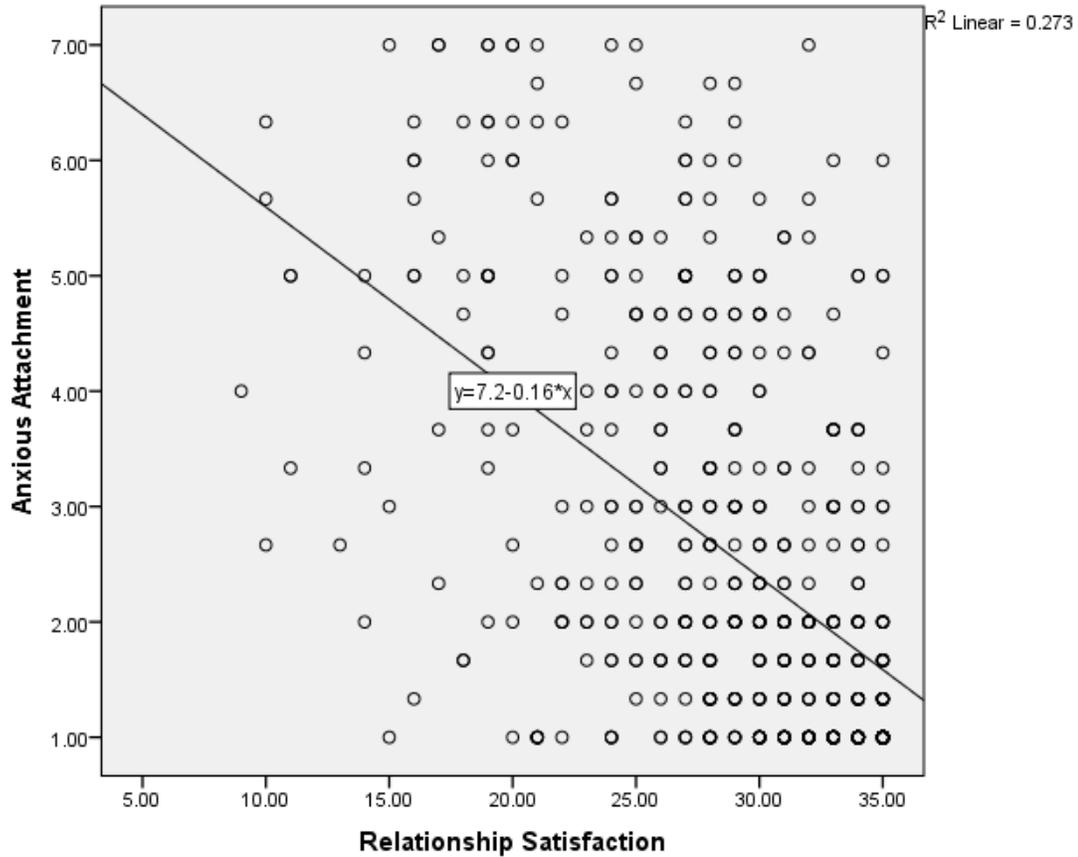


Overall, there was a weak, negative correlation between avoidant attachment type and dispositional gratitude. Increases in avoidant attachment type were correlated with decreases in dispositional gratitude.

Results for the researcher's third hypothesis suggested a negative correlation between anxious attachment and relationship satisfaction. A strong, negative correlation was found between the two variables, $r(583) = -.522, p < .001$. Figure 3 and Table 7 summarize the results.

Figure 3

Anxious Attachment and Relationship Satisfaction

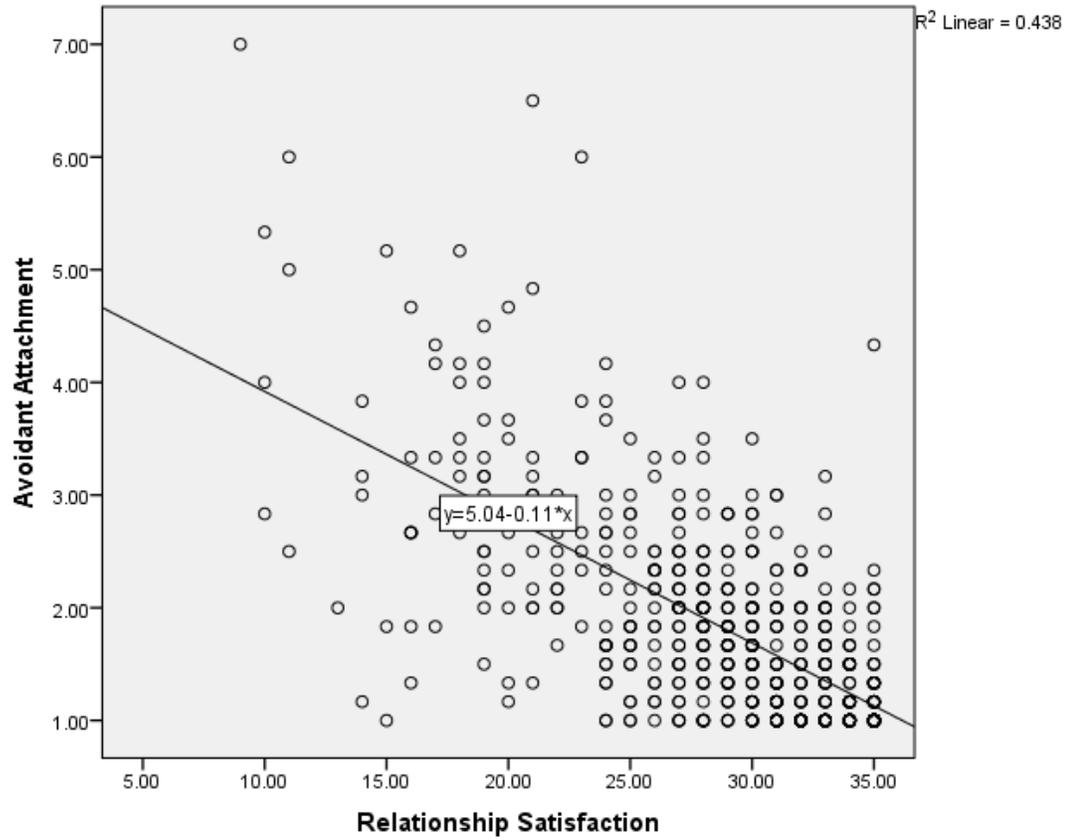


Overall, there was a moderate, negative correlation between anxious attachment type and relationship satisfaction. Increases in anxious attachment type were correlated with decreases in relationship satisfaction.

Results for the researcher's fourth hypothesis suggested a negative correlation between avoidant attachment and relationship satisfaction. A strong, negative correlation was found between the two variables $r(581) = -.662, p < .001$. Figure 4 and Table 7 summarize the results.

Figure 4

Avoidant Attachment and Relationship Satisfaction

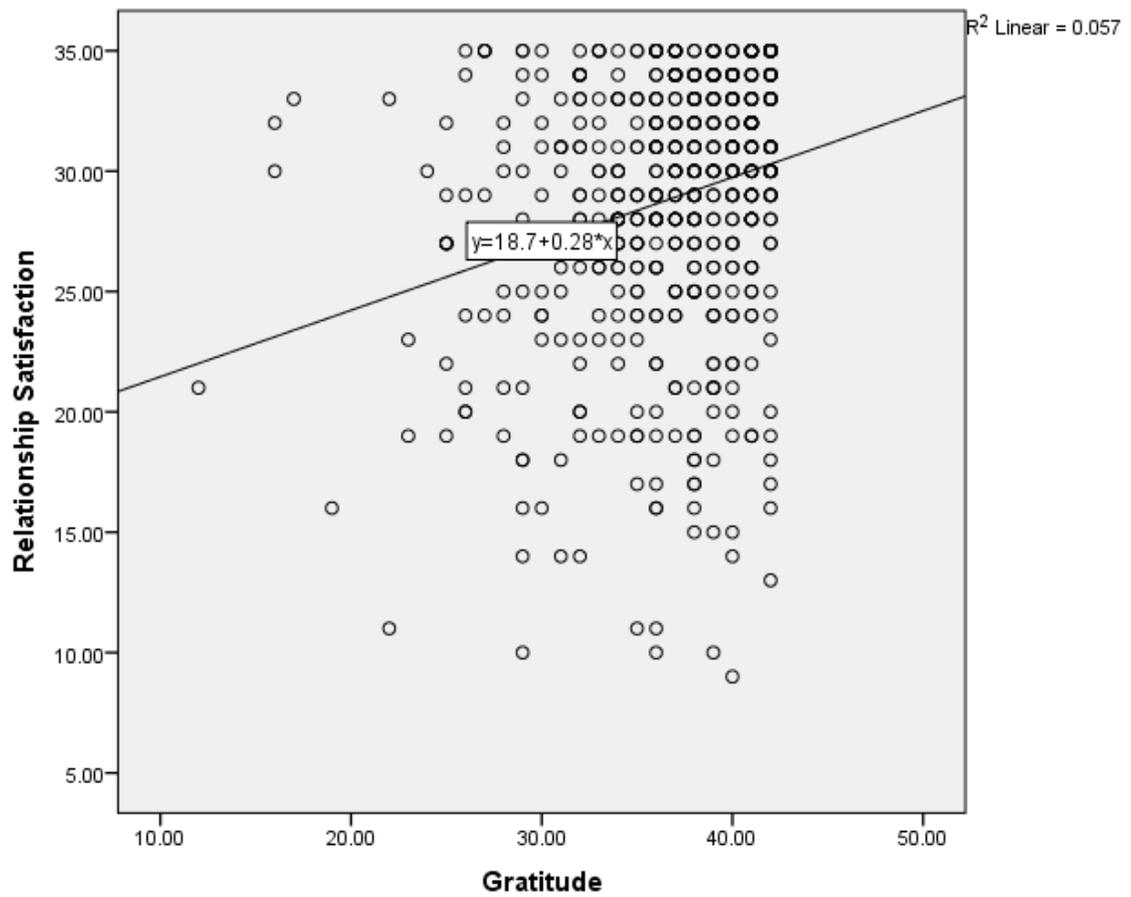


Overall, there was a moderate, negative correlation between avoidant attachment type and relationship satisfaction. Increases in avoidant attachment type were correlated with decreases in relationship satisfaction.

Results for the researcher's fifth hypothesis suggested a negative correlation between dispositional gratitude and relationship satisfaction. A weak, positive correlation was found between the two variables, $r(582) = .239, p < .001$. Figure 5 and Table 7 summarize the results.

Figure 5

Dispositional Gratitude and Relationship Satisfaction



Overall, there was a weak, positive correlation between dispositional gratitude and relationship satisfaction. Increases in dispositional gratitude were correlated with increases in relationship satisfaction.

Table 8					
<i>Pearson Correlations</i>					
		Gratitude	Relationship Satisfaction	Avoidant Attachment	Anxious Attachment
Gratitude	Pearson Correlation	1	.239**	-.314**	-.285**
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	Covariance	23.008	6.202	-1.414	-2.249
	N	612	584	597	597
Relationship Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.239**	1	-.662**	-.522**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	Covariance	6.202	30.051	-3.353	-4.826
	N	584	586	583	585
Avoidant Attachment	Pearson Correlation	-.314**	-.622**	1	.448**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	Covariance	-1.414	-3.353	.914	.719
	N	597	583	599	596
Anxious Attachment	Pearson Correlation	-.285**	-.522**	.488**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	Covariance	-2.249	-4.826	.719	2.820
	N	597	585	596	599

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Additionally, some relationships were found between age and the four variables. Age and anxious attachment had a moderate, negative correlation, $r(597) = -.290, p < .001$. Age and avoidant attachment had a very weak, negative correlation, $r(599) = -.015, p < .5$. Age and dispositional gratitude had a weak, positive correlation, $r(609) = .164, p < .001$. Finally, age and relationship satisfaction had a very weak, positive correlation, $r(584) = .032, p < .05$.

Finally, relationships were also found between the four variables and length of participants' relationships. Length of relationship and anxious attachment had a moderate, negative correlation, $r(435) = -.296, p < .001$. Length of relationship and avoidant attachment had a weak, positive correlation, $r(436) = .026, p < .5$. Length of relationship and dispositional gratitude had a weak, positive correlation, $r(438) = .178, p < .001$. Length of relationship and relationship satisfaction had a weak, negative correlation, $r(430) = -.007, p < .5$.

Discussion and Implications

The limitations of this study offer opportunities for future research to improve in various areas. First, future research can provide further clarity to the participant by offering definitions and distinction between the terms "romantic relationship" and "relationship with a significant other". Second, the demographic item that asked participants to indicate the duration of their current relationship was missing the option for 2-5 months. This item had a lower frequency of completion than the items before and after, so it is possible that participants skipped this question if they didn't find the answer that pertained to their relationship. Third, Qualtrics was programmed to skip the question that asked about the duration of relationship if the participants indicated that their relationship status was single or widowed, but it did not skip if the participant indicated that their relationship status is divorced. This may have caused some confusion for participants and may have caused them to choose an inaccurate response. Finally, the Experiences in Close Relationships-Short Form (ECR-S) (Wei, Russell, Mallinckrodt, & Vogel, 2007) was normed for college students, but almost 50% of the sample in this study was university faculty and staff. In future, only assessing college students or

selecting an instrument that is normed on a more diverse population may provide greater validity.

The implications of this research for the counseling profession are mirrored in the implications for individuals and partners. The therapeutic relationship is unique, in that it may be one of the only secure relationships that the client experiences in their lifetime. As stated by Main, Kaplan, and Cassidy (1985), due to participating in relationships that disconfirm negative features of experience-based mental models, people may experience more secure attachments in general. The therapeutic relationship is one of these relationships. Counseling is already an environment for providing clients with corrective emotional experiences and expressing gratitude interludes. This research provides further support for the use of gratitude in the therapeutic relationship. It also reveals its implications for creating more secure and satisfying relationships, not just between partners, but between counselors and their clients.

By demonstrating a relationship between dispositional gratitude, attachment type, and relationship satisfaction, a better understand of how individuals can improve the security of their attachments and the satisfaction of their relationships can be explored. The hope of the researcher is to better understand the elements that make up secure and satisfying relationships. The goal of gaining further insight into this aspect of relationships is to increase the repertoire of interventions that might help individuals, partners, and clients to experience more secure and satisfying relationships. As gratitude has been shown to be negatively correlated with anxious and avoidant attachment types in this study, interventions that foster increased gratitude may impact attachment. Further

research is needed to determine if increasing gratitude can also increase attachment security.

The results from this study demonstrate that anxious and avoidant attachment types are negatively correlated with the level of gratitude a person has. As such, there may be relevant implications for the relationship between client and counselor. It may be helpful for counselors to assess for attachment type early on in the therapeutic relationship in order to gain insight into their clients' needs. In the case that a counselor has a client who scores higher on levels of anxious or avoidant attachment, it may contribute to the security of the client's attachment to the counselor for the counselor express gratitude in moments where the client experiences emotional vulnerability. This might mean that the counselor would say something like, "Thank you for sharing those difficult memories with me; I feel honored by your trust", when a client shares something that the counselor deems to be difficult for them. Future research could examine the impact of gratitude interventions like this by assessing for attachment with the counselor before and after each session.

Clients who have developed insecure attachments with their caregivers have experienced times when their pleas for support have not been met by their caregivers (Cassidy & Shaver, 2016). If the client trusts the counselor enough to make pleas for support within the therapeutic relationship, there can be a great opportunity for the counselor to disprove some of the assumptions that contributed to the development of the client's insecure attachment. Through opportunities like this, the client may experience a corrective emotional experience with the counselor, wherein their pleas for support are met. When a client communicates a deep emotional need with the counselor, the client

puts himself or herself into a vulnerable position. After the counselor addresses the need in the manner which would be most healing for the client, it may contribute to the client's security if the counselor integrates a response of gratitude for the client's vulnerability in that moment. In this way, gratitude is integrated into the model of what a secure relationship may look like for the client. Gratitude also serves to affirm the client in his or her choice to be vulnerable and authentic with the counselor, despite their past experiences telling them that it is a risk. In some ways, gratitude is both a means of fostering a secure relationship and celebrating moments of trust and security.

As the results of this study also indicate a slight positive correlation between gratitude and relationship satisfaction, implementing gratitude into the therapeutic relationship may contribute to the satisfaction experienced within the relationship.

Similarly to the implications for counseling, the implications of this research for romantic relationships may contribute to overall security and satisfaction. The results of this study support the outcome of the study conducted by Algoe et al. (2010) that reports gratitude as an element that increases satisfaction in relationships. The practice of fostering gratitude may have help to increase satisfaction in relationships and, over time, increase security in relationships.

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