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"Let's Talk About Sex, Baby": A Mixed Methods Analysis of Conversations About Sexual

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A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy in Communication

by

Allison Prince Mazur

Committee in charge:

Professor Tamara D. Afifi, Chair

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June 2024

The dissertation of Allison Prince Mazur is approved.

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June 2024

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PUBLICATIONS

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ABSTRACT

"Let's Talk About Sex, Baby": A Mixed Methods Analysis of Conversations About Sexual

and Emotional Intimacy in Romantic Relationships

by

Allison Prince Mazur

This mixed methods study explored how individuals learn about emotional and sexual

intimacy, how individuals communicate about intimacy in their romantic relationships, and

what socialization factors facilitate or impede sexual communication in relationships. Three

theoretical frameworks – attachment theory, family communication patterns theory, and

adverse childhood experiences – were used to quantitatively test how socialization factors

affect individuals' communication and satisfaction in current relationships. Romantic couples

($N = 135$ dyads) discussed emotional and sexual intimacy in their relationships during a

recorded Zoom conversation and completed online surveys before and after the Zoom

conversation. A subsample of original participants ($n = 31$) completed follow-up interviews

that went more in depth about their socialization of intimacy and their perceptions of their

relationship following the Zoom conversation. Multiple methods were used to analyze the

data. Actor-partner interdependence structural equation modeling tested the hypothesized

quantitative models. Attachment avoidance and anxiety had the strongest effect on

participants' current relational communication. However, both partners' communicative

responsiveness, fear of emotional intimacy, and general sexual communication affected each other's relationship and sexual satisfaction, thus demonstrating the importance of dyadic analyses for interpersonal relationships. A phronetic iterative analysis (Tracy, 2020) was used to analyze the conversations and follow-up interviews for overarching themes. The qualitative analyses of both the conversation and interview data produced four themes: (a) Socialization of Intimacy, (b) Learning About Intimacy is a Continuous Process, (c) Intimacy Displays are Either Modeled or Compensated, and (d) Emotional and Sexual Intimacy Build Over Time. A fifth theme gleaned from the interview data, Conversation Served as an Intimacy Intervention, illuminated that the Zoom conversation functioned as a means for many couples to have subsequent intimacy conversations after participating in the study. The findings from this study have pragmatic implications for all couples, especially those who struggle with discussing intimacy. The findings from this study are also useful for clinicians who work with individuals and/or couples to better understand their communication and relationships by examining how their past experiences affect their current communication patterns.

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CHAPTER I: RATIONALE

As young adults enter more serious romantic relationships, communicating about their sexual preferences and feelings about emotional and sexual intimacy with their partner becomes increasingly central to the relationship. These conversations form sexual scripts and patterns that dating partners bring to other relationships and marriage (Byers & Demmons, 1999). Sexual communication between romantic partners has been associated with multiple positive relational outcomes, including more satisfying sexual interactions, increased relationship satisfaction, and fewer sexual problems (e.g., Blunt-Vinti et al., 2019; Christopher & Sprecher, 2000; Cupach & Comstock, 1990; Mallory, 2022; Metts & Cupach, 1989; Montesi et al., 2011, 2013; Yoo et al., 2014).

Prior studies examining sexual communication have rarely observed romantic partners' verbal and nonverbal communication with each other about their sexual and emotional intimacy. Communication variables are typically measured through self-report, retrospective measures. Self-report measures are essential to understanding partners' perceptions of the communication and their well-being, but they do not capture the content that partners discuss nor how they communicate with one another about it. Sometimes these measures actually capture the respondent's satisfaction with their sexual communication (e.g., Wheeless et al., 1984) or the extent of sexual self-disclosure (e.g., Byers & Demmons, 1999) rather than the communication itself. The finding that increased sexual communication yields positive relational outcomes means little if it is unclear what sexual communication entails and its precise impact on partners' relationship. The present study examines a real-time conversation between romantic partners about their sexual and emotional intimacy to further understand how they communicate about it and their perceptions of it. Given that

these conversations likely have an impact on one's emotions and sexual intimacy long after the conversation is over, this study also includes follow-up interviews with a subset of the original sample.

In addition to examining how relational partners talk about sexual intimacy, it is equally important to understand the relational histories that hinder or facilitate these conversations and their potential impact on the relationship. Communication does not exist in a vacuum, with past experiences and conversations continuing to color current communication (Joseph et al., 2016). Using attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969; 1973) and family communication patterns theory (FCPT; Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002) as theoretical frameworks, this study examines how socialization within one's family affects communication about sexual and emotional intimacy in romantic relationships. Attachment theory suggests the way individuals form emotional bonds with their primary caregivers carry over into later relationships (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). These attachments affect how individuals approach sexual/romantic relationships and communicate with their partners (Guerrero, 2017; Schachner & Shaver, 2004). Similarly, FCPT suggests that individuals learn communication rules from their families of origin (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). These communication patterns transfer to other relationships, and influence how open individuals are to discussing topics and dissenting from their conversational partner's views.

It is also important to account for past traumas that might impact the ways relational partners communicate with each other about sexual intimacy. Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs; Felitti et al., 1998) account for traumatic experiences, such as child abuse, before an individual turns 18 years old. A history of abuse can produce sexual and emotional difficulties later in life. Childhood sexual abuse can create negative attitudes and beliefs

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towards sexual activity and intimacy (DiLillo et al., 2007), potentially impairing how individuals communicate about sex with their partners. Additionally, emotional and psychological abuse can yield difficulties with emotional intimacy, such as trust, commitment, and disclosures in a relationship.

The present study examines how romantic partners' attachments, family communication patterns, and ACEs affect their communication about emotional and sexual intimacy with each other and how these communication patterns subsequently affect sexual and relationship satisfaction. Furthermore, follow-up interviews were conducted to examine participants' retrospective accounts of the conversation and probe for deeper insights into the factors that shape their communication about sexual and emotional intimacy with romantic partners. In the next section, I unpack how socialization and traumatic experiences in childhood can affect relational partners' emotional and sexual intimacy and potential communication about it before introducing the study's hypothesized models and research questions.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Communication about Sexual and Emotional Intimacy

Emotional intimacy is not clearly defined or agreed upon in the literature. Emotional intimacy has been conceptualized as partners being emotionally close (Yoo et al., 2014) or feeling comfortable and safe being interpersonally vulnerable with one another (Cordova et al., 2005). Reis and Shaver (1988) propose intimacy is a process that unfolds when one partner discloses self-relevant information and is met with responsiveness from the other partner. Through this process both partners can feel more understood and validated. Sexual intimacy is thought to be a subtype of general intimacy, although the two constructs are highly related (Birnie-Porter & Lydon, 2013). Researchers sometimes use the term *sexual intimacy* interchangeably with sexual activity. Birnie-Porter and Lydon (2013) found that sexual intimacy is more than sexual activity, as sexual intimacy includes attributes like having a connection, eye contact, and the sexual activity being consensual. To delineate the two concepts, sexual activity may include a "one-night stand" or having sex once with a stranger, whereas sexual intimacy would be a passionate, connecting sexual activity that brings partners emotionally closer.

Past research has found emotional and sexual intimacy to be positively associated with one another (e.g., Haning et al., 2007; Yoo et al., 2014). However, these two constructs should not be collapsed together or thought of as indistinguishable. The constructs of sexual and emotional intimacy tap into distinct parts of a relationship, and one can be experienced without the other. Some partners report having a sexual relationship without feeling emotionally close or connected to their partner, while other couples may have an emotionally satisfying relationship without a sexual component (Yoo et al., 2014).

It is also important to note the distinctions between emotional and sexual intimacy, as well as *communication about* emotional and sexual intimacy. Yoo et al. (2014) used three items from the avoidance subscale of the Revised Experiences in Close Relationships measure (ECR-R; Fraley et al., 2000) to assess emotional intimacy, which is actually designed to assess attachment style on the dimensions of avoidance and anxiety. In addition, Yoo et al. (2014) used a single item measure to assess sexual satisfaction. Yoo et al. (2014) found spouses' emotional and sexual intimacy to be moderately correlated, and sexual satisfaction was predictive of emotional intimacy, but emotional intimacy was not predictive of sexual satisfaction. However, these results do not refer to *communication about* emotional and sexual intimacy, and the aforementioned measurement issues raise questions about the interpretation of the results. While it appears emotional and sexual intimacy are related constructs, further investigation is warranted to understand how emotional and sexual intimacy *communication* are associated and predictive of sexual and relationship satisfaction.

Sexual Communication, Sexual Satisfaction, and Relationship Satisfaction

Across studies, sexual communication does not have one agreed upon conceptualization or definition. Metts and Cupach (1989) propose that sexual communication consists of sexual self-disclosures, the quality of the sexual communication, and the frequency of the communication. Sexual self-disclosures can include partners discussing sexual desires, preferences, needs, past experiences, values, and attitudes (Cupach & Comstock, 1990; Snell et al., 1989). Quality of the sexual communication refers to how satisfied partners are with the communication and their perceptions of being able to discuss negative and positive aspects of the sexual relationship (Catania, 2013; Wheeless et al.,

1984). Finally, frequency of sexual communication involves how often partners discuss their sexual relationship.

The associations among sexual communication, sexual satisfaction, and relationship satisfaction are well-documented and supported (e.g., Blunt-Vinti et al., 2019; Christopher & Sprecher, 2000; Jones et al., 2018; Mallory, 2022; Montesi et al., 2013; Yoo et al., 2014). Increased sexual communication tends to be associated with increased sexual satisfaction, as partners understand what each other desires in their sexual relationship (Metts & Cupach, 1989; Sprecher, 2006). Partners' disclosure of sexual likes and dislikes can also increase sexual knowledge, which improves sexual satisfaction (Metts & Cupach, 1989). Additionally, open communication during and after intercourse is important for maintaining a satisfying sexual relationship for both partners (Blunt-Vinti et al., 2019; Denes, 2012). On the other hand, a lack of communication can be associated with sexual dysfunction and/or dissatisfaction (Cupach & Comstock, 1990; Montesi et al., 2011).

Sexual satisfaction subsequently then predicts overall relationship satisfaction (Cupach & Comstock, 1990; Jones et al., 2018). MacNeil and Byers (2005) even claim that communication about sex between partners is instrumental to developing and maintaining a satisfying sexual relationship. Montesi et al. (2011) found support for these assertions; both general and sexual communication enhanced overall relationship satisfaction. This finding suggests that communication is important for a relationship, but communication about sexual aspects of the relationship offers a unique contribution to relationship satisfaction.

What is unclear, however, from the extant literature is how couples actually talk about sexual and emotional intimacy (or what it looks like) and what aspects of partners' histories affect it. Couples' real-time conversations about sexual communication have not

been examined. Instead, past studies have utilized self-report, retrospective scales that assess satisfaction, frequency, and extent of self-disclosure regarding sexual communication. Without understanding the message content that partners exchange about their sexual preferences and attitudes and how it is communicated, it is difficult to design and administer interventions to couples struggling with intimacy.

In addition, discussing sex and emotions in romantic relationships can make partners feel vulnerable. As a result, they might find it challenging to have these discussions with one another (Kuang & Gettings, 2021; Metts & Cupach, 1989; Rehman et al., 2019). Sexuality and intercourse are private and sensitive issues, and some individuals may feel more hesitant or embarrassed to discuss these topics (Montesi et al., 2011). The reason for individuals being more or less receptive to discussing sexual and emotional intimacy could be explained by the present study's predictors: attachment anxiety and avoidance, family communication patterns (FCP), and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).

Communication Socialization in Childhood

Much of how individuals learn to behave, think, and communicate is taught to them in childhood. Attachment theory and FCPT offer two organizing frameworks to understand how primary caregivers and families of origin shape our communication and approaches to relationships throughout the lifespan.

Attachment Theory

Attachments are defined as strong emotional bonds between individuals that are driven by the innate human desires for safety and security (Bowlby, 1973; Fraley, 2019). Attachment figures (initially the primary caregivers) allow individuals the freedom to explore and develop, while providing a safe haven and secure base to return to in times of distress

(Fraley, 2019). Attachment theory states that attachment styles develop from a very early age and are shaped by how emotionally and physically available the primary caregiver is to a child (Bowlby, 1969; 1973). Attentive caregivers help their children develop secure attachments. However, if a caregiver is inattentive to a child's needs, the child is more likely to develop an insecure attachment and be anxious or avoidant toward close relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). As individuals develop into adolescents and adults, attachments are transferred from primary caregivers to peers (i.e., friends or romantic partners) whom individuals turn to in times of distress (Nickerson & Nagle, 2005). Although they can be changed, research shows that attachment styles remain relatively stable throughout development and ultimately structure how individuals approach close relationships and communicate with their partners (Fraley, 2002; Guerrero, 2017; Opie et al., 2021; Pinquart et al., 2013). Secure attachments have been found to be more stable over time compared to insecure attachments, and individuals are more likely to trend toward secure attachments if their attachments styles shift (Opie et al., 2021).

Two dimensions underlie attachment styles: anxiety (also known as model of self) and avoidance (also known as model of other; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Brennan et al., 1998). Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) classified attachment styles into four categories (i.e., secure, preoccupied, fearful, and dismissive), however, present researchers more commonly use continuous dimensions of anxiety and avoidance to measure attachments (e.g., Mikulincer & Shaver, 2019; Velotti et al., 2022; Zheng et al., 2020). Secure individuals (low in anxiety and avoidance) have a high sense of self-worth, and generally believe other people are trustworthy and well-intentioned (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Securely attached individuals report having stable, supportive, and highly

satisfying relationships (Collins & Read, 1990; Hazan & Shaver, 1987). In addition, securely attached individuals tend to have longer relationships on average than insecurely attached individuals (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Individuals high in anxiety have a sense of unworthiness and have deep-seated fears of abandonment and rejection, but they desire acceptance from others through close relationships (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Hazan et al., 1994). Highly anxious people experience love as obsessive and all-consuming, thus they are often codependent and jealous partners (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Individuals high in avoidance view others as untrustworthy and rejecting, so they distance themselves from close relationships to maintain invulnerability (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Highly avoidant individuals are relatively uninterested in close relationships due to a fear of intimacy (Tracy et al., 2003). When highly avoidant individuals *are* in relationships, they are characterized by emotional extremes and jealousy (Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

Attachment styles extend to how individuals engage in sexual behavior with partners (e.g., Schachner & Shaver, 2004; Tracy et al., 2003). Secure individuals engage in sexual activity more often and experience more positive emotions during sexual activity than highly anxious or avoidant individuals (Tracy et al., 2003). Attachment insecurity has been linked to risky sexual behaviors such as having multiple sexual partners and engaging in unprotected sex (Kim & Miller, 2019). In addition, avoidant individuals have been found to be the most likely to use alcohol or drugs prior to sexual activity, whereas secure individuals are the least likely to use substances (Tracy et al., 2003). Anxious individuals report engaging in sexual activity out of feelings of insecurity and a need for intimacy. Highly anxious individuals use sexual activity to feel valued by their partners, enhance proximity with their partners, and affirm their relationships (Schachner & Shaver, 2004). However, women with highly anxious

attachments have been associated with lower sexual satisfaction, sexual intimacy, sexual arousal, and fewer orgasms (Birnbaum, 2007; Brassard et al., 2013, Dunkley et al., 2016). Avoidant individuals were less likely than secure and anxious individuals to engage in sexual activity, due to the intimacy often involved in sexual activity (Schachner & Shaver, 2004). Avoidant individuals report wanting to lose their virginity or fit in with their peer group as motivations for engaging in sexual activity (Schachner & Shaver, 2004; Tracy et al., 2003). Interestingly, highly avoidant individuals engage in more casual and short-term sexual encounters (i.e., one-night stands), likely due to the lack of intimacy that these arrangements require (Schachner & Shaver, 2004). Highly avoidant women also experience lower sexual satisfaction and poorer sexual functioning (i.e., fewer orgasms, pain during sexual intercourse; Brassard et al., 2013, Dunkley et al., 2016).

Feeney et al. (2000) believe communication acts as the underlying mechanism for why securely attached individuals are more satisfied in their relationships. Securely attached individuals typically use positive communication patterns that encourage closeness and support, such as self-disclosure, constructive conflict tactics, and affectionate communication (Feeney et al., 2000; Guerrero, 2017). In contrast, insecurely attached individuals utilize more negative communication patterns, including verbal aggression, withdrawal, defensiveness, and avoidance (Pearce & Halford, 2008). These differences in emotional intimacy are thought to contribute to lower relational satisfaction in insecure couples.

Attachment style has been previously studied in connection to sexual communication and satisfaction (e.g., Bennett et al., 2019; Davis et al., 2006; Pink, 2018). Bennett et al. (2019) found that insecure attachments predicted lower levels of trait affection, and thus less post-sex affectionate communication and sexual satisfaction. Similarly, Pink (2018) found

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that attachment insecurity was associated with dissatisfying sexual communication, and thus lower sexual satisfaction. Davis et al. (2006) also discovered that insecurely attached individuals experienced more sexual dissatisfaction, but this study provided a more nuanced examination of attachment insecurity. Highly avoidant individuals were strongly, negatively associated with the physical aspect of sexual satisfaction, whereas highly anxious individuals were strongly, negatively associated with the emotional component of sexual satisfaction. These findings suggest that avoidant individuals are more uncomfortable with physical intimacy, whereas anxious individuals are more uneasy with emotional intimacy. While these prior studies have examined attachment style in relation to sexual communication, real-time conversations about sexual intimacy have not yet been studied. The present study further examines how attachment avoidance and anxiety are related to perceptions of communicative responsiveness between romantic partners during a conversation about emotional and sexual intimacy. Based off prior research, it is likely that high levels of attachment anxiety and avoidance will be associated with perceptions of less communicative responsiveness and general sexual communication between partners, and in turn, lower levels of sexual and relationship satisfaction.

Family Communication Patterns Theory

Family communication patterns theory (FCPT; Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002) is another useful framework for the present study, as FCPT can explain why individuals may be more or less receptive to discussing sexual and emotional intimacy with their partner. FCPT uses two dimensions – conformity and conversation – to describe how family members communicate with one another. *Conformity orientation* refers to the level of homogeneity of attitudes, beliefs, and values in a family (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006). *Conversation*

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orientation refers to the degree of open communication in a family when it comes to discussing an array of topics. These two dimensions are not mutually exclusive; rather, they exist on a continuum and families can be more or less conformity- and conversation-oriented (Koerner & Schrodt, 2014). When these two dimensions are crossed, four family types are created: consensual, pluralistic, protective, and laissez-faire (Koerner & Schrodt, 2014). Consensual families are high in both conformity and conversation, meaning there are expectations of obedience to parents, but there is also the opportunity to discuss family rules and decisions. Pluralistic families are high in conversation but low in conformity, which allows for more unconstrained discussions and democratic decision-making. Protective families are high in conformity but low in conversation, meaning there are expectations of obedience to parents and their rules, and there is little room for discussion. Finally, laissez-faire families are low in both conformity and conversation because family members are very independent from one another, and little communication occurs between them.

Recently, scholars have debated whether the Revised Family Communication Patterns instrument (RCFP; Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990) accurately captures the conceptualization of the conformity orientation (Hesse et al., 2017). Researchers have suggested that the RCFP oversimplified the conformity orientation dimension through operationalizing it as rigid, negative, and authoritarian communication patterns, instead of communication patterns that emphasize homogeneous values and promote family cohesion (Hesse et al., 2017; Koerner & Schrodt, 2014). In response to these critiques of the RCFP, Horstman et al. (2018) developed the Extended Conformity Orientation Scale (ECOS). The ECOS is comprised of four subscales: respecting parental authority, experiencing parental control, adopting parents' values/beliefs, and questioning parents' authority/beliefs (Horstman et al., 2018).

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In their meta-analysis on decades of FCPT research, Schrodt et al. (2008) summarized that FCPT has been associated with an array of individual differences, including information processing, behavioral, and psychosocial outcomes. One example of these behavioral outcomes is how individuals communicate during conflicts in their romantic relationships (see Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). Individuals learn how to approach conflict in their families of origin and apply these same conflict resolution skills in other interpersonal domains. Individuals from consensual (high conformity/high conversation) families were found to use the most negative conflict behaviors (e.g., verbal aggression) out of the family types. Individuals from protective (high conformity/low conversation) families also experienced negative conflict experiences, but to a lesser extent than individuals from consensual families. Individuals from laissez-faire (low conformity/low conversation) families reported above average levels of conflict avoidance in their romantic relationships, likely because they were socialized in families that were emotionally divorced from one another and did not discuss their feelings. However, individuals from pluralistic (high conversation/low conformity) families reported engaging in healthy and productive conflicts with their partner because they were socialized to see conflict and its subsequent communication as a normal part of life in their families of origin.

Several studies have examined FCP and sexual communication in tandem (e.g., Holman & Koenig Kellas, 2015; Horan et al., 2018; Wu & Pask, 2023). Holman and Koenig Kellas (2015) investigated whether conversation or conformity orientations would impact adolescents' sexual attitudes and behaviors. However, they found that these FCP dimensions had little effect on adolescents' sexual behavior and attitudes, perhaps due to the taboo and uncomfortable nature of parent-child conversations about sex, so these conversations were

limited across many families. Horan et al. (2018) found that greater conversation orientation in families was associated with greater frequency of parent-child sexual communication, however there was no association between conformity orientation and parent-child sexual communication. Additionally, they found greater conversation orientation was negatively related to young adults' avoidance of sexual communication and their perceptions that sexual communication threatened their sexual relationships. In contrast, greater conformity orientation was associated with young adults' perceptions that sexual communication was a threat to their sexual relationship. Wu and Pask (2023) examined the nuances of conformity orientation regarding parent-child sexual communication by using the ECOS (Horstman et al., 2018). They found that experiencing more parental control and adopting parental beliefs (two sub-dimensions of the ECOS) were associated with greater intention to engage in protective sexual behaviors (i.e., STD and pregnancy prevention, obtaining consent), thus demonstrating benefits of a high conformity orientation. However, this study did not examine the association of parental control and parental beliefs with communication about sexual and emotional intimacy. Taken together, these findings about FCP and parent-child sexual communication suggest greater conversation orientation and lower conformity orientation may be positively related to perceptions of partner communicative responsiveness and general sexual communication in the present study.

The Effects of Childhood Trauma

Childhood trauma can also have a strong impact on how individuals approach relationships and relational communication, including communication about sexual and emotional intimacy. The term "trauma" is often used synonymously with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which is a psychiatric disorder that focuses on the intrapersonal,

psychological effects of trauma exposure (Nelson Goff et al., 2006). Some scholars have argued that this definition is a misnomer, as trauma can be thought of more globally, as a stressful event that is "emotionally and personally meaningful and cognitively incongruous and it affects human bonds and networks" (Nelson Goff et al., 2006, p. 451). This definition situates trauma as not just an intrapersonal experience, but one that also affects our interpersonal relationships.

Much of the research done on trauma comes from a clinical or psychological perspective (e.g., De Bellis & Zisk, 2014; DiLillo et al., 2007, 2009; Fergusson et al., 2013) and neglects the role of communication in interpersonal relationships. If communication is examined in these studies, it is usually treated as one overly simplistic variable and the nuances of communication are not examined. Communication may be examined through inexact variables such as "social support" (e.g., De Bellis & Zisk, 2014) or "positive/negative communication" (e.g., Banford Witting & Busby, 2019; Busby et al., 2011), but there is limited attention given to the specific communication patterns that transpire between conversational partners. Additionally, it is unclear how traumatic experiences can affect the interpersonal communication processes, specifically in intimate relationships. Of particular interest in the present study is how childhood trauma can affect communication between romantic partners about both sexual and emotional intimacy.

Effects of Trauma on Close Relationships

Recently, researchers have begun to examine how an individual's trauma impacts their interpersonal relationships, including family members, children, and partners/spouses. Most pertinent to the present study, Rosenthal and Freyd (2017) found that dissociation during sexual activity mediated the association between childhood trauma high in betrayal

and sexual communication in adulthood. Sexual communication in this study was operationalized by five Likert-style items that measured the respondent's comfort with expressing sexual needs and desires to their partner (e.g., wanting to stop sexual activity, feeling uncomfortable during sexual activity). Childhood trauma was related to disassociation during sex, likely because sexual activity caused flashbacks of abuse. This dissociation hampered sexual communication with partners, possibly due to trauma survivors being out of touch with their bodies and sexual preferences due to the dissociation.

In addition to trauma being linked to dissociation during sexual activity, traumatic experiences have been associated with other negative relational outcomes. Banford Witting and Busby (2019) found that childhood trauma, such as physical and sexual abuse, created feelings of loss and negative family impact in an individual that radiated out into more anxiety, negative relational communication processes (i.e., criticism, disrespect, verbal attacks), and relationship instability later in life. Furthermore, Busby et al. (2011) found that trauma influenced survivors' perceptions of their romantic relationships, specifically that survivors perceived both themselves and their partners as more neurotic and conflictual, even when that did not reflect reality. This study offers evidence that survivors' perceptions of themselves and others are misconstrued from their trauma.

Other researchers have investigated how trauma impacts general communication in romantic relationships. Nelson Goff et al. (2006) conducted qualitative interviews with survivors of trauma, which elicited themes of how their trauma affected their romantic partners. Of interest to the present study, traumatic experiences produced both increased and decreased communication between romantic partners. For some survivors, communicating with their partner about their traumatic experience and related feelings was critical for deeper

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understanding, closeness, and support. In contrast, other couples experienced decreased communication regarding the trauma, primarily because the survivor did not want to discuss it and engaged in either active or passive avoidance of the topic. Similarly, couples experienced both increased and decreased cohesion or connection, often due to the abundance or lack of communication about the trauma. Traumatic experiences, both sexual and nonsexual, also introduced challenges with sexual intimacy. In the case of sexual trauma, sexual activity could serve as a reminder of the trauma. With nonsexual trauma, the survivor expressed that they were experiencing stress or other negative emotions and did not have the desire to engage in sexual activity or be close to their partner. Increased relationship distress also emerged as a prevalent theme, oftentimes because interactions with their partner triggered a traumatic response for the survivor. These responses would result in feelings of deep-seated fear, or destructive conflict patterns, such as screaming, verbal abuse, or throwing objects. The results from this study show the variety of ways, both positive and negative, that trauma can affect intimate, interpersonal processes.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

One route of studying trauma is through the examination of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Felitti et al. (1998) conducted the first ACEs study that gained traction from the scientific community. Felitti et al (1998) were interested in the associations between childhood maltreatment and adult health risk behaviors and diseases (i.e., substance abuse, smoking, mental illness, high number of lifetime sexual partners, sexually transmitted diseases, heart disease, lung disease, cancer, etc.). They surveyed patients through Kaiser Permanente, a large health maintenance organization, and correlated their surveys responses with some of their healthcare data. Felitti et al. (1998) found a strong, graded association

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between exposure to instances of childhood maltreatment and health risk factors in adults. More than half of the respondents reported experiencing one ACE, with about six percent of the sample experiencing four or more ACEs. There is no set list of ACEs or agreed upon measure (Finkelhor, 2020), but most measures include items that measure the categories of child psychological/physical abuse, household dysfunction, community dysfunction, and peer victimization (Karatekin & Hill, 2019). In recent years, ACEs have been expanded to include experiences such as growing up in an active military zone, being discriminated against due to race, sexuality, etc., and immigration/deportation (Karatekin & Hill, 2019).

ACEs have been associated with negative health outcomes in adulthood, including obesity, chronic illness, smoking, alcoholism, substance abuse, depression, sexual risk-taking, and suicidal ideation and attempts (Felitti et al., 1998; Fergusson et al., 2013). In the original ACEs study, more than half of participants experienced one or more ACE, and about 6% of the sample experienced four or more ACEs. Felitti et al. (1998) found a graded relationship between exposure to ACEs and increased risk for negative health outcomes. Compared to individuals who had no exposure to ACEs, individuals exposed to four or more ACEs were 4 to 12 times more likely to develop negative health outcomes, which shows how trauma can produce tangible, physical outcomes throughout the lifespan.

Regarding relational outcomes, childhood maltreatment and abuse have been linked to both sexual and emotional difficulties. Sexual difficulties include individuals having more romantic and sexual partners over time (Fergusson et al., 2013; Pfaff & Schlarb, 2018), first engaging in consensual sexual activity at an earlier age (Fergusson et al., 2013), increased relational violence victimization (Widom et al., 2014), decreased sexual activity (DiLillo et al., 2009), and more negative attitudes toward sexual activity for women. Emotional

difficulties include decreased relationship satisfaction, decreased partner trust, increased interpersonal conflicts, and greater fear of emotional intimacy in past and current relationships (Bigras et al., 2015; DiLillo et al., 2007, 2009). These associations bring into question how ACEs might affect individuals' relational communication in their romantic relationships, specifically conversations about sexual and emotional intimacy. Childhood abuse and trauma can alter perceptions of trust, openness, and satisfaction with close relationships (DiLillo et al., 2009). These outcomes warrant examination on how measurable exposures to trauma affect interpersonal processes in romantic relationships, especially regarding intimate communication.

The Present Study

The aforementioned gaps in the literature warrant examination of couples' real-time conversations about sexual and emotional intimacy. Cupach and Comstock (1990) found that sexual satisfaction mediated the association between sexual communication and marital satisfaction but suggested that future research utilize longitudinal designs and path analytic techniques to confirm the findings. Two studies conducted by Montesi et al. (2011; 2013) extended Cupach and Comstock's (1990) findings. First, Montesi et al. (2011) examined the couples' dyadic perceptions of general and sexual communication and its effect on sexual and overall relationship satisfaction. This study corroborated Cupach and Comstock's (1990) results, finding that open sexual communication predicted increased sexual and relationship satisfaction. Subsequently, Montesi et al. (2013) examined how social anxiety affects emotional intimacy, sexual communication, sexual satisfaction, and overall relationship satisfaction. They found that higher levels of social anxiety predicted greater fear of

intimacy, and in turn, lower satisfaction with sexual communication and lower sexual satisfaction.

Both studies conducted by Montesi et al. (2011; 2013) utilized cross-sectional survey designs, which they acknowledged as a limitation of their study design. Similar to Cupach and Comstock (1990), they recommended other researchers study similar patterns using a longitudinal design to discover if these same associations exist over time. Additionally, the researchers (2013) recommended studying other variables of interest in the place of social anxiety in their model. Their reasoning for this was that the construct of social anxiety may overlap with other constructs, like attachment anxiety and avoidance, fear of rejection, and other individual differences. Thus, they recommend additional testing of the model to parse out the relationships between the variables.

In the past decade or so of interpersonal communication research, there have been continued calls to study communication as it naturally unfolds, rather than exclusively utilizing self-report measures (see Knapp & Daly, 2011). Self-report measures are useful for generalizing results to large populations and attempting to understand the attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors or individuals. However, they have been called into question about how accurately individuals can recall their exact feelings or messages in a conversation from the past (Knapp & Daly, 2011). using self-report methods exclusively and those that require relational partners to think back over long periods of time about their sexual communication glosses over the important nuances of interpersonal communication and does not capture the messages exchanged between conversational partners as they happen in real-time.

The purpose of the current study is to examine how romantic partners communicate with each other about their sexual and emotional intimacy, what factors they bring to those conversations that might predict how they talk about intimacy, and the potential impact of their communication on their relational and sexual satisfaction. To address the gaps in the literature, the present study used a mixed-methods design with self-report surveys, recorded real-time conversations about sexual and emotional intimacy between romantic partners, and follow-up interviews, to uncover what messages are being exchanged and how they are communicated when romantic partners talk about emotional and sexual intimacy, as well as their perceptions of each other's communication in that conversation. In addition, trained coders completed observational coding for the couples' conversations to provide more objective ratings of the partners' communication. A greater focus on the communication processes themselves yields important insight into how emerging adults conceptualize intimacy and discuss it with their romantic partner, and how their sexual communication may affect their sexual and relationship satisfaction.

Theoretically, the current study sheds light on predictors of emotional and sexual intimacy to further understand what contributes to satisfying communication and relationships. By having couples engage in a real-time conversation, researchers can get a better understanding of the messages exchanged during sexual communication conversations and how these messages contribute to greater sexual and relational satisfaction. Additionally, the present study answers the calls for more nuanced and methodologically rigorous research in this area to confirm past findings. Practically, this study can help couples understand what aspects of their communication with their romantic partner – whether that comes from attachment styles, past trauma, or how they learned to communicate in their families of

origin—might be contributing to difficulties with their emotional and sexual intimacy. This study also has pragmatic implications for therapists and clinicians who want to help their clients better understand their communication and relationships, especially from a holistic perspective, with examining how their past experiences affect their current communication patterns and sexual satisfaction.

With this information in mind, the quantitative portion of this dissertation involves testing a series of hypothesized models, which were theoretically derived from the research on attachment theory, family communication patterns, and ACEs. The hypothesized models (see Figures 1-3) dyadically examine romantic partners' attachment style, FCP, and ACEs as key predictors of sexual and relationship satisfaction after a conversation with each other about emotional and sexual intimacy. It is hypothesized that attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance will be negatively associated with perceptions of partner's communicative responsiveness during the intimacy conversation, observational coding of communicative responsiveness during the intimacy conversation, and general sexual communication. However, attachment avoidance and attachment anxiety should be positively associated with fear of emotional intimacy. For family communication patterns, it is hypothesized that conversation orientation will be positively associated with perceptions of partner's communicative responsiveness during the intimacy conversation, observational coding of communicative responsiveness during the intimacy conversation, and general sexual communication, but negatively associated with fear of emotional intimacy. It is hypothesized that conformity orientation will be negatively associated with perceptions of partner's communicative responsiveness during the intimacy conversation, observational coding of communicative responsiveness during the intimacy conversation, and general

sexual communication, but positively associated with fear of emotional intimacy. ACEs ae hypothesized to be negatively associated with perceptions of partner's communicative responsiveness during the intimacy conversation, observational coding of communicative responsiveness during the intimacy conversation, and general sexual communication, and positively associated with fear of emotional intimacy. For all of the hypothesized models, perceptions of partner's communicative responsiveness during the intimacy conversation, observational coding of communicative responsiveness during the intimacy conversation, and general sexual communication should be positively associated with sexual and relationship satisfaction. In contrast, fear of emotional intimacy should be negatively associated with sexual and relationship satisfaction. Furthermore, it is hypothesized that across all models the mediating variables (i.e., partner communicative responsiveness, observational communicative responsiveness, fear of emotional intimacy, and general sexual communication) will account for the relationships between the predictor (i.e., attachment anxiety and avoidance, conversation and conformity orientations, and ACEs) and outcome variables (i.e., sexual and relationship satisfaction). These mediation hypotheses suggest that partners' current communication processes are the driving factor for their sexual and relationship satisfaction, although socialization factors affect how that communication is enacted.

The qualitative portion of this dissertation involves a qualitative analysis of the conversations that transpired between the romantic partners about their sexual and emotional intimacy and follow-up interviews where the participants are asked to reflect back on that conversation and their histories that might have informed their communication patterns

during that conversation. The following research questions are advanced for the qualitative

portion of this study:

RQ₁: How do individuals learn about intimacy?

RQ₂: How do individuals experience intimacy in their romantic relationships?

RQ₃: How did individuals' conversation about sexual and emotional intimacy affect

their relationship?

CHAPTER III: METHODS

Sample

One hundred thirty-five romantic couples ($N = 270$ individuals) participated in the present study. The average age was 21.06 years old ($SD = 2.53$, range = 18-36 years old). Most of the sample identified as cisgender female (50%), followed by cisgender male (47.8%), nonbinary (1.9%), and transgender female (0.4%). Most of the sample identified as heterosexual (81%), followed by bisexual (12.6%), queer/questioning (4.9%), and gay/lesbian (1.5%). Participants could identify as more than one race, so the following percentages add up to more than 100 percent. Overall, 55.6% of the sample identified as White, 36.3% identified as Asian, 15.9% identified at Latino/a/x, 4.1% as Black/African American, 2.2% as Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 1.1% identified at Middle Eastern, 0.7% as American Indian/Alaskan Native, and 0.4% as multiracial.

The majority of the sample (83.3%) were undergraduate students, with most being in their third year (42.7%), followed by second year (21.8%), fourth year (17.3%), first year (16%), and fifth year or more (2.2%). The remainder of the sample were not students ($n = 35$), or they were graduate students ($n = 9$) pursuing doctoral degrees ($n = 5$), master's degrees ($n = 3$), or another type of advanced degree ($n = 1$). Forty-seven percent of the participants were employed, either part- or full-time. Of those who were employed, they worked an average of 21.41 hours per week ($SD = 13.59$, range = 2-60 hours).

The average relationship length was 20.41 months ($SD = 20.28$; range = 3 months to 132 months). The majority of couples (83%) were dating but not living together, 14.1% were cohabitating, and 3% were married. Two couples (1.5%) had one child each, both under 10 years old. Twenty-seven percent of the participants said their current partner was their first

sexual partner. The majority of the sample (46.7%) said they engage in sexual activity a few times a week, followed by a few times a month (15.6%), once a week (11.9%), every other day (10.4%), daily (10%), multiple times a day (3%), a few times a year (1.5%), less than once a year but they have before (0.7%), and once a month (0.4%). Almost all participants had discussed sexual activity with their partner before this study (97.4%). Out of the participants who had previously discussed sexual activity with their partners, the majority discussed sexual activity a few times a week (27%), followed by a few times a month (24.3%), once a week (18.3%), once a month (11.4%), a few times a year (9.5%), daily (8.7%), and less than once a year but they have before (0.8%).

Procedures

The partners were recruited using the SONA research pool in the UCSB Department of Communication and from the community through advertisements on listservs and social media. To be eligible for the study, participants had to be between 18 to 35 years old and in a cross-sex, monogamous, and committed romantic relationship. While participants were primarily in cross-sex relationships, several same-sex couples were included. The relationship had to be at least three months duration in an effort to recruit romantic partners that were invested in the relationship (see also Denes et al., 2022; Montesi et al., 2013). Couples recruited through SONA ($n = 79$) were compensated with research credit, whereas couples recruited from the community ($n = 56$) were paid $25 total. Participants who completed a follow-up interview were paid an additional $20 per person.

The study design included an online baseline survey, a recorded conversation on Zoom immediately followed by a post-conversation survey online, and a follow-up in-depth interview with a subset of the original sample. First, romantic partners completed individual

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baseline surveys on Qualtrics about their relationship the day before their conversation. Then they had a recorded conversation over Zoom in which they discussed emotional and sexual intimacy within their relationship. Immediately following the conversation, partners completed another Qualtrics survey about their perceptions of the conversation and their relationship. Follow-up interviews were conducted with participants who indicated they were interested in doing so in the post-conversation survey. Follow-up interviews occurred after the Zoom conversation based on participants' availability. Participants received a secure online link of their recorded conversation to watch before the interview to help them recall their feelings and thoughts during the conversation.

Pre-Conversation and Baseline Survey

All study procedures and modifications were approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of California, Santa Barbara. After completing the informed consent, couples were scheduled to have a recorded conversation on Zoom about sexual and emotional intimacy in their relationship. One day prior to the recorded conversation, couples were emailed a link to an online baseline survey to complete independent of one another in private. The baseline survey included measures of attachment style, FCP, ACEs, fear of emotional intimacy, general sexual communication, sexual satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, and demographic questions about the participant and their relationship. Although they were not used in the current study, measures of sexual socialization, relational violence, mental health, and perceived stress were included as variables for another manuscript.

Research assistants set up Zoom sessions that audio- and video-recorded the conversations in the couples' apartment or home rather than a lab setting. A home setting was used to enhance participants' comfort as sexual activity can be a sensitive, embarrassing, or

stigmatized topic to discuss. Participants were told to be in the same location for the conversation and use one Zoom account, rather than having the conversation over two different Zoom accounts. Participants were also told to sit next to one another on a couch and angle the camera to capture their bodies from the waist up. These restrictions promoted control in the study and allowed for participants to engage in more intimate nonverbal communication, such as touch, during the conversation.

Intimacy Conversation

Research assistants began each couple's Zoom session at their scheduled time and gave them the following prompts (and placed them in the chat feature of Zoom) to discuss for 15 minutes total:

1. What does emotional intimacy mean to you? What does sexual intimacy mean to you?

2. How did you learn about emotional and sexual intimacy? How do you show intimacy to your partner?

3. Discuss how you and your partner communicate about intimacy. How has it changed over time?

4. Discuss what you appreciate about the emotional and sexual intimacy in your relationship.

5. Are there things you would like to change or enhance regarding the intimacy in your relationship?

These prompts were pilot tested during research meetings with research assistants who were the target age for the sample. They were asked about wording of the prompts and whether they made sense. Adjustments were then made, and research assistants asked participants if

they needed any clarity on the prompts after they provided them. Research assistants then turned off their video and microphone and left while the couple discussed the topic, and they gave them a warning in the Zoom chat that they had 5 minutes left. After 15 minutes, the research assistant re-entered the Zoom session, told participants that they could conclude their conversation, and instructed them to complete their post-conversation survey online. Audio from the recorded conversations was transcribed using Otter.ai, an online artificial intelligence transcription software, and was cleaned and checked for accuracy by research assistants. All identifying information was removed from the transcripts. Zoom conversation recordings ranged from 12 to 28 minutes long ($M = 19.82$ minutes) and resulted in 1,629 single-spaced pages of conversation transcripts.

Post-Conversation Survey

Each partner received a post-conversation survey link immediately following their Zoom conversation and was told to complete it independently, in private, and as soon as possible after the conversation. The email also included a link to a list of campus and community interpersonal violence resources in the event that either partner felt uncomfortable by anything said in the conversation. The post-survey included measures of communication perceptions during the conversation, fear of emotional intimacy, general sexual communication, sexual satisfaction, and relationship satisfaction measures. Participants indicated whether researchers could keep their videos indefinitely and whether they could be shown to other researchers or outside groups. Participants could also opt-in to being contacted by the researchers for a follow-up interview.

Follow-Up Interviews

A subsample of the original participants ($n = 31$) completed follow-up interviews. Participants were contacted via email if they indicated they were interested in a follow-up interview in the post-conversation survey. Participants who were still interested signed up for an interview time slot with the lead researcher. Interviews were conducted over the telephone ($n = 17$) or Zoom ($n = 14$), at the participant's discretion. The set of follow-up interview questions are presented in Appendix A. Audio from the interviews and the conversations between the partners were transcribed using Otter.ai, an online artificial intelligence transcription software, and was cleaned and checked for accuracy by research assistants. All identifying information was removed from the transcripts. Interviews ranged from 24 to 77 minutes long ($M = 43.58$ minutes) and resulted in 534 single-spaced pages of interview transcripts.

Out of the interview participants, 18 participants identified as cisgender females, 11 as cisgender males, one as nonbinary, and one as transgender female. Both partners from nine couples participated ($n = 18$; 58.1%), with the remaining 13 participants from independent couples. The average age for interviewees was 21.57 years old ($SD = 3.34$, range $= 18$ to 30 years old). Most of the interviewees identified as heterosexual ($n = 24$), followed by bisexual ($n = 5$), queer/questioning ($n = 1$), and gay/lesbian ($n = 1$). Participants could identify as more than one race, so the following percentages add up to more than 100 percent. Overall, 58.1% of the sample identified as White, 32.3% identified at Latino/a/x, 22.6% identified as Asian, 9.7% as Black/African American, 3.2% as Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 3.2% as "other". The majority of the interviewees ($n = 24$) were undergraduate students, with most being in their second year ($n = 8$), followed by third year ($n = 7$), first

year (n = 6), and fourth year (n = 3). The remainder of the interviewees were not students (n = 6), or graduate students (n = 1). About half of the interviewees were employed (48.4%), either part- or full-time. Of those who were employed, they worked an average of 21.87 hours per week (SD = 14.11, range = 5 to 40 hours).

The average relationship length was 17.65 months (SD = 16.80; range = 3 to 78 months). Most interviewees (80.6%) were dating their romantic partner but not living together, 9.7% were cohabitating, and 9.7% were married. Nine participants (29%) said their current partner was their first sexual partner. Most participants (32.3%) said they engage in sexual activity a few times a week, followed by every other day (19.4%), a few times a month (16.1%), daily (9.7%), multiple times a day (6.5%), once a week (6.5%), a few times a year (6.5%), and once a month (3.2%). All 31 interviewees had discussed sexual activity with their partner before this study. The majority of participants (35.5%) said they communicate with their partner about sexual activity a few times a week, followed by once a week (25.8%), daily (12.9%), a few times a month (12.9%), a few times a year (9.7%), and once a month (3.2%).

Measures

Scale reliabilities and descriptive statistics for both male and female partners are provided in Table 1. Full measures are included in Appendices B through J.

Baseline Measures

Attachment Style. Attachment style was measured in the baseline survey using the Revised Experiences in Close Relationships scale (ECR-R; Fraley et al., 2000). The ECR-R consists of 36 items: 18 items in the anxiety subscale and 18 items in the avoidance subscale. Participants read these instructions prior to completing the measure: "Please take a moment

to think about your overall experiences in romantic/love relationships, including both your previous and current relationship experiences. Please answer the following questions with these experiences in mind." The items were rated on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*), with higher scores for each subscale indicating greater levels of attachment anxiety or avoidance. Example items included, "I prefer not to be too close to romantic partners" and "I'm afraid that I will lose my partner's love."

Family Communication Patterns. The conversation orientation subscale from the Revised Family Communication Patterns instrument (RFCP; Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990) and Horstman et al.'s (2018) Expanded Conformity Orientation Scale (ECOS) were used to assess participant's FCP in the baseline survey. The RFCP conversation subscale consists of 15 items and the ECOS consists of 24 items. Responses ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The items were averaged for each measure, with greater scores indicating greater levels of conversation or conformity orientation. Example items included, "I can tell my parents almost anything" (RCFP conversation) and "My parents expect us to respect our elders" (ECOS).

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). ACEs were measured in the baseline survey using the 31-item expanded ACEs measure (Karatekin & Hill, 2019). Respondents were asked if they had experienced each item before the age of 18. Each item was dummy coded as "0" if the respondent never experienced the item, or "1" if the respondent had experienced the item. The scores were originally summed for a total ACEs score, ranging from 0-31. However, there was little variance across the measure, which caused issues with reaching model fit for the structural equation models (SEM). Thus, these 31 items were compared to the original 17-item ACEs measure (Felitti et al., 1998), and 7 items (e.g., items

1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11; see Appendix E for full measure) that overlapped between the measures were retained for use in the present study. These items, which were more reflective of the original ACEs measure, produced good fitting SEM models and were therefore used for the analyses. These items were also more likely to be ones that would influence conversations about sexual and emotional intimacy. These scores were summed to create a final ACEs score, ranging from 0-7. Example items included, "Was there a time that a member of your household drank or used drugs so often that it caused problems?" and "Did any grown-up in your life (whether you knew them or not) touch your private parts when they shouldn't have or make you touch their private parts? Or did a grown-up force you to have sex, that is sexual intercourse of any kind?"

Post-Conversation Measures

Partner Communicative Responsiveness. Several subscales from Burgoon and Hale's (1987) Relational Topoi scale were used to assess participants' perceptions of their partner's communicative responsiveness during the recorded conversation. The subscales measured perceptions of partners' immediacy (6 items), similarity (4 items), receptivity (5 items), and composure (4 items). Items were rated on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*), and averaged within each subscale. Example items included "My partner created a sense of distance between us" (immediacy), "My partner tried to move the conversation to a deeper level" (similarity), "My partner was open to my ideas" (receptivity) and "My partner felt very tense talking to me" (composure).

Fear of Emotional Intimacy. The Fear of Intimacy Scale (FIS; Descutner & Thelen, 1991) measured participants' general anxiety about being emotionally close with their partner in the post-conversation survey. The FIS consists of 35 items on a Likert-type scale,

with responses ranging from 1 (*not at all characteristic of me*) to 5 (*extremely characteristic of me*). The responses were averaged, with higher scores indicating more fear of emotional intimacy. Example items include, "I am afraid of sharing my private thoughts with my partner" and "A part of me is afraid to make a long-term commitment to my partner."

General Sexual Communication. The Dyadic Sexual Communication Scale (DSC; Catania, 1986; 2013) measured participants' global perceptions of their ability to openly communicate with their partner about their sexual relationship in the post-conversation survey. The DSC consists of 13 items on a Likert-type scale, with responses ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree)* to 7 (*strongly agree*). Items were averaged, with higher scores indicating more satisfying sexual communication with one's partner. Example items include, "Talking about sex is a satisfying experience for both of us," and "My partner often complains that I am not very clear about what I want sexually" (reverse coded).

Sexual Satisfaction. The Index of Sexual Satisfaction (ISS; Hudson et al., 1981) was included in the post-conversation survey to measure participants' overall satisfaction with their sexual relationship with their partner. The measure consists of 25 items on a Likert-type scale, with responses ranging from 1 (*none of the time*) to 5 (*all of the time*). Items were averaged, with higher scores indicating more satisfaction with one's sexual relationship with their partner. Example items include, "Sex is fun for my partner and me" and "I feel that my sex life is lacking in quality" (reverse coded).

Relationship Satisfaction. The shortened 16-item Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI-16; Funk & Rogge, 2007) measured participants' general satisfaction with their relationship during the post-conversation survey. The measure consists of 16 items on a Likert-type scale with responses ranging from 1 (*not at all true/never*) to 6 (*completely true/all of the time*).

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Example items included, "Our relationship is strong" and "How well does your partner meet your needs?". Scores were averaged, with higher scores indicating more relationship satisfaction.

Observational Coding Ratings

The Zoom conversation videos were analyzed by four trained coders for gestalt observer ratings of the Relational Topoi subscales of immediacy, similarity, receptivity, and composure (Burgoon & Hale, 1987), which comprised the composite variable *Observational Communicative Responsiveness* (see below). Coders also rated the videos for nonverbal involvement (Guerrero, 1996; 1997; 2005), but these ratings were not used in subsequent analyses. A sample observational coding sheet is presented in Appendix K. These observational coding ratings serve as more objective measures of responsiveness and engagement in the conversation to supplement participants' self-report measures in the post-survey.

Four research assistants were trained on the coding scheme by the lead researcher for eight hours over the course of five weeks. Coders were trained to observe and rate one participant at a time, rather than code the couple together. Coders were also trained to give gestalt ratings for the whole 15-minute conversation, rather than ratings at time intervals. At the beginning of the training sessions, the lead researcher and coders discussed every item in the coding scheme and described what a rating of 1 (strongly disagree) to a 5 (strongly agree) would look like in one of the Zoom videos. After coming to a consensus on each item, the coding team watched exemplar videos and practiced coding in meetings. Although coders completed their coding independently during meetings, the team came together and discussed differences of ratings until a consensus was reached once again. Between training sessions,

coders were given homework assignments to practice coding on some of the videos. When the team met again, differences in ratings were discussed and resolved. The coders practiced on 10% of the data ($n = 13$ videos) until a suitable inter-rater reliability was achieved (ICC = .92, Krippendorff's α = .74). Krippendorff's α accounts for chance levels of agreement that the intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) does not (Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007; Krippendorff, 1970). The remaining videos were split equally amongst the coders to complete independently.

Observational Communicative Responsiveness. The immediacy (6 items), similarity (3 items), receptivity (4 items), and composure (4 items) subscales from the Relational Topoi scale (Burgoon & Hale, 1987) were used by trained coders to assess communicative responsiveness of each partner during the recorded Zoom conversation. Items were rated on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) and were averaged within each subscale. Example items included "The partner was intensely involved in the conversation" (immediacy), "The partner tried to move the conversation to a deeper level" (similarity), "The partner was willing to listen to their partner" (receptivity) and "The partner seemed very relaxed talking with their partner" (composure). Descriptive statistics and reliabilities are presented in Table 1.

CHAPTER IV: QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

Data Analysis Plan

Structural equation modeling (SPSS AMOS Version 29) was used to test the hypothesized models (see Figures 1-3). Specifically, actor-partner interdependence models (APIMs) were utilized to account for interdependence between romantic partners and examine the influence that each partner has on one another (Kenny et al., 2006). Dyads were distinguished by biological sex, which is why being in a cross-sex relationship was a recruitment requirement. The majority of the sample were in cross-sex relationships, but several couples did not have a distinguishable male partner and female partner. Thus, 127 (n = 254 individuals) out of the 135 couples were included in the structural equation models and all subsequent quantitative analyses. All of the conversations, however, were used for the qualitative analysis of the conversations between the romantic partners. Missing data were imputed using regression imputation in AMOS.

Twelve APIMs were run with each of the three predictor variables (attachment anxiety and avoidance, family communication patterns conversation and conformity orientations, and adverse childhood experiences) crossed with each of the four mediator variables (partner communicative responsiveness, observational communicative responsiveness, fear of emotional intimacy, and general sexual communication). The mediators were separated into independent structural equation models for increased parsimony and due to a lack of statistical power needed for more complex models.

Confirmatory factor analyses or measurement models were first run for each of the 12 hypothesized models, and all latent variables were correlated with one another. Parceling was used to make the model more parsimonious. Scale items were grouped into multiple

composite indicators, which then loaded onto the corresponding latent factors (Matsunaga, 2008). Each latent construct had three parcels loading onto it, except for partner communicative responsiveness and observational communicative responsiveness, which had four indicators – one for each subscale (i.e., immediacy, receptivity, similarity, composure). Once model fit was achieved for each measurement model, structural models were then run.

Correlations between all of the variables included in the structural equation models are shown in Table 2. The subscales of the attachment, as well as the FCP predictor variables, were hypothesized to be correlated within partners and this was supported in the data. Attachment anxiety and avoidance were significantly and positively correlated for both females and males. Conversation and conformity orientation were significantly and inversely correlated for both females and males, which is a pattern found in past research (Horstman et al., 2018). The predictor variables were also expected to be correlated between female and male partners. Partners' scores were significantly correlated for attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance. The outcome variables of sexual and relationship satisfaction were also significantly positively correlated for male and female partners. However, ACEs were not significantly correlated across female and male partners, nor were conversation orientation or conformity orientation. Given these preliminary findings, attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance were correlated between males and females in all of the attachment structural models. Sexual satisfaction and relational satisfaction were also correlated between males and females for all of the structural equation models. Conformity and conversation orientations were correlated within partners (i.e., female conformity orientation was correlated to female conversation orientation), but not between males and

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females for the structural models. ACEs were also not correlated between male and female partners in the structural models.

Mediation Tests Using Bootstrapping

Mediational paths in each model were examined using bootstrapping, which is a statistical sampling method to provide more reliable estimates of mediation compared to the Baron and Kenny (1986) approach to mediation (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). The bootstrap method treats the sample as if it were a population, and repeatedly draws random samples with replacement to compute the indirect effect in each sample (Collier, 2020; Mallinckrodt et al., 2006; Preacher & Hayes, 2004). Bootstrapping is particularly useful for small samples and/or samples that violate the assumption of normality (Preacher & Hayes, 2004).

Using AMOS, indirect effects were tested with 5,000 bootstrap replications and 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals. Significant indirect effects with non-significant direct effects indicate full mediation, whereas significant indirect effects with significant direct effects signify partial mediation (Collier, 2020). Following the steps outlined by Collier (2020), a user-specified *estimands* function was used to isolate the individual indirect effects within each model with multiple mediators. After reviewing the indirect effects output for each model, the *estimands* function was used for paths that approached significance to calculate the indirect estimate and significance level. Mediational paths that at least approached significance are presented below in the Mediation Results section.

Preliminary Results

Descriptive statistics for male and female partners are presented in Table 1. Both male and female partners had relatively low levels of attachment avoidance, and slightly higher but still under average levels of attachment anxiety. Both male and female partners

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reported above average levels of conversation orientation in their family of origin, with male partners reporting slightly higher levels than females. Males and females also reported above average levels for conformity orientation in their family of origin, but female partners reported slightly higher levels than males. Females ($M = 1.76$) reported experiencing slightly more ACEs than males ($M = 1.11$). Both females and males reported slightly higher than average levels of anxiety toward emotional intimacy. However, both partners reported higher than average levels of general sexual communication in their relationships. Additionally, both partners indicated quite high levels of sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction. Both males and females reported quite high levels of partners' communicative responsiveness (immediacy, similarity, receptivity, and composure) during the conversation. Ratings of similarity were slightly lower than the other three subscales, but still above average ratings. Finally, observational ratings of communicative responsiveness (immediacy, similarity, receptivity, and composure) during the Zoom conversation were rated quite high for both males and females by trained coders.

Measurement Models

The following fit indices were used as guidelines of good or acceptable model fit in all subsequent measurement and structural models: CFI, IFI, and NFI above .90 (Bentler & Bonett, 1980), RMSEA less than .05 for good fit, less than .08 for adequate fit, and greater than .10 was considered bad fit (MacCallum et al., 1996).

Attachment Models

Attachment and Partner Communicative Responsiveness. All parceled elements loaded acceptably onto their respective constructs (range = .49 to .96, $p < .001$). See Tables 3 and 4 for the standardized estimates and significance levels for the correlations and factor

loadings, respectively. The measurement model was a good fit to the data, χ^2 (419, $N = 127$) = 601.62, $p < .001$, CFI = .95, IFI = .95, NFI = .85, RMSEA = .06, 90% CI [.48, .69].

Attachment and Observational Communicative Responsiveness. All parceled elements loaded acceptably onto their respective constructs (range = .64 to 1.04, $p < .001$), except for the observational coding composure indicator for both females and males, so it was removed from the observational communicative responsiveness latent construct. See Tables 5 and 6 for the standardized estimates and significance levels for the correlations and factor loadings, respectively. The measurement model was a good fit to the data, χ^2 (360, $N = 127$) = 512.65, $p < .001$, CFI = .96, IFI = .96, NFI = .87, RMSEA = .058, 90% CI [.046, .069].

Attachment and Fear of Emotional Intimacy. All parceled elements loaded very well onto their respective constructs (range = .81 to .96, $p < .001$). See Tables 7 and 8 for the standardized estimates and significance levels for the correlations and factor loadings, respectively. The measurement model was an excellent fit to the data, χ^2 (360, $N = 127$) = 411.69, $p = .03$, CFI = .99, IFI = .99, NFI = .90, RMSEA = .03, 90% CI [.01, .05].

Attachment and General Sexual Communication. All parceled elements loaded well onto their respective constructs (range = .72 to .96, $p < .001$). See Tables 9 and 10 for the standardized estimates and significance levels for the correlations and factor loadings, respectively. The measurement model was an excellent fit to the data, χ^2 (360, $N = 127$) = 424.18, $p = .01$, CFI = .98, IFI = .98, NFI = .89, RMSEA = .04, 90% CI [.02, .05].

Family Communication Patterns Models

FCP and Partner Communicative Responsiveness. All parceled elements loaded acceptably onto their respective constructs (range = .48 to .96, $p < .001$). See Tables 11 and

12 for the standardized estimates and significance levels for the correlations and factor loadings, respectively. The measurement model was a good fit to the data, χ^2 (419, N = 127) = 563.71, p < .001, CFI = .96, IFI = .96, NFI = .87, RMSEA = .05, 90% CI [.04, .06].

FCP and Observational Communicative Responsiveness. All parceled elements loaded acceptably onto their respective constructs (range = .64 to 1.04, p < .001), except for the observational coding composure indicator for both females and males, so it was removed from the observational communicative responsiveness latent construct. See Tables 13 and 14 for the standardized estimates and significance levels for the correlations and factor loadings, respectively. The measurement model was a good fit to the data, χ^2 (360, N = 127) = 445.67, p = .001, CFI = .98, IFI = .98, NFI = .89, RMSEA = .04, 90% CI [.028, .056].

FCP and Fear of Emotional Intimacy. All parceled elements loaded acceptably onto their respective constructs (range = .84 to .96, p < .001). See Tables 15 and 16 for the standardized estimates and significance levels for the correlations and factor loadings, respectively. The measurement model was an excellent fit to the data, χ^2 (360, N = 127) = 371.43, p = .33, CFI = .997, IFI = .997, NFI = .92, RMSEA = .02, 90% CI [.00, .04].

FCP and General Sexual Communication. All parceled elements loaded well onto their respective constructs (range = .74 to .96, p < .001). See Tables 17 and 18 for the standardized estimates and significance levels for the correlations and factor loadings, respectively. The measurement model was an excellent fit to the data, χ^2 (360, N = 127) = 370.10, p = .35, CFI = .997, IFI = .997, NFI = .91, RMSEA = .02, 90% CI [.00, .04].

Adverse Childhood Experiences Models

ACEs and Partner Communicative Responsiveness. All parceled elements loaded acceptably onto their respective constructs (range = .48 to .96, p < .001). See Tables 19 and

20 for the standardized estimates and significance levels for the correlations and factor loadings, respectively. The measurement model was an acceptable fit to the data, χ^2 (183, $N = 127$) = 281.68, $p < .001$, CFI = .96, IFI = .96, NFI = .89, RMSEA = .065, 90% CI [.05, .08].

ACEs and Observational Communicative Responsiveness. All parceled elements loaded acceptably onto their respective constructs (range = .65 to 1.04, $p < .001$), except for the observational coding composure indicator for both females and males, so it was removed from the observational communicative responsiveness latent construct. See Tables 21 and 22 for the standardized estimates and significance levels for the correlations and factor loadings, respectively. The measurement model was an acceptable fit to the data, χ^2 (144, $N = 127$) = 222.20, $p < .001$, CFI = .97, IFI = .97, NFI = .91, RMSEA = .066, 90% CI [.048, .08].

ACEs and Fear of Emotional Intimacy. All parceled elements loaded acceptably onto their respective constructs (range = .84 to .96, $p < .001$). See Tables 23 and 24 for the standardized estimates and significance levels for the correlations and factor loadings, respectively. The measurement model was an excellent fit to the data, χ^2 (144, $N = 127$) = 128.55, $p = .82$, CFI = 1.00, IFI = 1.01, NFI = .95, RMSEA < .001, 90% CI [.00, .03].

ACEs and General Sexual Communication. All parceled elements loaded well onto their respective constructs (range = .74 to .96, $p < .001$). See Tables 25 and 26 for the standardized estimates and significance levels for the correlations and factor loadings, respectively. The measurement model was an excellent fit to the data, χ^2 (144, $N = 127$) = 140.47, $p = .57$, CFI = 1.00, IFI = 1.00, NFI = .94, RMSEA < .001, 90% CI [.00, .04].

Structural Equation Models

Attachment Models

Attachment and Partner Communicative Responsiveness. The structural model was a good fit to the data, χ^2 (428, $N = 127$) = 635.06, $p < .001$, CFI = .94, IFI = .94, NFI = .84, RMSEA = .06, 90% CI [.05, .07]. All parcels also loaded acceptably onto their corresponding latent constructs (range = .47-.96). See Figure 4 for estimated parameters and significance levels. For both males and females, their own attachment avoidance and anxiety were inversely associated with their perceptions of their partner's communicative responsiveness (of immediacy, similarity, receptivity, and composure) during the intimacy conversation. In other words, individuals with less attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance were more likely to perceive their partner as more responsive when talking about their sexual and emotional intimacy. Additionally, the inverse association between males' own attachment avoidance and females' perceptions of their partner's communicative responsiveness was approaching significance. In turn, greater levels of one's own feelings of partner communicative responsiveness predicted relationship and sexual satisfaction for both female and male partners. In other words, if individuals perceived their romantic partner was responsive and engaged during the intimacy conversation, they were more likely to be satisfied with their romantic and sexual relationship. In addition, males' perceptions of their partner's communicative responsiveness during the conversation were positively associated with females' relationship and sexual satisfaction. The path between females' perceptions of partner communicative responsiveness and males' relationship satisfaction was approaching significance. These findings explicate the dyadic nature of the intimacy conversation; when

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males viewed their female partners as more responsive, their female partners were more likely to be satisfied with their sexual and romantic relationship.

Additionally, there were significant negative direct effects from females' attachment avoidance and anxiety to females' relationship and sexual satisfaction, indicating that less attachment avoidance and anxiety predicted greater relationship and sexual satisfaction for female partners. Similarly, there were significant negative direct effects for males' attachment avoidance on males' relationship and sexual satisfaction. However, the direct path from males' attachment anxiety to males' sexual satisfaction was negative and approaching significance, and the path between males' attachment anxiety to males' relationship satisfaction was not significant. These findings suggest that attachment avoidance is a bigger hindrance to relational and sexual satisfaction than attachment anxiety for male partners.

Attachment avoidance and anxiety were significantly and positively correlated within and between both male and female partners. Relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction were strongly and positively correlated within partners. Across partners, females' relationship satisfaction and males' relationship satisfaction were strongly and positively correlated. This same pattern was found regarding females' and males' sexual satisfaction. Males' relationship satisfaction and females' sexual satisfaction were approaching significance and in a positive direction, as was the correlation between females' relationship satisfaction and males' sexual satisfaction.

Attachment and Observational Communicative Responsiveness. The structural model was a good fit to the data, χ^2 (369, $N = 127$) = 593.93, $p < .001$, CFI = .94, IFI = .94, NFI = .85, RMSEA = .07, 90% CI [.059, .08]. All parcels loaded highly onto their

corresponding latent constructs (range = .76-.97). See Figure 5 for estimated parameters and significance levels. There were no significant paths from attachment anxiety or attachment avoidance to observational communicative responsiveness for either female or male partners. Females' observational communicative responsiveness was positively associated with females' sexual and relationship satisfaction as well as males' sexual and relationship satisfaction. In other words, as female partners appeared more responsive during the intimacy conversation to outside coders, both females and males reported being more satisfied with their sexual and romantic relationships. However, males' observational communicative responsiveness was negatively associated with males' relationship satisfaction and females' sexual and relationship satisfaction. This finding suggests that when males appeared less responsive during the intimacy conversation to outside coders, male partners reported being more satisfied with their relationship and female partners reported being more satisfied with their romantic and sexual relationships.

There were also several significant direct effects present. Females' attachment avoidance and anxiety were negatively associated with their own relationship and sexual satisfaction, indicating that less attachment avoidance and anxiety predicted greater relationship and sexual satisfaction for female partners. Similarly, there were significant negative direct effects for males' attachment avoidance on their own relationship and sexual satisfaction. However, the negative direct path from males' attachment anxiety to their own relationship satisfaction was approaching significance.

Attachment avoidance and anxiety were significantly and positively correlated within and between both male and female partners. Relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction were strongly and positively correlated within and between male and female partners.

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Attachment and Fear of Emotional Intimacy. The structural model was an excellent fit to the data, χ^2 (369, $N = 127$) = 420.55, p = .03, CFI = .99, IFI = .99, NFI = .90, RMSEA = .033, 90% CI [.011, .048]. All parcels loaded highly onto their corresponding latent constructs (range = .81-.96). See Figure 6 for estimated parameters and significance levels. For both female and male partners, greater levels of their own attachment avoidance and anxiety predicted greater levels of their own fear of emotional intimacy. In other words, individuals with more attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance were more likely to be uncomfortable being emotionally connected in close relationships. The positive relationship between males' attachment avoidance and females' fear of emotional intimacy was approaching significance. The other partner effects of attachment avoidance and anxiety on fear of emotional intimacy were not significant.

For both partners, greater fear of emotional intimacy was strongly associated with less relationship and sexual satisfaction. There were also partner effects present, suggesting that male partners' increased fear of emotional intimacy was associated with less relationship and sexual satisfaction for female partners. In addition, females' increased fear of emotional intimacy was associated with less relationship satisfaction for males. However, the relationship between females' fear of emotional intimacy and males' sexual satisfaction was not significant. Only one direct path between attachment avoidance and anxiety and relationship and sexual satisfaction was significant: females' greater attachment anxiety predicted less satisfaction with their own sexual relationship.

Attachment avoidance and anxiety were significantly and positively correlated within and between both male and female partners. Relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction were strongly and positively correlated within and between male and female partners.

Attachment and General Sexual Communication. The structural model was a good fit to the data, χ^2 (369, $N = 127$) = 440.36, $p = .006$, CFI = .98, IFI = .98, NFI = .89, RMSEA = .039, 90% CI [.022, .052]. All parcels loaded highly onto their corresponding latent constructs (range = .71-.96). See Figure 7 for estimated parameters and significance levels. Males' attachment avoidance and anxiety were inversely associated with males' general sexual communication, which suggests that less attachment avoidance and anxiety was associated with greater sexual communication for male partners. The same pattern was found for female partners, although the association between attachment avoidance and general sexual communication was approaching significance. In addition, less attachment avoidance from male partners was associated with greater sexual communication for female partners. No other partner effects for attachment avoidance and anxiety were significant. For both partners, greater levels of their own sexual communication predicted greater levels of their own relationship and sexual satisfaction. Partner effects were also present; more sexual communication from male partners predicted females' greater sexual satisfaction (relationship satisfaction was not significant), and more sexual communication from female partners predicted males' greater relationship and sexual satisfaction.

Significant inverse direct effects were also present for females' attachment avoidance on females' relationship and sexual satisfaction. There was also a negative direct effect of females' attachment anxiety on females' relationship satisfaction, and the inverse relationship between females' attachment anxiety and females' sexual satisfaction was approaching significance. In other words, females' greater attachment avoidance and anxiety predicted less satisfaction with their own sexual and romantic relationships. There were no significant direct effects for males' attachment avoidance and anxiety.

Attachment avoidance and anxiety were significantly and positively correlated within and between both male and female partners. Relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction were strongly and positively correlated within and between male and female partners, except for the positive relationship between females' sexual satisfaction and males' relationship satisfaction which was approaching significance.

Family Communication Patterns Models

FCP and Partner Communicative Responsiveness. The structural model was an acceptable fit to the data, χ^2 (432, $N = 127$) = 613.01, $p < .001$, CFI = .95, IFI = .95, NFI = .86, RMSEA = .058, 90% CI [.047, .068]. All parcels loaded acceptably onto their corresponding latent constructs (range = .47-.96). See Figure 8 for estimated parameters and significance levels. For male partners, the positive associations between their own conversation and conformity orientations and males' partner communicative responsiveness were approaching significance. The positive association between males' conformity orientation and females' partner communicative responsiveness was also approaching significance. The actor and partner effects for females' conversation and conformity orientations on partner communicative responsiveness were not significant. For both male and female partners, there were significant positive actor and partner effects of partner communicative responsiveness on relationship and sexual satisfaction. These findings suggest that females' and males' perceptions of greater partner communicative responsiveness in the intimacy conversation predicted greater relationship and sexual satisfaction for both them and their partner. Lastly, there were two significant direct effects: high conversation orientation for female partners predicted females' greater relationship

satisfaction, and low conformity orientation for male partners was associated with males' greater sexual satisfaction.

Conversation and conformity orientations were negatively correlated within partners. Relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction were strongly and positively correlated within and between male and female partners, except for the positive relationship between females' relationship satisfaction and males' sexual satisfaction which was approaching significance.

FCP and Observational Communicative Responsiveness. The structural model was a good fit to the data, χ^2 (373, $N = 127$) = 522.77, $p < .001$, CFI = .96, IFI = .96, NFI = .87, RMSEA = .056, 90% CI [.045, .068]. All parcels loaded highly onto their corresponding latent constructs (range = .76-.97). See Figure 9 for estimated parameters and significance levels. There were no significant paths from conversation or conformity orientation to observational communicative responsiveness for either female or male partners. Females' observational communicative responsiveness was positively associated with females' sexual and relationship satisfaction as well as males' sexual and relationship satisfaction. In other words, as female partners appeared more responsive during the intimacy conversation to outside coders, both females and males reported being more satisfied with their sexual and romantic relationships. However, males' observational communicative responsiveness was negatively associated with males' relationship satisfaction and females' sexual and relationship satisfaction. This finding suggests that when males appeared less responsive during the intimacy conversation to outside coders, males reported being more satisfied with their relationship and female partners reported being more satisfied with their romantic and sexual relationships.

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There was a positive direct path between females' conversation orientation and females' relationship satisfaction, indicating that female partners with a high conversation orientation were more likely to be satisfied with their relationship. Two direct paths were approaching significance for male partners: males' conformity orientation was negatively associated with their own relationship and sexual satisfaction.

Conversation and conformity orientations were negatively correlated within partners. Relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction were strongly and positively correlated within and between male and female partners.

FCP and Fear of Emotional Intimacy. The structural model was a good fit to the data, χ^2 (373, $N = 127$) = 417.26, $p = .06$, CFI = .99, IFI = .99, NFI = .90, RMSEA = .03, 90% CI [.00, .046]. All parcels loaded highly onto their corresponding latent constructs (range = .83-.96). See Figure 10 for estimated parameters and significance levels. For both male and female partners, conversation orientation was negatively associated with their own fear of emotional intimacy. In other words, male or female partners with low conversation orientations were likely to experience more discomfort with emotional connection in their close relationships. There was also one significant partner effect present: males' low conformity orientation was associated with females' greater fear of emotional intimacy. No other actor or partner effects for conversation or conformity orientations were significant.

For both male and female partners, there were significant inverse actor and partner effects of fear of emotional intimacy on relationship and sexual satisfaction (the relationship between females' fear of emotional intimacy and males' sexual satisfaction was approaching significance. These findings suggest that for both partners, less fear of emotional intimacy was associated with greater relationship and sexual satisfaction for both them and their

partner. Only one direct effect was approaching significance in the model: females'
conversation orientation was positively associated with their relationship satisfaction.

Conversation and conformity orientations were negatively correlated for both female
and male partners. Relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction were strongly and
positively correlated within and between male and female partners.

FCP and General Sexual Communication. The structural model was an excellent
fit to the data, χ^2 (373, $N = 127$) = 415.43, $p = .06$, CFI = .99, IFI = .99, NFI = .90, RMSEA =
.03, 90% CI [.00, .045]. All parcels loaded highly onto their corresponding latent constructs
(range = .73-.96). See Figure 11 for estimated parameters and significance levels. For both
female and male partners, the positive association between their own conversation orientation
and their own general sexual communication was approaching significance. There were no
other significant actor or partner effects for conversation or conformity orientations.

For both male and female partners, their own general sexual communication was
positively associated with their own and their partner's relationship and sexual satisfaction
(except for the path between males' sexual communication and females' relationship
satisfaction which was not significant). These findings suggest that greater sexual
communication predicts greater relationship and sexual satisfaction for both partners. Only
one direct effect was approaching significance in the model: females' conversation
orientation was positively associated with their own relationship satisfaction.

Conversation and conformity orientations were negatively correlated for both females
and males. Relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction were positively correlated within
and between male and female partners (except for the relationship between females' sexual
satisfaction and males' relationship satisfaction which was not significant).

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ACEs and Partner Communicative Responsiveness. The structural model was an acceptable fit to the data, χ^2 (189, $N = 127$) = 326.07, $p < .001$, CFI = .94, IFI = .94, NFI = .87, RMSEA = .076, 90% CI [.06, .09]. All parcels loaded acceptably onto their corresponding latent constructs (range = .47-.96). See Figure 12 for estimated parameters and significance levels. There were no significant actor or partner effects between ACEs and partner communicative responsiveness. For both female and male partners, their perceptions of partner communicative responsiveness were positively associated with their own and their partner's relationship and sexual satisfaction. In other words, when females and males felt their partner was responsive during the intimacy conversation, they were more satisfied with their sexual and romantic relationships, and their partners were also more satisfied with their sexual and romantic relationships. There were also several significant direct effects. Females' ACEs were negatively associated with both their relationship and sexual satisfaction. For male partners, the negative association between males' ACEs and their sexual satisfaction was approaching significance.

Relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction were strongly and positively correlated within and between male and female partners, except for the positive association between females' relationship satisfaction and males' sexual satisfaction, which was approaching significance.

ACEs and Observational Communicative Responsiveness. The structural model was an adequate fit to the data, χ^2 (150, $N = 127$) = 291.75, $p < .001$, CFI = .94, IFI = .94, NFI = .88, RMSEA = .087, 90% CI [.07, .10]. All parcels loaded well onto their corresponding latent constructs (range = .76-.97). See Figure 13. There were no significant

actor or partner effects between ACEs and observational communicative responsiveness. Females' observational communicative responsiveness was positively associated with females' sexual and relationship satisfaction as well as males' sexual and relationship satisfaction. In other words, as female partners appeared more responsive during the intimacy conversation to outside coders, both females and males were likely to be more satisfied with their sexual and romantic relationships. However, males' observational communicative responsiveness was negatively associated with males' relationship satisfaction and females' sexual and relationship satisfaction. This finding suggests that when males appeared less responsive during the intimacy conversation to outside coders, male partners reported being more satisfied with their relationship and female partners reported being more satisfied with their romantic and sexual relationships.

Several direct paths were significant. Females' ACEs were negatively associated with both their relationship and sexual satisfaction. In other words, as female partners experience more ACEs, their relationship and sexual satisfaction decrease. For male partners, the negative association between males' ACEs and their sexual satisfaction was approaching significance. Relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction were strongly and positively correlated within and between male and female partners.

ACEs and Fear of Emotional Intimacy. The structural model was an excellent fit to the data, χ^2 (150, $N = 127$) = 162.53, $p = .23$, CFI = .995, IFI = .995, NFI = .94, RMSEA = .026, 90% CI [.00, .05]. All parcels loaded highly onto their corresponding latent constructs (range = .82-.96). See Figure 14 for estimated parameters and significance levels. There were no significant actor or partner effects between ACEs and fear of emotional intimacy. For both partners, fear of emotional intimacy was negatively associated with both their own and

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their partner's relationship and sexual satisfaction (except for the path between females' fear of emotional intimacy and males' sexual satisfaction which was not significant). These findings suggest less fear of emotional intimacy for both females and males predicted greater relationship and sexual satisfaction for them and their partner. There were also two significant direct effects: females' ACEs were negatively associated with both their relationship and sexual satisfaction. In other words, as females experienced more ACEs, they were less satisfied with their sexual and romantic relationships. Lastly, relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction were strongly and positively correlated within and between male and female partners.

ACEs and General Sexual Communication. The structural model was an excellent fit to the data, χ^2 (150, $N = 127$) = 170.91, $p = .12$, CFI = .99, IFI = .99, NFI = .93, RMSEA = .033, 90% CI [.00, .055]. All parcels loaded highly onto their corresponding latent constructs (range = .74-.96). See Figure 15 for estimated parameters and significance levels. There were no significant actor or partner effects between ACEs and general sexual communication. For both partners, general sexual communication was positively associated with their own and their partner's relationship and sexual satisfaction. These findings suggest greater sexual communication from both partners predicted greater relationship and sexual satisfaction for them and their partner. There were also two significant direct effects present: females' ACEs were negatively associated with both their relationship and sexual satisfaction. These results indicate that as females experience more ACEs, they have less relational and sexual satisfaction. In addition, relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction were positively correlated within and between male and female partners (except for the relationship between females' sexual satisfaction and males' relationship satisfaction which was not significant).

Mediation Results

Attachment Models

Attachment and Partner Communicative Responsiveness. Table 27 presents the mediation results for the attachment and partner communicative responsiveness model. Females' partner communicative responsiveness during the intimacy conversation partially mediated the associations between (a) their own attachment anxiety and sexual satisfaction, (b) their own attachment anxiety and relationship satisfaction, (c) their own attachment avoidance and sexual satisfaction, and (d) their own attachment avoidance and relationship satisfaction. Males' attachment anxiety negatively predicted their perceptions of partner communicative responsiveness during the intimacy conversation, which in turn, positively predicted (a) their own sexual satisfaction, (b) their own relationship satisfaction, and (c) their female partner's sexual satisfaction. These three mediations were full mediations. These findings suggest that males' attachment anxiety can negatively impact how responsive they perceive their partner to be, which, in turn, affects their sexual and relationship satisfaction, as well as their partner's sexual satisfaction.

Males' perceptions of partner communicative responsiveness partially mediated the association between (a) their attachment avoidance and sexual satisfaction, and (b) their attachment avoidance and relationship satisfaction. Lastly, males' perceptions of partner communicative responsiveness fully mediated the association between male's own attachment avoidance and their female partner's sexual satisfaction. Again, this finding suggests males' attachment avoidance influences how responsive they perceive their partner to be in conversations about emotional and sexual intimacy, which, in turn, affects their partner's sexual satisfaction.

Attachment and Observational Communicative Responsiveness. Table 28 presents the mediation results for the attachment and observational communicative responsiveness model. Two indirect effects approached significance, so the indirect estimates and significance levels were calculated. Neither path was significant, thus no mediational paths were significant for this model.

Attachment and Fear of Emotional Intimacy. Table 29 presents the mediation results for the attachment and fear of emotional intimacy model. Females' fear of emotional intimacy partially mediated the association between (a) their own attachment anxiety and sexual satisfaction, and (b) their own attachment anxiety and relationship satisfaction. Females' attachment avoidance positively predicted their fear of emotional intimacy, which in turn, negatively predicted (a) their own sexual satisfaction, (b) their own relationship satisfaction, and (c) males' relationship satisfaction. These were all full mediations. These findings indicate that females' greater attachment anxiety and avoidance contribute to their greater fear of emotional intimacy, which, in turn, predicts their decreased sexual and relational satisfaction, as well as their partner's decreased sexual satisfaction.

Males' attachment anxiety positively predicted their fear of emotional intimacy, which in turn, negatively predicted their own (a) sexual satisfaction and (b) relationship satisfaction. Lastly, males' attachment avoidance positively predicted their fear of emotional intimacy, which in turn, negatively predicted their own (a) sexual satisfaction and (b) relationship satisfaction. These were all full mediations. Similar to the female partners' findings above, when males experience more attachment avoidance and anxiety, they experience greater fear of emotional intimacy, which, in turn, predicts their decreased relationship and sexual satisfaction.

Attachment and General Sexual Communication. Table 30 presents the mediation results for the attachment and general sexual communication model. Females' attachment anxiety negatively predicted their general sexual communication, which in turn, positively predicted their sexual satisfaction. This was a full mediation. In addition, females' general sexual communication partially mediated the association between (a) their attachment anxiety and relational satisfaction, and (b) their attachment avoidance and relationship satisfaction. In other words, as females' experience greater attachment anxiety and avoidance, their own sexual communication can suffer, which, in turn, can contribute to less relationship and sexual satisfaction.

All of the following mediations are full mediations. Males' attachment anxiety negatively predicted their own general sexual communication, which in turn, positively predicted their own (a) sexual satisfaction, and (b) relationship satisfaction. In addition, males' attachment avoidance negatively predicted their own general sexual communication, which in turn, positively predicted their own (a) sexual satisfaction, and (b) relationship satisfaction. Lastly, males' attachment avoidance negatively predicted females' general sexual communication, which, in turn, positively predicted females' sexual and relationship satisfaction. Similarly to females' results, when males experience more attachment anxiety and avoidance, they report less general sexual communication, which, in turn, can contribute to less relationship and sexual satisfaction. Additionally, males' increased attachment avoidance contributes to less general sexual communication for their female partners, which, in turn, negatively impacts females' relationship and sexual satisfaction.

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FCP and Partner Communicative Responsiveness. Table 31 presents the mediation results for the FCP and partner communicative responsiveness model. Although several indirect effects were significant or approached significance, there were no significant mediational paths for this model once indirect estimates were calculated.

FCP and Observational Communicative Responsiveness. No indirect effects approached significance for the FCP and observational communicative responsiveness model, so indirect estimates were not calculated.

FCP and Fear of Emotional Intimacy. Table 32 presents the mediation results for the FCP and fear of emotional intimacy model. Males' fear of intimacy fully mediated the associations between (a) their own conversation orientation and sexual satisfaction, (b) their own conversation orientation and relationship satisfaction, and (c) their own conversation orientation and females' relationship satisfaction. Males' fear of intimacy partially mediated the association between males' conversation orientation and females' sexual satisfaction. These findings suggest that as males report greater conversation orientation from their childhood, they experience less fear of emotional intimacy, which, in turn, contributes to greater relationship and sexual satisfaction for them and their female partner.

Females' fear of intimacy fully mediated the association between (a) males' conformity orientation and females' sexual satisfaction, and (b) males' conformity orientation and females' relationship satisfaction. These findings suggest that when males report greater conformity orientation from their childhood, their female partners experience less fear of emotional intimacy, which, in turn, contributes to greater relationship and sexual satisfaction for their female partner.

FCP and General Sexual Communication. Table 33 presents the mediation results for the FCP and general sexual communication model. Males' general sexual communication fully mediated the relationship between males' conversation orientation and their own (a) sexual satisfaction and (b) relationship satisfaction. In addition, males' general sexual communication partially mediated the relationship between males' conversation orientation and their female partner's sexual satisfaction. In other words, when males report greater conversation orientation from their childhood, they experience greater sexual communication, which, in turn, contributes to greater relationship and sexual satisfaction for them, and greater sexual satisfaction for their female partner.

Adverse Childhood Experiences Models

No indirect effects approached significance for any of the ACEs models, so indirect estimates were not calculated.

Brief Discussion

The quantitative results of this study shed light on the dyadic nature of sexual communication and intimacy in romantic couples and the individual and familial factors that predict these communication patterns. Attachment avoidance and anxiety were the strongest predictors for the mediators tested (i.e., partner communicative responsiveness, observational communicative responsiveness, fear of emotional intimacy, and general sexual communication), thus providing more theoretical support for attachment theory. The predictors of FCP and ACEs did not have as strong effects on the mediators in the models as hypothesized, which may be for several reasons, which will be further discussed in the general discussion section. However, in all of the models tested, each mediator was significantly associated with at least the individual's relationship and sexual satisfaction, if

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not also the partner's relationship and sexual satisfaction. These findings demonstrate that couples' communication and relationship and sexual satisfaction are inextricably intertwined and need to be studied as such. As the models show, one's communication in the intimacy conversation, or general sexual communication, or overall fear of emotional intimacy, can impact not only their own relationship and sexual satisfaction, but also their partner's. Theoretical and pragmatic implications will be further discussed in the general discussion chapter.

CHAPTER V: QUALITATIVE RESULTS

Phronetic Iterative Approach

Tracy's (2018; 2020) phronetic iterative approach was used for the qualitative analyses of both the intimacy conversations and follow-up interviews. The phronetic iterative approach is unique in that the researcher uses abductive reasoning to go back and forth between emergent findings in the data and existing theories, models, and concepts in the field. Two separate research teams (each comprised of myself and three research assistants) analyzed the conversations and interviews to allow for novel themes to emerge from each dataset. I was the only consistent member on both teams, so I was able to draw comparisons between the two datasets and limit bias from the other dataset's findings. While the quantitative analyses excluded couples that did not have distinguishable male and female partners, the qualitative analyses include all participants in the sample. Two Zoom conversations were not usable because one couple did not speak English during their discussion, and the other couple experienced technological issues so there was no video or audio recording of their conversation. There were no issues with any of the follow-up interviews. Thus, 133 Zoom conversations and 31 follow-up interviews were included in the qualitative analyses. Both research teams met weekly for an hour, with the conversation team meeting for 20 weeks and the interview team meeting for 10 weeks (due to the smaller dataset).

Following the phronetic iterative analysis protocol outlined in Tracy (2018; 2020), each research team began with the data immersion phase. All coders had worked on other parts of the study (i.e., data collection and/or transcription), so they were all familiar with the content of the conversations and interviews. They also read through each transcript multiple

times at the beginning and throughout the coding process. After the data immersion phase, the next phase was primary-cycle coding, in which codes were primarily descriptive and detailed the "who, what, where, and when" in the transcripts (Tracy, 2020). During this phase, each team open coded 20% of the data (i.e., 26 transcripts for the conversation team and 6 transcripts for the interview team) using Atlas.ti, an online qualitative data analysis software that allowed for collaboration among multiple team members. Initially, each coder independently coded a transcript, then the other coders would read that transcript and add additional codes as they saw fit. After a few rounds of this style of coding, coders completed transcripts independently. During weekly meetings coders would discuss their first-level codes, and we grouped conceptually similar codes together. Coding disagreements were also resolved during these meetings.

At the beginning of secondary-cycle coding (i.e., axial coding), the conversation team formed a codebook from the 200+ first-level codes. We printed out all of the first-level codes then manually sorted them into theoretically similar groups, engaging in hierarchical coding and creating second-level codes that synthesized the data and created larger themes. The conversation team was familiar with interpersonal and family communication theories and some of the literature on romantic relationships and intimacy, so the coders and I could draw in these larger theoretical concepts during the sorting process. Not all first-level codes were used during this sorting process, as some codes did not attend to our research questions. The four themes created from this sorting process are displayed in Figures 16 through 19. These four themes and sub-concepts were used as a codebook moving forward. The conversation team then split the remaining transcripts and independently coded them using the codebook.

During this process, we discussed how the codebook fit the new data, looked for discrepant cases, and made revisions as needed.

After the interview team completed primary-cycle coding, I compared the first-level codes to the codebook created for the conversation team. Similar themes and sub-concepts were continuously emerging in the follow-up interview data, so I used the conversation data codebook and completed secondary-cycle coding for the interview data by myself. Even though the interviews elicited similar themes to the conversations, some novel ideas emerged from the interview data, which are discussed below.

Findings

Overall, both the conversation and interview data suggest that emotional and sexual intimacy appear different in every romantic relationship, however partners try to learn from mistakes in past relationships (both romantic and platonic) to be better partners in their current romantic relationship. The conversation data elicited four themes (see Figures 16 to 19) that will be explored in detail below. The first theme, **Socialization of Intimacy**, attends to RQ_1 which asked, *how do individuals learn about intimacy?* This theme explores the many socialization factors individuals encountered either through passively being taught about intimacy or through actively seeking out information on intimacy. Factors that shaped perceptions of intimacy include family attitudes, sexual education in school, culture, religious beliefs, and intimacy portrayals in the media.

The following three themes attend to RQ_2 which asked, *how do individuals experience intimacy in their romantic relationships?* The second theme, **Learning About Intimacy is a Continuous Process**, illustrates how each relationship comes with its unique set of rules and norms regarding emotional and sexual intimacy. Sometimes past

relationships determine how partners desire to enact intimacy in the current relationship, whereas other times a transition in the relationship is the catalyst for change. Lastly, self-reflection or personal growth may be the impetus for change in intimacy in a relationship. The third theme, **Intimacy Displays are Either Modeled or Compensated**, details how individuals develop frameworks of how they desire their relationships to (not) be, depending on how they observed intimacy between their parents and with their past partners. The fourth theme, **Emotional and Sexual Intimacy Build Over Time**, explains how partners establish trust and understanding as they get to know one another. When partners feel secure with one another, their emotional and sexual intimacy can further develop.

The purpose of the follow-up interviews was to probe for more depth for RQ_1 and RQ_2. Thus, the conversation and interview findings are discussed in tandem in each theme. However, the interview context was different from the Zoom conversation context in that participants were interviewed alone (without their partner) and for a longer period of time. The interview setting allowed for more privacy and honesty, which elicited more participants' disclosures of sensitive information. The interviewer could also probe to gather more depth regarding why the individuals felt the way they did. The final theme, **Conversation Served as an Intimacy Intervention**, attends to RQ_3 which asked, *how did individuals' conversation about sexual and emotional intimacy affect their relationship?* Although not its intended purpose, participants reported that the Zoom conversation sparked subsequent conversations about intimacy in their relationships. In addition, participants said the Zoom conversation gave them a framework and vocabulary to discuss emotional and sexual intimacy in their relationships, thus providing efficacy to have further discussions.

Socialization of Intimacy

There was a wide variety of experiences of how individuals learned about both emotional and sexual intimacy. Many participants discussed never having conversations or "sex talks" with their parents, or if they did have those talks, they were largely technical and transmitted their parents' sexual attitudes. When parents did not provide helpful education about sex and intimacy, participants looked toward other sources for information, including friends, school, religion, and media. These sources also had drawbacks, as friends were often as knowledgeable as the participants, sex education in schools was very technical and may have been abstinence-only or rooted in religious values, and media depictions of intimacy were often unrealistic.

Couple 53 described how their parents had limited discussions about sexual and emotional intimacy with them:

> **53M:** I've had some sex talks with my mom because she's a doctor, but it's all pretty medical what she said…
>
> **53F:** My mom did have a conversation with me, probably because I'm a girl too. But just like to wait for the right person type thing, to make sure you're fully comfortable with them, before you get emotionally and sexually intimate with someone because it takes a toll on you. So, I did learn about that from a young age.
>
> **53M:** I would say my mom has like said similar things like that to me, like be respectful, obviously like consensual, and make sure that everyone's comfortable.
>
> **53F:** Yeah, I agree.
>
> **53M:** But also like you don't need to rush things, you know… My mom is definitely against like really casual sexual encounters.

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53F: Oh, I would agree. My parents are definitely like… I mean, I am the first kid too, so they just don't want to think about that. But I feel like my dad especially, would be like absolutely not. And my mom would also be. Even though they probably did that on their own.

The male partner stated his "sex talk" was more focused on the biological or medical mechanisms of sexual activity, whereas the female partner described how her parents emphasized the connection between sexual and emotional intimacy. Both partners expressed that their parents conveyed their negative attitudes about casual sexual relationships, although the partners mused that these views may be hypocritical since their parents likely had casual sexual encounters. Couple 8 also discussed how the female partner's parents emphasized messages of purity and morality regarding sexual encounters.

8F: I guess my mom taught me a little about sexual intimacy. Not really like the nuts and bolts, but she always told me never to have sex without love. Now, I don't necessarily agree with this phrase, but she used to say that that 'sex without love was dirty.' I don't agree with that. I think that's a bit old-fashioned minded. But I think that it was an important lesson, especially being a young girl. I'm glad that I had that in the back of my mind, even though I don't agree with it now as an adult. I do think that it is important to have, maybe not love, but I think that that word really should have been emotional intimacy, before you have sex.

The idea of purity, especially for women, is largely tied to cultural and religious values. In her follow-up interview, 59F explained how her religious family demonized sexual activity and avoided discussing it.

59F: I grew up in a very religious Catholic household. Like, [sex] was always just like, really bad. It was just like, 'No, do not do it.' Especially premarital [sex] like, do not do it. I think it was mostly just putting a lot of fear and shame on to your children. And at the same time, it didn't really make sense because it was like, '[Sex] is a beautiful thing that everyone deserves to experience, but you still shouldn't do it.' [The messages] were just to scare you and to discourage [sex]. And if you do engage in it, to feel shameful about it.

As 59F explains, she received opposing messages regarding sex due to her parents' religious beliefs. Sexual activity was deemed sacred, yet also very shameful. These strict and contradicting messages left her confused about sexual intimacy. However, not all religious teachings stigmatize sexual intimacy. In her follow-up interview, 10F explained how her synagogue actively tried to destigmatize sexual intimacy, which helped her develop a positive outlook on sexuality.

10F: I went to a reformed Jewish temple, and it's a very progressive temple. I remember we had this guy come in, and basically gave us a sex ed class. One of the first exercises that we did was he had us all write down all of the synonyms for sex that we could possibly think about. There was like, 'screw,' 'hammer,' and 'pound.' Then he showed us how aggressive all those words were. Like, 'I screwed this girl' or like, 'I banged her.' All of the words that are used as synonyms for sex are aggressive and kind of violent. I think my synagogue's education was really helpful, and just like the fact that my rabbi was there in the room with us, and she was totally cool with everything. I think we were like, 13 or 14 years old. Talking about sex openly with

our religious officials with us made it something that's not shamed and not scary.

That was really important and helpful, and kind of destigmatized it.

Similar to religious and cultural ideas of purity that are primarily cast onto women, men face cultural pressures of masculinity, specifically regarding emotional intimacy. Couple 3 discussed how the male partner was taught to keep his emotions to himself because that's how a man should behave. However, when he entered this romantic relationship with his partner, he felt that he could open up emotionally to her.

3M: For me, I've never had anyone to open up to in my life…I was raised that a man is supposed to be a man. That's how I was raised by my dad and my mom. And I mean, even growing up with two sisters, I didn't have anyone who I could go and say, this is bothering me. It was always you figure it out by yourself. So, I think you're the first person I've really been able to just tell you how I'm feeling about a situation, even if it's good. I've never had a person to talk to pretty much.

While most participants said they had some sort of formal sexual education in middle or high school, it was often limited in scope. Some programs emphasized abstinence, while other schools covered contraception and sexually transmitted diseases/infections. However, there was a consensus among participants that emotional intimacy in sexual and/or romantic relationships was not taught in sexual education classes. Couple 113 discussed their sexual education class they had in high school together:

113F: It wasn't necessarily abstinence-only education but there was a lot of emphasis on that. Like, they did not really touch on any emotional aspects of sex. It was like, penis, vagina, periods.

113M: They didn't talk about queer sex at all.

113F: Oh no, none of that. It was just like, 'Don't have sex. That's the best way to not get pregnant.' Not really much on contraceptives or anything. They did not touch on emotional sexual intimacy.

Without formal or informal education on sexual and emotional intimacy, some participants were left to learn on their own. 112F says she "learned a lot of stuff about sex online… like don't forget to pee after sex," which was not taught in her formal sexual education courses. Similarly, 104M said he "learned [about sex] faster through porn than from school. Because in school, I learned [about sex] in ninth grade. But my friends were all watching porn when I was in like, middle school." In addition to watching pornography, some participants said they turned toward movies and television shows for displays of intimacy and how to enact intimacy. In her follow-up interview, 25F describes how she learned about sexual intimacy from *Glee*, a popular 2010's sitcom about a high school glee club that explored themes of romantic relationships and sexuality.

25F: If you are familiar with the show, *Glee*, I watched that show in fifth grade. So that basically was my sex education… I think even now, I still look to pieces of media as kind of like references for how to like, navigate these situations.

Without formal education or socialization of emotional and sexual intimacy, individuals have to seek out information about how to behave in romantic or sexual encounters. Sometimes these displays of intimacy in media are rather unrealistic or dramatized, as with pornography, which typically focuses on sexual acts and not emotional or sexual intimacy.

Learning About Intimacy is a Continuous Process

Participants described how both emotional and sexual intimacy were continuously negotiated in their relationships. Past romantic relationships were often the source of desiring

different experiences of intimacy. Other times, relationship transitions or issues within relationships caused couples to recalibrate how they communicated about and expressed intimacy with their partner. Couple 94 discussed how it was important to both of them to explain their past relationships and emotional baggage to each other. These conversations allowed them to better understand one another and how they wanted to approach their current relationship.

> **94-2:** When we first met each other, we shared our history. Like we got a little deep. And I think that's important because it's like, you need to know everything that happened before to understand why we are who we are.

Couple 60 described how their past romantic relationships allowed them to understand how they wanted to express and receive intimacy. They also described how maturing helped them realize the importance of discussing intimacy, especially when life transitions like moving in together, disrupted their routines.

> **60F:** [I learned about intimacy] through experience with other partners, and just like learning how people want to be loved and like to be loved and treated and be intimate.
>
> **60M:** Yeah, I think experience is probably the only real way I feel like.
>
> **60F:** Or just like talking about it. Like we've talked about it before. Like, what do you need? What are your needs? How do you want to feel close to me?
>
> **60M:** But like when you were like, 17 in your first relationship, those conversations probably never happened. And it comes with like, 'Oh, if I'm gonna cohabitate with another person, I've got to learn how to be like…' Like when we first moved in together, it wasn't smooth sailing right off the bat. There's lots of experience and

being willing to adapt to have uncomfortable conversations. Uncomfortable, not in a bad way, but I know with a lot of people at first…

60F: They're taboo conversations.

60M: Right, right…taboo is the right way to put it, it's a difficult topic to talk about your feelings and receive other people's feelings. A lot of people are maybe willing to talk about how *they* feel, but then they stop listening as soon as someone else does the same.

Couple 82 discussed how an external factor, the Covid-19 pandemic, caused them to face the transition of living together sooner than expected. Due to this sudden change, both partners had to recalibrate their routines and be more direct in their communication with each other about their intimacy needs. However, the female partner described how their direct communication aided in subsequent transitions, such as when she began graduate school.

82F: We started dating right before COVID and then we quarantined together, and towards the end of quarantine we ended up needing to be more direct about what we needed. I remember when I started grad school, you expressed that you like needed more emotional intimacy, you needed more quality time together. So, we had to be more direct with each other about that. And I think that that's something that we've like, been pretty good about since it's like, if one of us feels like our needs aren't being met, we address it.

82M: Yeah, I think definitely over COVID it kind of changed because like, with me being an only child and liking being alone for the vast majority –

82F: And I was just there all the time.

82M: Yeah, so I think that because of that, I was put in a situation where I had to express my needs where I never really had to. I always had a place to go back and be the only one there. And once that changed, I think I understood emotional intimacy a lot more than I ever had to up until that point. I feel like with previous relationships, it was always easy for me to get away from problems because like, if I wasn't wanting to deal with shit, I can leave. But like, over COVID, it definitely changed where like, if we had problems, we had to talk through it.

Similarly, Couple 22 described the common transition from friends to romantic partners, and how the transition required them to have in-depth conversations about their emotional and sexual intimacy. This couple found it helpful to have specific time dedicated to these conversations where they could talk through their feelings and needs.

22F: We started out as being really good friends. We didn't just start dating when we met each other. So, I think we already had that communication there. But then when you switch to having a [romantic] relationship, obviously it gets different in the way that you talk about your feelings. And then you're adding like a whole other sexual field to relationship too, so it's a whole other need to talk about. I like when we sit down and have talks about it because I like setting aside space for it. Because sometimes in the moment, it's overwhelming and I don't feel like it's the time to say how I'm feeling.

Even without a turning point or major transition in a relationship necessitating change, partners may find that they still can work on their communication patterns and intimacy. Couple 98 reflected on how the female partner struggles with being emotionally intimate, but she is continuing to work on voicing her feelings to her partner.

98F: I think I'm still on that journey of telling you things, like telling you when I'm

upset by something and expressing that. In general, I'm pretty bad at that with people,

and the people closest to me are the most difficult to talk about.

98M: Yeah, I get that. I would say just like, let me in more, but you have been really

good at that. So, I think we're going in the right direction already with that.

Overall, this theme demonstrates that emotional and sexual intimacy are not concepts that

can be fully learned. Rather, intimacy is something that is continuously learned, dependent

on each relationship and stages of life.

Intimacy Displays are Either Modeled or Compensated

Participants were clearly split on whether they desired to replicate intimacy behaviors

they had seen in past relationships or between their parents, or whether they wanted to do the

complete opposite from what they had experienced. The male partner in Couple 16 described

how his parents displayed a healthy relationship, and have been happily married for 23 years.

16M: I definitely learned a lot from my family, and how my mom and dad treat each

other. Sometimes they will disagree or argue, but they're very respectful towards each

other in that they both make an effort to understand how the other person's feeling…

My parents have been married for 23 years now. They're doing something right.

Similarly, the male partner from Couple 27 reflected on how his parents' displays of

intimacy subconsciously caused him to model their openness toward physical affection with

his romantic partners.

27M: My mom and dad have a very loving relationship, and I see them touching,

snuggling on the couch all the time. It's not something I ever really thought about

before I got into relationships, but I definitely think it's had a big impact about how

I'm more touchy-feely with my partners, and I'm more comfortable and stuff.

In contrast, many participants recounted how their parents did not model healthy emotional

or sexual intimacy for them. For some participants, their parents were still unhappily married,

whereas others witnessed their parents get divorced, or become trapped in an endless cycle of

unfulfilling relationships. 24F said, "My parents fought a lot when I was younger. [I thought]

that doesn't feel good, that's not what I want in a partner." After witnessing her parents

handle conflict unsuccessfully, 24F decided not to mirror her parents' communicative

behaviors in her own romantic relationships. Relatedly, the male partner in Couple 46

remembered how his father was not emotionally available for his mother or other family

members, and how he did not want to repeat this pattern. After seeing the negative impact of

his father's avoidant behavior, 46M decided he wanted to be physically and emotionally

present for his romantic partner unlike his father.

> **46M:** A big part about of intimacy is not only being there physically, but also
>
> emotionally and mentally…that's how I tried to show it too. I'm not trying to get in
>
> the habit of being like, 'Sorry, I'm busy.' That's something that I noticed with my dad
>
> that I wasn't huge fan…how my dad often chooses work instead [of family], or is like,
>
> 'Sorry, I gotta go.' Yeah, that really is something that I don't want to try and replicate.

10M was extreme in how he responded to his parents' displays of intimacy. In his follow-up

interview, 10M described the impact his parents' divorce had on his outlook on romantic

relationships. Even though he said his parents' divorce was quite amicable, he does not desire

to ever go through a divorce himself, and thus, is cautious in romantic relationships.

10M: I think being old enough to watch the unfolding of [my parent's] relationship was, maybe not scarring, but impressionable for me. And I think that despite any of my subconscious feelings, I think I'm very timid to give someone my full, unwavering, intimate, self. Because I don't want to have to go through that. I don't want to have to go through a divorce. I would rather wait it out, or potentially even miss opportunities, even if it means that I don't marry anybody at all because then I'm not getting divorced. Or [ensure] that I am one million, trillion percent sure that this person is good and that I will stay married the rest of my life.

Parents' romantic relationships have a large impact on how their children come to understand intimacy, as demonstrated throughout this theme. Participants whose parents modeled healthy, loving relationships wished to replicate these displays in their romantic relationships. On the other hand, participants who experienced unhealthy or tumultuous displays of intimacy from their parents had no desire to repeat those same patterns with their romantic partners.

Emotional and Sexual Intimacy Build Over Time

Participants discussed how emotional and sexual intimacy were not immediately present in their relationships. Rather, partners had to work together to understand each other. As their trust and comfort with each other grew, so did their intimacy. Couple 88 explained that it took a while to build emotional intimacy with one another because the male partner experienced rejection of his feelings in past relationships. Over time, the couple built trust and emotional intimacy, which allowed the male partner to disclose his past traumas to his partner.

88M: I will say, it's only due to the things that I've been through, and the people that I've had relationships with in the past, when I do talk about a lot of my past traumas it tends to, I don't want to say it like scares people, but it does change their opinion on me. And they just think of me in a certain way that I don't want them to.

88F: Yeah, it took you a long time to open up. You hid a lot of parts of yourself for a long time, like a lot of parts of yourself that you didn't want to show me. And you kind of hinted and insinuated that. But you didn't want to like fully reveal, which I thought was interesting. And then it wasn't until about five or six months, and I started seeing a little bit of each side of you, and I started to fully grasp your entire being. And we had talked enough, and we had been intimate long enough to where I felt really, really comfortable with you.

For individuals who have experienced traumas, betrayals, or unhealthy relationships, it may take longer for them to feel secure and be emotionally intimate with their partner. If their partner is validating and respectful, they can help their partner feel comfortable as demonstrated by Couple 88. Likewise, Couple 96 described the ability to really know and understand one's partner that develops over time. Couple 96 discussed how they have become in tune with one another's emotions, and they are extremely willing to communicate about any issues that arise in their relationship. Couple 96 demonstrated that maintaining their relationship through check-ins with each other allowed their emotional intimacy to remain in a desired state.

96F: When we feel like something's wrong, we check in with each other to make sure we're still on the same page.

96M: I feel like we're both pretty good about sensing that the other person is not

perfectly in their best headspace, but sometimes I check in, you say you're okay, then

I'll check back in in an hour or whatever. We won't push it too much, but we both

clearly know when something is wrong.

The female partner in Couple 47 talked about how her partner's validation and support was

extremely important to her and allowed emotional and sexual intimacy to develop in their

relationship.

47F: I appreciate that you're always willing to listen, like during sex specifically

because I'm new to a lot of stuff. So, it's nice to have someone that will talk me

through it, reassure me, make sure I'm okay. And I'm not very good at sharing my

emotions, but you always ask how my day is, or you try and make that initiative so I

can come out of my comfort zone. But I struggle with that, and I appreciate that you

always make the conscious effort to do that. And part of emotional intimacy is having

someone like that, and I never really had that before. [47F begins crying] So it's nice,

and I just appreciate you being there… I'm crying!

47F became emotional and began crying while expressing how grateful she was for her

partner, and he comforted her by putting his arm around her. For 47F, her partner listening to

her needs was particularly important since he was her first sexual partner, and he provided a

safe and non-judgmental space for her.

In contrast, Couple 28 discussed how sexual intimacy was not at the forefront of their

relationship initially because the male partner used to identify as asexual. Instead, they

focused on building emotional intimacy, which allowed them to have open conversations

about the potential for a sexual component of their relationship. When they did begin a sexual relationship, they already felt comfortable and secure with one another.

> **28M:** When we started seeing each other, I had been asexual for years. And then we started hanging out a lot, and then you started sleeping over at my house. I didn't know if we were gonna have sex, and then it kind of just started happening.
>
> **28F:** But we talked about it.
>
> **28M:** Yeah, we definitely talked about it.
>
> **28F:** It wasn't spontaneous. One time after I slept at your house, and we hadn't done anything but kiss because we were talking about [the possibility of having sex]. We were taking it really slow. So, I was like, we don't have to have sex, I really like hanging out with you. And you were like, I think I'm down to try maybe, but I need some time… But I remember we took a shower together and it was like the first time we'd seen each other naked, but it was very comfortable and like not sexual. It just felt very intimate, like I feel exposed and vulnerable in a nice way with this guy that I really like and trust. I feel like that is a good anecdote that shows like our immediate comfortability. I feel like we were down to share all parts of each other from the beginning, even if it wasn't sexual immediately.

Some couples struggled more with emotional intimacy, whereas others grappled with sexual intimacy. However, all couple reported that as they communicated more openly and developed trust with each other, it was easier to discuss and develop intimacy in their relationships.

Conversation Served as an Intimacy Intervention

Participants were asked in the follow-up interviews to reflect on their Zoom conversation and describe what impact, if any, it had on their relationship. Almost all participants said they did not believe the Zoom conversation had a major impact on their relationship, but they explained how the conversation allowed for subsequent discussions of intimacy. 27F described how the Zoom conversation required her and her partner to be open about what they want from each other regarding sexual and emotional intimacy, which helped them get through a difficult time in their relationship.

> **27F:** At that point, we were together for I think like, seven or eight months. We were kind of at a weird place in our relationship at that Zoom call. And I think since then, we're a lot more open about intimacy things, and have a very solid understanding of what each of us wants and needs in a partner.

8F discussed how her and her partner would be having their first child soon, and how the Zoom conversation gave them the vocabulary to further discuss intimacy in their relationship. The framework to continue discussing intimacy with her partner made her feel more efficacious, especially as they were transitioning into parenthood.

> **8F:** I don't think we would have had like the framework to even think about it like, let's talk about our emotional and sexual intimacy. Like, I think we would have just been like, 'Hey, I hope that we still have sex when we have this baby,' or, 'Hey, hope we're still as open with each other.' Now having that Zoom conversation, I feel like we have more of a vocabulary about it.

20F viewed the Zoom conversation as a helpful reminder that her partner is willing to listen to her, and that conversations about emotional and sexual intimacy do not have to be uncomfortable.

> **20F:** I would say [the Zoom conversation] was like a reference point for me to remember what he talked about or just to remember that we are on the same page, or we feel the same way. It was also a reminder that when I do share my thoughts, like what I'm thinking, that he is really receiving it and doesn't make me feel like bad. So, I just remember when we had the conversation, and how open I was able to be and how comfortable it felt.

Overall, participants found the Zoom conversations helpful for giving them the vocabulary and structure to have future conversations about intimacy with their partner. While the Zoom conversation was not intended to be an intimacy intervention, these findings provide future avenues to create actual intimacy interventions that aim to increase sexual communication efficacy in romantic couples.

Brief Discussion

The qualitative analyses of the conversation and interview data explored the nuances of sexual communication between romantic couples. Four themes emerged from the conversation and interview data: (a) Socialization of Intimacy, (b) Learning About Intimacy is a Continuous Process, (c) Intimacy Displays are Either Modeled or Compensated, and (d) Emotional and Sexual Intimacy Build Over Time. One novel theme emerged solely from the interview data: Conversation Served as an Intimacy Intervention. The first theme, Socialization of Intimacy, revealed that many young adults do not receive much information about sexual or emotional intimacy from their parents or school, thus leaving them to seek

out information from friends/peers or the media. Out of the information they did receive from their parents and school, it was usually technical information about the mechanics of sexual activity and might be laden with religious or moral values. The second theme, Learning About Intimacy is a Continuous Process, suggested that intimacy looks different in each relationship based on partner's preferences and relational transitions. Couples described how their past relationships informed how they approach intimacy in their current relationships. In addition, couples discussed how relational transitions, such as shifting from friends to romantic partners or moving in together, forced them to confront issues of emotional and/or sexual intimacy in their relationships.

The third theme, Intimacy Displays are Either Modeled or Compensated, explained how partners wanted to recreate the healthy relationships they were exposed to or wanted to stray away from the unhealthy or negative relationship models they experienced. Oftentimes, these relationships they wanted to replicate (or not) were the participants' parents. If the participants saw their parents were still loving and happy, the participants would want to emulate that in their relationships. If the participants witnessed their parents fighting, not being intimate, or getting divorced, participants would want to not repeat those patterns in their romantic relationships. The fourth theme, Emotional and Sexual Intimacy Build Over Time, discussed how partners become build trust and understanding over time, and this allows both emotional and sexual intimacy to increase. Couples struggled with different issues, including past traumas or this relationship being their first sexual and/or romantic relationship, but as they communicated more openly about these issues, they were able to better understand and rely on each other. The fifth theme, Conversation Served as an Intimacy Intervention, was derived solely from the follow-up interview data. While the Zoom

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conversation was not intended to be an intimacy intervention, many participants reported that the study helped them have subsequent conversations about intimacy with their partners.

Instead of relying on self-report measures to understand couples' sexual communication, these conversations and interviews provide a richer understanding of how individuals are socialized to learn about emotional and sexual intimacy, and subsequently enact intimacy in their relationships. Theoretical and pragmatic implications will be further discussed in the general discussion chapter.

CHAPTER VI: DISCUSSION

Sex can be a taboo or uncomfortable topic to discuss with one's romantic partner, but the importance of these conversations should not be understated since sexual communication is strongly linked to both sexual and relationship satisfaction. The purpose of this study was to examine how romantic partners communicate with each other about their sexual and emotional intimacy, what factors they bring to those conversations that might predict how they talk about intimacy, and the potential impact of their communication on their relational and sexual satisfaction. The findings from this mixed methods study confirm and extend past research on how intimacy is socialized in children as they transition into adulthood, and how the theoretical frameworks of attachment style and family communication patterns operate regarding romantic couples' sexual communication and intimacy. Furthermore, the findings highlight the interdependent nature of emotional and sexual intimacy (Prekatsounaki et al., 2022) in romantic relationships, by concluding how both partners affect each other's communication about sexual and emotional intimacy, sexual satisfaction, and relationship satisfaction. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses are discussed in further detail below.

The Socialization of Intimacy

Quantitative Models

The study's quantitative models dyadically examined three socialization factors – attachment anxiety and avoidance, conversation and conformity orientations, and adverse childhood experiences – as predictors of romantic partners' communicative responsiveness in the intimacy conversation, observational coding of the partners' communicative responsiveness, general fear of emotional intimacy, and general sexual communication. In turn, those four mediators predicted sexual and relationship satisfaction.

Across all models, attachment anxiety and avoidance were the strongest predictors of the mediating variables. Attachment anxiety and avoidance negatively predicted perceptions of partners' communicative responsiveness and couples' general sexual communication. Additionally, attachment anxiety and avoidance were positively associated with fear of emotional intimacy. These findings are consistent with past studies that have linked attachment insecurity with lower levels of sexual and emotional intimacy, sexual communication, and sexual satisfaction (Davis et al., 2006; Pink, 2018; Wendołowska et al., 2022). In addition, several significant mediation effects were found throughout the attachment models that further explain how attachment affects communication processes. Males' general sexual communication fully accounted for the relationship between (a) males' attachment anxiety and their own sexual and relationship and (b) males' avoidance and their own sexual and relationship satisfaction. For all of these mediated paths, males' attachment anxiety or avoidance was inversely related to their general sexual communication, which in turn, was positively related to their relationship and sexual satisfaction. Meaning, as males had lower attachment anxiety and avoidance (i.e., a more secure attachment), they experienced increased sexual communication in their relationship, which predicted greater relational and sexual satisfaction. These findings align with past research, such as securely attached individuals using more self-disclosure and affectionate communication (Feeney et al., 2000; Guerrero, 2017) and insecurely attached individuals experiencing less sexual communication (Davis et al., 2006; Pink, 2018). However, these mediating findings were only significant for male partners, which past literature does not address.

Conversation and conformity orientations in the FCP models did not reveal many significant paths toward the mediating variables, except that conversation orientation was

positively associated with general sexual communication and negatively associated with fear of emotional intimacy for both male and female partners. Meaning that individuals who were raised in families where it was normative to openly discuss a wide breadth of topics found it easier to engage in sexual and emotional conversations with their current romantic partners. These findings are aligned with Horan et al. (2018) who found that greater conversation orientation in families was associated with more parent-child sexual communication, and young adults with greater conversation orientation were less avoidant toward sexual communication with their romantic partners.

Several interesting mediating effects emerged in the FCP models that further elucidate the role of FCP in current relational communication. For conversation orientation, males' general sexual communication fully mediated the associations between males' conversation orientation and their own sexual and relationship satisfaction. Males' general sexual communication partially mediated the association between males' conversation orientation and their female partners' sexual satisfaction. In addition, males' fear of emotional intimacy fully mediated males' conversation orientation to their own sexual and relationship satisfaction and their female partners' relationship satisfaction. Also, males' fear of emotional intimacy partially mediated the association between males' conversation orientation and their female partners' sexual satisfaction. These mediational paths show that it is not just partners' conversation orientations they learn in childhood that contribute to their current relationship and sexual satisfaction, but rather their conversation orientations contribute to their communication processes (more general sexual communication, less fear of emotional intimacy), which predicts increased relational and sexual satisfaction for themselves and their partner. Regarding conformity orientation, females' fear of intimacy

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fully mediated males' conformity orientation to females' sexual and relationship satisfaction. This path suggests that as males have greater conformity orientation, females experience less fear of emotional intimacy, which in turn, predicts females' greater relational and sexual satisfaction. Perhaps male partners adhering to their parents' (possibly traditional) beliefs about relationships and sexual encounters creates more security for their female partners, which lowers their fear of emotional intimacy, and subsequently contributes to greater sexual and relationship satisfaction. Wu and Pask (2023) found that women who adopted their parents' beliefs and experienced more parental control (two sub-dimensions of conformity from the ECOS scale; Horstman et al., 2018) had greater intentions to engage in protective sexual behaviors (i.e., STD and pregnancy prevention, obtaining consent). In regards to the present study, high conformity orientation may lend more structure to relationships and sexual encounters, thus lowering uncertainty or fear of emotional intimacy with one's partner.

Similar to the FCP models, ACEs did not have any significant paths toward the mediating variables. This may be due to a few reasons, including the limited variance of responses for the ACEs measure. Originally, the expanded ACEs measure was used (Karatekin & Hill, 2019), but those variables resulted in poor model fit. Those responses were compared to the Felitti et al. (1998) measure, and seven items were retained for the analyses in the present study. Still, the average ACE score (out of 7) ranged from 1.11 to 1.76, for males and females, respectively. Perhaps a different measure of childhood maltreatment would be better suited for similar studies. The ACEs measures weighed all items the same – 1 if the respondent experienced that ACE, zero if not. However, some ACEs such as physical or sexual abuse potentially should receive a heavier weight than one's

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parents getting divorced. The ACEs measures also do not account for generational trauma or physiological stress, so these measures are missing some nuance that could affect couples' intimacy communication. Finally, a larger sample would likely yield greater variance in people's ACE responses.

Most interesting in the quantitative models was the consistent, significant actor and partner effects from each mediator on the outcomes of sexual and relationship satisfaction. For all models, partner communicative responsiveness was positively associated with one's own sexual and relational satisfaction. Partner effects were also present in most models; as one's perceptions of their partner's communicative responsiveness increased so did their partner's sexual and relationship satisfaction. Meaning as an individual perceived their partner to be more responsive during the intimacy conversation, not only did *their* sexual and relationship satisfaction increase, but so did their partner's sexual and relationship satisfaction. Across all models, females' observational communicative responsiveness was positively associated with both their own and their partner's sexual and relationship satisfaction. However, males' observational communicative responsiveness was consistently negatively associated with their own and their partner's sexual and relationship satisfaction. In other words, as females appeared more engaged in the conversation to outside coders, females' and males' sexual and relationship satisfaction increased. In contrast, as males appeared less responsive during the intimacy conversation, males' and females' sexual and relationship satisfaction increased. Perhaps this finding could be attributed to gender roles and socialization, where females are socialized to be expressive in their communication (including nonverbal displays) and males are not (Noller & Gallois, 1986).

Across all of the models, fear of emotional intimacy was negatively associated with one's own sexual and relationship satisfaction. Partner effects were also present in all models with fear of emotional intimacy as a mediator; one's own fear of emotional intimacy was negatively associated with their partner's sexual and relationship satisfaction. Taken together, this means less fear emotional of intimacy improved one's own and their partner's sexual and relationship satisfaction, which one can surmise is due to couples being able to be vulnerable with each other about their thoughts and feelings. There were also consistent actor and partner effects across all models with general sexual communication as a mediator. General sexual communication was positively associated with one's own sexual and relationship satisfaction, as well as their partner's sexual and relationship satisfaction. These findings of actor-partner effects support past research that have demonstrated the interdependence of partners' sexual communication, sexual satisfaction, and relationship satisfaction (e.g., Denes et al., 2023; Theiss, 2011).

Qualitative Analysis

Meanwhile, the qualitative analyses of the conversation and interview data revealed that participants learned about emotional and sexual intimacy through a variety of formal and informal channels, such as parents, friends, sex education classes at school, religion, and media, which corroborates past research (Whitfield et al., 2013). However, information about intimacy was not presented readily or thoroughly for participants through any of these channels. In fact, participants received little education about emotional and sexual intimacy from their parents, who are supposed to be the main source of knowledge for their children. Similarly, Rosenthal and Feldman (1999) found that parents infrequently discussed sexual matters with their children. In the present study, when participants' parents *did* discuss

intimacy with them, parents often transmitted messages about the morality of sexual activity, such as waiting to engage in sexual activity until they found the "right" person, were in love, or married. These messages had a gendered double standard: females often received harsher messages about remaining chaste than their male counterparts. Past research (e.g., Kim & Ward, 2007; Metts & Cupach, 1989) echo these sexual morality findings, but it is surprising that these stringent ideas of sexuality are still being taught to young adults decades later when sexual permissiveness is thought to be more socially acceptable. Furthermore, several male partners reported receiving messages regarding societal expectations of masculinity. Males said they were told either directly or indirectly that it was not "manly" to express their emotions or talk about their feelings. When they entered romantic relationships, they often felt they could open up about their feelings to their female partners, which is a common refrain (Holmes, 2015; River & Flood, 2021).

Overall, a lack of parent-child sexual communication is a detriment to children, as parent-child sexual communication has been linked to children's increased sexual assertiveness, self-efficacy regarding sexual activity, sexual satisfaction, and decreased sexual risk-taking and sexual anxiety (Denes et al., 2022; Mastro & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2015). Additionally, a lack of parent-child sexual communication during adolescence can translate to lower levels of sexual communication with romantic partners later in life, thus impeding sexual and relationship satisfaction (Denes et al., 2022).

Intimacy is a Continuous Process and Builds Over Time

Very few participants mentioned multiple or extensive discussions about emotional and sexual intimacy with their parents or in their school's sexual education classes. Oftentimes, these conversations happened once, if at all. This left many participants unsure

about how to navigate intimacy with their partners, and they often defaulted to trial and error with past or current partners. Many participants said they learned about emotional and sexual intimacy from their current partner, or that it was a "learn as you go" process in their relationships. When conflict or transitions in relationships occurred, participants found it necessary to work through these issues with their partners, rather than avoid them. However, it was a continuous negotiation of intimacy needs and desires between partners. Over time, as partners built trust and security with each other, they were able to be more emotionally and sexually intimate. These findings connect to the idea of *earned-security*, or shifting from an insecure to a secure attachment, which can be achieved through therapy and/or receiving emotional support from an alternative support figure such as a romantic partner (Dansby Olufowote et al., 2019; Saunders et al., 2011). As partners establish trust with one another, those with insecure attachments can work on healing their attachment wounds with the help of their partner.

Modeling or Compensating with Intimacy Displays

Some participants turned toward models of healthy relationships they had seen in their life, particularly among their parents, and aimed to replicate these models in their romantic relationships. In contrast, other participants noted that they did not have good or healthy models of romantic relationships in their lives. For these participants, they took the lessons they learned from seeing unhealthy relationships and tried to compensate by doing the opposite in their own romantic relationships. Past studies (Floyd & Morman, 2000; Odenweller et al., 2013) have examined the modeling-compensation hypotheses in families, specifically between fathers and sons. Floyd and Morman (2000) found that identification to one's father predicted affection with their own son. Specifically, if one received low amounts

of affection from their father, they were more likely to compensate with higher amounts of affection toward their son. Whereas, if one received high amounts of affection from their father, they were more likely to model that affection with their own son, giving their son more affection than the compensation group. In relation to the present study's findings, participants who saw positive, healthy relationships and intimacy being modeled by their parents or other adults, report being more likely to replicate these communication processes in their own romantic relationships. Those who saw unhealthy relationships and a lack of intimacy in the parents' relationship(s) did not want to repeat these patterns, even if it meant never getting married because then he would never have to go through a divorce, like one participant said.

Limitations and Future Directions

While a structured and recorded intimacy conversation like the one participants completed for this study is rather atypical, most participants reported they had similar conversations about emotional and sexual intimacy prior to participating in the study. In addition, the Zoom setting was chosen to give participants more privacy while discussing intimacy, which can be a stigmatized and taboo topic. Although participants who completed follow-up interviews expressed that they initially found the Zoom setting awkward, they soon forgot they were being recorded, and the conversation felt quite normal. Furthermore, interview participants expressed their appreciation for the study and Zoom conversation, as it gave them and their partner the framework and vocabulary to have subsequent intimacy conversations. A future direction for this line of research is to create an intimacy intervention, particularly for couples struggling with communicating about intimacy. In addition to completing a conversation about intimacy, couples may find it useful to complete

a video-assisted recall activity (Sillars et al., 2000; 2005) in which they watch back their recorded conversation and recall what they were thinking as well as what they believed their partner was thinking. This activity could help work through issues with open communication and intimacy for the couple.

Some limitations exist in the sample itself. Couples of at least 3 months duration ranging from 18 to 35 years old was the target population. Additionally, couples had to be in a cross-sex, monogamous relationship, and be able to complete the Zoom conversation in the same physical location. These participation requirements limited who could participate, and thus limited the generalizability of the findings. While the sample was primarily dating couples, several married or cohabitating couples participated. The analyses did not account for differences in life stages and how that may affect communication and relational and sexual satisfaction. In addition, mostly cross-sex couples were included in the sample in order to use actor-partner interdependence modeling. However, these leaves out the experiences of those in same-sex couples and members of the LGBTQ+ community. Out of the few same-sex couples that were included in the study, their Zoom conversations and follow-up interviews were markedly different in the ways they discussed intimacy, having to manage issues like "coming out," their sexuality being accepted by family and friends, and comparing relationships with men to women to nonbinary individuals. Better understanding the nuances of emotional and sexual intimacy in LGBTQ+ relationships would be a fruitful future research avenue. In addition, data about geographical proximity between partners was not collected. Partners had to complete the Zoom conversation together, but they did not have to live near each other. During the Zoom conversations, several couples mentioned being long distance, but were able to see each other on the weekends or several times a month.

However, not being geographically close with one's partner likely impedes on the frequency of sexual activity, and perhaps even sexual and relationship satisfaction. These demographic variables were not taken into account in the analyses of the present study but offer promising future research directions.

Lastly, while some participants' relationships flourished after the study – several got engaged, married, or welcomed babies – a handful of relationships came to close (i.e., three couples told the lead researcher that they had broken up). The majority of relational research does not track the lifespan of romantic relationships (likely due to limited resources such as time and funding), although the continuation or end of a relationship is an important outcome. Unfortunately, none of the partners who ended their relationships participated in a follow-up interview, so it is unknown what contributed to the relationship terminations. Future research should employ longitudinal designs, particularly if studying an intimacy intervention, to better understand the effects of couples' conversations about intimacy over time.

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Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Scale Reliabilities

Variable	Male Partners				Female Partners		
	M	*SD*	α		*M*	*SD*	α
Attachment Avoidance	2.13	.65	.88		2.17	.70	.89
Attachment Anxiety	2.83	1.05	.91		3.11	1.13	.92
Conversation Orientation	4.51	1.37	.94		4.18	1.38	.94
Conformity Orientation	4.54	.88	.91		4.82	1.07	.94
ACEs (7 items)	1.11	1.43	.67		1.76	1.50	.57
Fear of Emotional Intimacy	2.97	.53	.93		2.90	.52	.93
General Sexual Communication	5.66	.86	.82		5.78	.82	.83
Sexual Satisfaction	4.32	.51	.90		4.29	.53	.92
Relationship Satisfaction	5.36	.70	.95		5.43	.71	.96
Partner CR	6.01	.70	.81		6.11	.75	.86
Immediacy	6.03	.86	.83		6.16	.95	.86
Similarity	5.58	.95	.64		5.73	.99	.74
Receptivity	6.39	.81	.96		6.48	.71	.95

Composure	6.06	.85	.73	6.07	.91	.79
Observational CR	4.46	.51	.81	4.46	.55	.83
Immediacy	4.46	.66	.85	4.43	.62	.89
Similarity	4.14	.83	.79	4.15	.88	.82
Receptivity	4.70	.49	.82	4.70	.47	.77
Composure	4.56	.55	.82	4.57	.63	.84

Note. CR = communicative responsiveness. Attachment avoidance, attachment anxiety, conformity orientation, conversation orientation, general sexual communication, and partner communicative responsiveness subscales were rated on 7-point scales. Relationship satisfaction was rated on a 6-point scale. Fear of intimacy, sexual satisfaction, and observational communicative responsiveness were rated on 5-point scales.

Table 2

Pearson Correlations for the Structural Equation Model Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
1. MACE	–																				
2. MAvd	.12	–																			
3. MAnx	.19*	**.48**	–																		
4. MConv	**-.43**	-.27*	-.24*	–																	
5. MConf	**.30**	.16ᵃ	.13	**-.44**	–																
6. MFIS	.09	**.67**	**.57**	**-.34**	.15ᵃ	–															
7. MSC	-.09	**-.47**	**-.48**	.22*	-.14	**-.71**	–														
8. MPCR	.02	**-.34**	**-.37**	.10	.06	**-.66**	**.65**	–													
9. MOCR	.02	-.02	-.02	.05	.02	-.09	.20*	.24*	–												
10. MSS	-.07	**-.45**	**-.45**	.15ᵃ	-.08	**-.64**	**.78**	**.63**	.13	–											
11. MRS	-.08	**-.48**	**-.42**	.11	-.09	**-.66**	**.63**	**.66**	.06	**.71**	–										
12. FACE	.12	-.04	.14	-.01	.01	-.06	-.01	-.003	-.06	.002	-.03	–									
13. FAvd	.06	.25*	**.29**	-.06	-.18*	.28*	-.21*	-.19*	-.03	-.18*	-.23*	.13	–								
14. FAnx	-.05	.26*	.28*	-.04	.08	**.32**	-.25*	-.16ᵃ	-.02	-.19*	-.26*	.20*	**.35**	–							
15. FConv	-.01	.04	-.07	-.01	-.06	-.03	.06	.04	-.16ᵃ	.07	.15ᵃ	-.23*	-.14	**-.31**	–						
16. FConf	-.05	-.10	-.001	.15ᵃ	-.04	-.09	.002	.04	.10	.06	.04	.16ᵃ	-.02	.17ᵃ	**-.43**	–					
17. FFIS	-.01	**.34**	**.33**	-.08	-.12	**.45**	**-.34**	**-.46**	-.02	**-.37**	**-.44**	.05	**.61**	**.43**	-.14	-.04	–				

18. FSC	.01	**-.36**	-.23*	.07	.02	**-.44**	**.45**	**.59**	.21*	**.46**	**.54**	-.04	**-.30**	**-.34**	.08	.10	**-.65**	–			
19. FPCR	.09	-.28*	-.23*	.03	.12	**-.45**	**.34**	**.53**	**.36**	**.44**	**.47**	-.04	**-.34**	**-.32**	.03	.06	**-.59**	**.54**	–		
20. FOCR	.02	-.10	-.12	-.03	.07	-.26*	**.41**	**.48**	**.59**	**.34**	**.36**	-.08	-.19*	-.12	-.04	.04	**-.34**	**.46**	**.38**	–	
21. FSS	.06	**-.32**	**-.32**	-.06	.17[a]	**-.44**	**.51**	**.56**	.13	**.62**	**.58**	-.16[a]	**-.42**	**-.41**	.11	.06	**-.64**	**.68**	**.56**	**.46**	–
22. FRS	-.04	**-.34**	-.28*	.002	.02	**-.44**	**.36**	**.45**	.06	**.47**	**.63**	-.28*	**-.44**	**-.43**	.25*	-.01	**-.62**	**.59**	**.56**	**.40**	**.69**

Note. M = male partner; F = female partner; ACE = adverse childhood experiences; Anx = attachment anxiety; Avd = attachment avoidance; Conv = conversation orientation; Conf = conformity orientation; FIS = fear of intimacy; SC = general quality of sexual communication; PCR = partner's communicative responsiveness during conversation; OC = observational coding of communicative responsiveness during conversation; SS = sexual satisfaction; RS = relationship satisfaction. Correlations are standardized estimates.
[a]$p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **bolded** = $p < .001$.

Table 3

Attachment and Partner Communicative Responsiveness Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results

Path	Estimate	SE
M Avoidance ↔ F Avoidance	.27**	.04
M Avoidance ↔ M Anxiety	.54***	.07
M Avoidance ↔ F Anxiety	.29**	.07
M Avoidance ↔ M PCR	-.40***	.05
M Avoidance ↔ F PCR	-.33**	.05
M Avoidance ↔ M Sex Sat	-.50***	.04
M Avoidance ↔ F Sex Sat	-.35***	.03
M Avoidance ↔ M Rel Sat	-.52***	.05
M Avoidance ↔ F Rel Sat	-.37***	.05
F Avoidance ↔ F PCR	-.38***	.05
F Avoidance ↔ M PCR	-.22*	.05
F Avoidance ↔ F Sex Sat	-.45***	.03
F Avoidance ↔ M Sex Sat	-.19[a]	.03
F Avoidance ↔ F Rel Sat	-.47***	.05
F Avoidance ↔ M Rel Sat	-.25*	.04
F Avoidance ↔ F Anxiety	.38***	.06
F Avoidance ↔ M Anxiety	.31**	.06
M Anxiety ↔ F Anxiety	.30**	.10
M Anxiety ↔ M PCR	-.43**	.08
M Anxiety ↔ F PCR	-.27***	.08
M Anxiety ↔ M Sex Sat	-.49***	.05
M Anxiety ↔ F Sex Sat	-.35***	.05
M Anxiety ↔ M Rel Sat	-.43***	.07

M Anxiety ↔ F Rel Sat	-.30**	.07
F Anxiety ↔ F PCR	-.35***	.08
F Anxiety ↔ M PCR	-.18[a]	.07
F Anxiety ↔ F Sex Sat	-.43***	.05
F Anxiety ↔ M Sex Sat	-.21*	.05
F Anxiety ↔ F Rel Sat	-.45***	.07
F Anxiety ↔ M Rel Sat	-.29**	.07
M PCR ↔ M Sex Sat	.72***	.04
M PCR ↔ F Sex Sat	.65***	.04
M PCR ↔ M Rel Sat	.75***	.06
M PCR ↔ F Rel Sat	.49***	.06
M PCR ↔ F PCR	.61***	.07
F PCR ↔ F Sex Sat	.64***	.04
F PCR ↔ M Sex Sat	.50***	.04
F PCR ↔ F Rel Sat	.63***	.06
F PCR ↔ M Rel Sat	.52***	.06
M Sex Sat ↔ F Sex Sat	.68***	.03
M Sex Sat ↔ M Rel Sat	.76***	.04
M Sex Sat ↔ F Rel Sat	.50***	.04
F Sex Sat ↔ F Rel Sat	.73***	.04
F Sex Sat ↔ M Rel Sat	.62***	.04
M Rel Sat ↔ F Rel Sat	.67***	.05

Note. F = female partner; M = male partner; Avoidance = attachment avoidance; Anxiety = attachment anxiety; PCR = partner communicative responsiveness during conversation; Sex Sat = sexual satisfaction; Rel Sat = relationship satisfaction. Correlations are standardized estimates. [a]$p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.

Table 4

Factor Loadings for Attachment and Partner Communicative Responsiveness Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Path	Estimate
M Avoidance → M Avoid P1	.82
M Avoidance → M Avoid P2	.85
M Avoidance → M Avoid P3	.88
F Avoidance → F Avoid P1	.88
F Avoidance → F Avoid P2	.90
F Avoidance → F Avoid P3	.85
M Anxiety → M Anx P1	.86
M Anxiety → M Anx P2	.89
M Anxiety → M Anx P3	.92
F Anxiety → F Anx P1	.91
F Anxiety → F Anx P2	.92
F Anxiety → F Anx P3	.89
M PCR→ M Receptivity	.84
M PCR → M Immediacy	.84
M PCR → M Similarity	.49
M PCR → M Composure	.78
F PCR → F Receptivity	.81
F PCR → F Immediacy	.81
F PCR → F Similarity	.74
F PCR → F Composure	.76
M Sexual Satisfaction → M Sex Sat P1	.91
M Sexual Satisfaction → M Sex Sat P2	.88
M Sexual Satisfaction → M Sex Sat P3	.88

F Sexual Satisfaction → F Sex Sat P1	.93
F Sexual Satisfaction → F Sex Sat P2	.90
F Sexual Satisfaction → F Sex Sat P3	.84
M Relationship Satisfaction → M Rel Sat P1	.94
M Relationship Satisfaction → M Rel Sat P2	.96
M Relationship Satisfaction → M Rel Sat P3	.90
F Relationship Satisfaction → F Rel Sat P1	.95
F Relationship Satisfaction → F Rel Sat P2	.93
F Relationship Satisfaction → F Rel Sat P3	.94

Note. F = female partner; M = male partner; Avoid = attachment avoidance; Anx = attachment anxiety; PCR = partner communicative responsiveness during conversation; Sex Sat = sexual satisfaction; Rel Sat = relationship satisfaction; P1, P2, and P3 = Parcels 1, 2, and 3. All parameters are significant at *p* < .001.

Table 5

Attachment and Observational Communicative Responsiveness Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results

Path	Estimate	SE
M Avoidance ↔ F Avoidance	.27**	.04
M Avoidance ↔ M Anxiety	.54***	.07
M Avoidance ↔ F Anxiety	.29**	.07
M Avoidance ↔ M OBV CR	-.05	.04
M Avoidance ↔ F OBV CR	-.11	.04
M Avoidance ↔ M Sex Sat	-.49***	.04
M Avoidance ↔ F Sex Sat	-.35***	.03
M Avoidance ↔ M Rel Sat	-.52***	.05
M Avoidance ↔ F Rel Sat	-.38***	.05
F Avoidance ↔ F OBV CR	-.22*	.04
F Avoidance ↔ M OBV CR	.01	.04
F Avoidance ↔ F Sex Sat	-.45***	.03
F Avoidance ↔ M Sex Sat	-.18[a]	.03
F Avoidance ↔ F Rel Sat	-.47***	.05
F Avoidance ↔ M Rel Sat	-.25*	.04
F Avoidance ↔ F Anxiety	.38***	.06
F Avoidance ↔ M Anxiety	.31**	.06
M Anxiety ↔ F Anxiety	.30**	.10
M Anxiety ↔ M OBV CR	-001	.06
M Anxiety ↔ F OBV CR	-.14	.06
M Anxiety ↔ M Sex Sat	-.49***	.05
M Anxiety ↔ F Sex Sat	-.35***	.05
M Anxiety ↔ M Rel Sat	-.43***	.07

M Anxiety ↔ F Rel Sat	-.30**	.07
F Anxiety ↔ F OBV CR	-.14	.06
F Anxiety ↔ M OBV CR	.01	.06
F Anxiety ↔ F Sex Sat	-.43***	.05
F Anxiety ↔ M Sex Sat	-.21*	.05
F Anxiety ↔ F Rel Sat	-.45***	.07
F Anxiety ↔ M Rel Sat	-.29**	.07
M OBV CR ↔ M Sex Sat	.13	.03
M OBV CR ↔ F Sex Sat	.09	.03
M OBV CR ↔ M Rel Sat	.001	.04
M OBV CR ↔ F Rel Sat	-.03	.04
M OBV CR ↔ F OBV CR	.69***	.04
F OBV CR ↔ F Sex Sat	.40***	.03
F OBV CR ↔ M Sex Sat	.30**	.03
F OBV CR ↔ F Rel Sat	.28**	.04
F OBV CR ↔ M Rel Sat	.30***	.04
M Sex Sat ↔ F Sex Sat	.67***	.03
M Sex Sat ↔ M Rel Sat	.77***	.04
M Sex Sat ↔ F Rel Sat	.50***	.04
F Sex Sat ↔ F Rel Sat	.74***	.04
F Sex Sat ↔ M Rel Sat	.63***	.04
M Rel Sat ↔ F Rel Sat	.67***	.05

Note. F = female partner; M = male partner; Avoidance = attachment avoidance; Anxiety = attachment anxiety; OBV CR = observational coding of communicative responsiveness during conversation; Sex Sat = sexual satisfaction; Rel Sat = relationship satisfaction. Correlations are standardized estimates. [a]$p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.

Table 6

Factor Loadings for Attachment and Observational Communicative Responsiveness
Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Path	Estimate
M Avoidance → M Avoid P1	.82
M Avoidance → M Avoid P2	.85
M Avoidance → M Avoid P3	.88
F Avoidance → F Avoid P1	.88
F Avoidance → F Avoid P2	.90
F Avoidance → F Avoid P3	.85
M Anxiety → M Anx P1	.86
M Anxiety → M Anx P2	.89
M Anxiety → M Anx P3	.92
F Anxiety → F Anx P1	.91
F Anxiety → F Anx P2	.92
F Anxiety → F Anx P3	.89
M OBV CR → M Receptivity	.72
M OBV CR → M Immediacy	.99
M OBV CR → M Similarity	.77
F OBV CR → F Receptivity	.76
F OBV CR → F Immediacy	1.04
F OBV CR → F Similarity	.64
M Sexual Satisfaction → M Sex Sat P1	.92
M Sexual Satisfaction → M Sex Sat P2	.87
M Sexual Satisfaction → M Sex Sat P3	.88
F Sexual Satisfaction → F Sex Sat P1	.92
F Sexual Satisfaction → F Sex Sat P2	.91

F Sexual Satisfaction → F Sex Sat P3	.84
M Relationship Satisfaction → M Rel Sat P1	.94
M Relationship Satisfaction → M Rel Sat P2	.97
M Relationship Satisfaction → M Rel Sat P3	.90
F Relationship Satisfaction → F Rel Sat P1	.95
F Relationship Satisfaction → F Rel Sat P2	.93
F Relationship Satisfaction → F Rel Sat P3	.94

Note. F = female partner; M = male partner; Avoid = attachment avoidance; Anx = attachment anxiety; OBV CR = observational coding of communicative responsiveness during conversation; Sex Sat = sexual satisfaction; Rel Sat = relationship satisfaction; P1, P2, and P3 = Parcels 1, 2, and 3. All parameters are significant at $p < .001$.

Table 7

Attachment and Fear of Emotional Intimacy Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results

Path	Estimate	SE
M Avoidance ↔ F Avoidance	.27**	.06
M Avoidance ↔ M Anxiety	.54***	.07
M Avoidance ↔ F Anxiety	.27**	.07
M Avoidance ↔ M Fear of Intimacy	.75***	.04
M Avoidance ↔ F Fear of Intimacy	.39***	.03
M Avoidance ↔ M Sex Sat	-.50***	.03
M Avoidance ↔ F Sex Sat	-.35***	.03
M Avoidance ↔ M Rel Sat	-.52***	.05
M Avoidance ↔ F Rel Sat	-.37***	.05
F Avoidance ↔ F Fear of Intimacy	.67***	.04
F Avoidance ↔ M Fear of Intimacy	.31**	.03
F Avoidance ↔ F Sex Sat	-.45***	.03
F Avoidance ↔ M Sex Sat	-.18[a]	.03
F Avoidance ↔ F Rel Sat	-.46***	.05
F Avoidance ↔ M Rel Sat	-.24*	.04
F Avoidance ↔ F Anxiety	.38***	.06
F Avoidance ↔ M Anxiety	.31**	.06
M Anxiety ↔ F Anxiety	.30**	.10
M Anxiety ↔ M Fear of Intimacy	.61***	.05
M Anxiety ↔ F Fear of Intimacy	.36***	.05
M Anxiety ↔ M Sex Sat	-.49***	.05
M Anxiety ↔ F Sex Sat	-.35***	.05
M Anxiety ↔ M Rel Sat	-.43***	.07

M Anxiety ↔ F Rel Sat	-.30**	.07
F Anxiety ↔ F Fear of Intimacy	.47***	.05
F Anxiety ↔ M Fear of Intimacy	.34***	.05
F Anxiety ↔ F Sex Sat	-.43***	.05
F Anxiety ↔ M Sex Sat	-.21*	.05
F Anxiety ↔ F Rel Sat	-.45***	.07
F Anxiety ↔ M Rel Sat	-.29**	.07
M Fear of Intimacy ↔ F Fear of Intimacy	.48***	.02
M Fear of Intimacy ↔ M Sex Sat	-.68***	.03
M Fear of Intimacy ↔ F Sex Sat	-.48***	.02
M Fear of Intimacy ↔ M Rel Sat	-.70***	.04
M Fear of Intimacy ↔ F Rel Sat	-.47***	.03
F Fear of Intimacy ↔ F Sex Sat	-.70***	.03
F Fear of Intimacy ↔ M Sex Sat	-.38***	.02
F Fear of Intimacy ↔ F Rel Sat	-.66***	.04
F Fear of Intimacy ↔ M Rel Sat	-.47***	.03
M Sex Sat ↔ F Sex Sat	.68***	.03
M Sex Sat ↔ M Rel Sat	.77***	.04
M Sex Sat ↔ F Rel Sat	.50***	.04
F Sex Sat ↔ F Rel Sat	.74***	.04
F Sex Sat ↔ M Rel Sat	.63***	.04
M Rel Sat ↔ F Rel Sat	.67***	.05

Note. F = female partner; M = male partner; Avoidance = attachment avoidance; Anxiety = attachment anxiety; Sex Sat = sexual satisfaction; Rel Sat = relationship satisfaction. Correlations are standardized estimates. [a]$p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.

Table 8

Factor Loadings for Attachment and Fear of Emotional Intimacy Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Path	Estimate
M Avoidance → M Avoid P1	.81
M Avoidance → M Avoid P2	.86
M Avoidance → M Avoid P3	.88
F Avoidance → F Avoid P1	.89
F Avoidance → F Avoid P2	.89
F Avoidance → F Avoid P3	.84
M Anxiety → M Anx P1	.86
M Anxiety → M Anx P2	.89
M Anxiety → M Anx P3	.92
F Anxiety → F Anx P1	.91
F Anxiety → F Anx P2	.92
F Anxiety → F Anx P3	.89
M Fear of Intimacy → M FIS P1	.91
M Fear of Intimacy → M FIS P2	.90
M Fear of Intimacy → M FIS P3	.92
F Fear of Intimacy → F FIS P1	.91
F Fear of Intimacy → F FIS P2	.90
F Fear of Intimacy → F FIS P3	.92
M Sexual Satisfaction → M Sex Sat P1	.92
M Sexual Satisfaction → M Sex Sat P2	.88
M Sexual Satisfaction → M Sex Sat P3	.88
F Sexual Satisfaction → F Sex Sat P1	.93

F Sexual Satisfaction → F Sex Sat P2	.91
F Sexual Satisfaction → F Sex Sat P3	.84
M Relationship Satisfaction → M Rel Sat P1	.94
M Relationship Satisfaction → M Rel Sat P2	.96
M Relationship Satisfaction → M Rel Sat P3	.90
F Relationship Satisfaction → F Rel Sat P1	.95
F Relationship Satisfaction → F Rel Sat P2	.93
F Relationship Satisfaction → F Rel Sat P3	.94

Note. F = female partner; M = male partner; Avoid = attachment avoidance; Anx = attachment anxiety; FIS = fear of intimacy; Sex Sat = sexual satisfaction; Rel Sat = relationship satisfaction; P1, P2, and P3 = Parcels 1, 2, and 3. All parameters are significant at $p < .001$.

Table 9

Attachment and General Sexual Communication Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results

Path	Estimate	SE
M Avoidance ↔ F Avoidance	.27**	.04
M Avoidance ↔ M Anxiety	.54***	.07
M Avoidance ↔ F Anxiety	.29**	.07
M Avoidance ↔ M Sexual Communication	-.59***	.06
M Avoidance ↔ F Sexual Communication	-.41***	.06
M Avoidance ↔ M Sex Sat	-.49***	.03
M Avoidance ↔ F Sex Sat	-.36***	.03
M Avoidance ↔ M Rel Sat	-.52***	.05
M Avoidance ↔ F Rel Sat	-.38***	.05
F Avoidance ↔ F Sexual Communication	-.35***	.05
F Avoidance ↔ M Sexual Communication	-.24*	.04
F Avoidance ↔ F Sex Sat	-.45***	.03
F Avoidance ↔ M Sex Sat	-.18[a]	.03
F Avoidance ↔ F Rel Sat	-.47***	.05
F Avoidance ↔ M Rel Sat	-.25*	.04
F Avoidance ↔ F Anxiety	.38***	.06
F Avoidance ↔ M Anxiety	.31**	.06
M Anxiety ↔ F Anxiety	.30**	.10
M Anxiety ↔ M Sexual Communication	-.56***	.08
M Anxiety ↔ F Sexual Communication	-.26*	.08
M Anxiety ↔ M Sex Sat	-.49***	.05
M Anxiety ↔ F Sex Sat	-.35***	.05
M Anxiety ↔ M Rel Sat	-.43***	.07

M Anxiety ↔ F Rel Sat	-.30**	.07
F Anxiety ↔ F Sexual Communication	-.39***	.09
F Anxiety ↔ M Sexual Communication	-.28**	.07
F Anxiety ↔ F Sex Sat	-.43***	.05
F Anxiety ↔ M Sex Sat	-.21*	.05
F Anxiety ↔ F Rel Sat	-.45***	.07
F Anxiety ↔ M Rel Sat	-.29**	.07
M Sexual Communication ↔ F Sexual Communication	.50***	.07
M Sexual Communication ↔ M Sex Sat	.88***	.05
M Sexual Communication ↔ F Sex Sat	.54***	.04
M Sexual Communication ↔ M Rel Sat	.72***	.06
M Sexual Communication ↔ F Rel Sat	.74***	.05
F Sexual Communication ↔ F Sex Sat	.77***	.05
F Sexual Communication ↔ M Sex Sat	.51***	.04
F Sexual Communication ↔ F Rel Sat	.65***	.07
F Sexual Communication ↔ M Rel Sat	.60***	.06
M Sex Sat ↔ F Sex Sat	.67***	.03
M Sex Sat ↔ M Rel Sat	.76***	.04
M Sex Sat ↔ F Rel Sat	.49***	.04
F Sex Sat ↔ F Rel Sat	.74***	.04
F Sex Sat ↔ M Rel Sat	.63***	.04
M Rel Sat ↔ F Rel Sat	.67***	.05

Note. F = female partner; M = male partner; Avoidance = attachment avoidance; Anxiety = attachment anxiety; Sexual Communication = general sexual communication; Sex Sat = sexual satisfaction; Rel Sat = relationship satisfaction. Correlations are standardized estimates. [a]$p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.

Table 10

Factor Loadings for Attachment and General Sexual Communication Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Path	Estimate
M Avoidance → M Avoid P1	.82
M Avoidance → M Avoid P2	.85
M Avoidance → M Avoid P3	.88
F Avoidance → F Avoid P1	.88
F Avoidance → F Avoid P2	.90
F Avoidance → F Avoid P3	.85
M Anxiety → M Anx P1	.86
M Anxiety → M Anx P2	.89
M Anxiety → M Anx P3	.92
F Anxiety → F Anx P1	.91
F Anxiety → F Anx P2	.92
F Anxiety → F Anx P3	.88
M Sexual Communication → M DSC P1	.72
M Sexual Communication → M DSC P2	.88
M Sexual Communication → M DSC P3	.77
F Sexual Communication → F DSC P1	.79
F Sexual Communication → F DSC P2	.85
F Sexual Communication → F DSC P3	.79
M Sexual Satisfaction → M Sex Sat P1	.93
M Sexual Satisfaction → M Sex Sat P2	.87
M Sexual Satisfaction → M Sex Sat P3	.87
F Sexual Satisfaction → F Sex Sat P1	.92

F Sexual Satisfaction → F Sex Sat P2	.91
F Sexual Satisfaction → F Sex Sat P3	.84
M Relationship Satisfaction → M Rel Sat P1	.94
M Relationship Satisfaction → M Rel Sat P2	.96
M Relationship Satisfaction → M Rel Sat P3	.90
F Relationship Satisfaction → F Rel Sat P1	.95
F Relationship Satisfaction → F Rel Sat P2	.93
F Relationship Satisfaction → F Rel Sat P3	.94

Note. F = female partner; M = male partner; Avoid = attachment avoidance; Anx = attachment anxiety; DSC = dyadic sexual communication; Sex Sat = sexual satisfaction; Rel Sat = relationship satisfaction; P1, P2, and P3 = Parcels 1, 2, and 3. All parameters are significant at $p < .001$.

Table 11

FCP and Partner Communicative Responsiveness Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results

Path	Estimate	SE
M Conversation ↔ F Conversation	.002	.18
M Conversation ↔ M Conformity	-.46***	.12
M Conversation ↔ F Conformity	.16	.13
M Conversation ↔ M PCR	.13	.10
M Conversation ↔ F PCR	.04	.10
M Conversation ↔ M Sex Sat	.17[a]	.06
M Conversation ↔ F Sex Sat	-.05	.06
M Conversation ↔ M Rel Sat	.12	.09
M Conversation ↔ F Rel Sat	.01	.09
F Conversation ↔ F PCR	.04	.11
F Conversation ↔ M PCR	.07	.10
F Conversation ↔ F Sex Sat	.11	.06
F Conversation ↔ M Sex Sat	.08	.06
F Conversation ↔ F Rel Sat	.24*	.09
F Conversation ↔ M Rel Sat	.15	.09
F Conversation ↔ F Conformity	-.44***	.14
F Conversation ↔ M Conformity	-.06	.11
M Conformity ↔ F Conformity	-.03	.07
M Conformity ↔ M PCR	.09	.06
M Conformity ↔ F PCR	.13	.06
M Conformity ↔ M Sex Sat	-.09	.03
M Conformity ↔ F Sex Sat	.18[a]	.03
M Conformity ↔ M Rel Sat	-.10	.05

M Conformity ↔ F Rel Sat	.02	.05
F Conformity ↔ F PCR	.06	.07
F Conformity ↔ M PCR	.06	.07
F Conformity ↔ F Sex Sat	.05	.04
F Conformity ↔ M Sex Sat	.06	.04
F Conformity ↔ F Rel Sat	-.01	.06
F Conformity ↔ M Rel Sat	.03	.06
M PCR ↔ M Sex Sat	.72***	.04
M PCR ↔ F Sex Sat	.65***	.04
M PCR ↔ M Rel Sat	.75***	.06
M PCR ↔ F Rel Sat	.49***	.06
M PCR ↔ F PCR	.61***	.07
F PCR ↔ F Sex Sat	.64***	.04
F PCR ↔ M Sex Sat	.50***	.04
F PCR ↔ F Rel Sat	.63***	.06
F PCR ↔ M Rel Sat	.52***	.06
M Sex Sat ↔ F Sex Sat	.68***	.03
M Sex Sat ↔ M Rel Sat	.77***	.04
M Sex Sat ↔ F Rel Sat	.50***	.04
F Sex Sat ↔ F Rel Sat	.74***	.04
F Sex Sat ↔ M Rel Sat	.63***	.04
M Rel Sat ↔ F Rel Sat	.67***	.05

Note. F = female partner; M = male partner; Conversation = conversation orientation; Conformity = conformity orientation; PCR = partner communicative responsiveness during conversation; Sex Sat = sexual satisfaction; Rel Sat = relationship satisfaction. Correlations are standardized estimates. [a]$p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.

Table 12

Factor Loadings for FCP and Partner Communicative Responsiveness Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Path	Estimate
M Conversation → M Conv P1	.92
M Conversation → M Conv P2	.92
M Conversation → M Conv P3	.96
F Conversation → F Conv P1	.89
F Conversation → F Conv P2	.94
F Conversation → F Conv P3	.94
M Conformity → M ECOS P1	.87
M Conformity → M ECOS P2	.89
M Conformity → M ECOS P3	.90
F Conformity → F ECOS P1	.93
F Conformity → F ECOS P2	.96
F Conformity → F ECOS P3	.92
M PCR → M Receptivity	.84
M PCR → M Immediacy	.83
M PCR → M Similarity	.48
M PCR → M Composure	.78
F PCR → F Receptivity	.81
F PCR → F Immediacy	.81
F PCR → F Similarity	.74
F PCR → F Composure	.76
M Sexual Satisfaction → M Sex Sat P1	.92
M Sexual Satisfaction → M Sex Sat P2	.88

M Sexual Satisfaction → M Sex Sat P3	.88
F Sexual Satisfaction → F Sex Sat P1	.92
F Sexual Satisfaction → F Sex Sat P2	.91
F Sexual Satisfaction → F Sex Sat P3	.84
M Relationship Satisfaction → M Rel Sat P1	.94
M Relationship Satisfaction → M Rel Sat P2	.96
M Relationship Satisfaction → M Rel Sat P3	.90
F Relationship Satisfaction → F Rel Sat P1	.95
F Relationship Satisfaction → F Rel Sat P2	.93
F Relationship Satisfaction → F Rel Sat P3	.94

Note. F = female partner; M = male partner; Conversation = conversation orientation; Conformity = conformity orientation; PCR = partner communicative responsiveness during conversation; Sex Sat = sexual satisfaction; Rel Sat = relationship satisfaction; P1, P2, and P3 = Parcels 1, 2, and 3. All parameters are significant at *p* < .001.

Table 13

FCP and Observational Communicative Responsiveness Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results

Path	Estimate	SE
M Conversation ↔ F Conversation	.002	.18
M Conversation ↔ M Conformity	-.46***	.12
M Conversation ↔ F Conformity	.16[a]	.13
M Conversation ↔ M OBV CR	.04	.08
M Conversation ↔ F OBV CR	-.01	.07
M Conversation ↔ M Sex Sat	.17[a]	.06
M Conversation ↔ F Sex Sat	-.05	.06
M Conversation ↔ M Rel Sat	.12	.09
M Conversation ↔ F Rel Sat	.01	.09
F Conversation ↔ F OBV CR	-.08	.07
F Conversation ↔ M OBV CR	-.17[a]	.09
F Conversation ↔ F Sex Sat	.11	.06
F Conversation ↔ M Sex Sat	.08	.06
F Conversation ↔ F Rel Sat	.24*	.09
F Conversation ↔ M Rel Sat	.15	.09
F Conversation ↔ F Conformity	-.44***	.14
F Conversation ↔ M Conformity	-.06	.11
M Conformity ↔ F Conformity	-.03	.07
M Conformity ↔ M OBV CR	.09	.05
M Conformity ↔ F OBV CR	.16[a]	.04
M Conformity ↔ M Sex Sat	-.09	.04
M Conformity ↔ F Sex Sat	.18[a]	.04
M Conformity ↔ M Rel Sat	-.09	.05

M Conformity ↔ F Rel Sat	.02	.05
F Conformity ↔ F OBV CR	.12	.05
F Conformity ↔ M OBV CR	.11	.06
F Conformity ↔ F Sex Sat	.05	.04
F Conformity ↔ M Sex Sat	.06	.04
F Conformity ↔ F Rel Sat	-.01	.06
F Conformity ↔ M Rel Sat	.03	.06
M OBV CR ↔ M Sex Sat	.13	.03
M OBV CR ↔ F Sex Sat	.09	.03
M OBV CR ↔ M Rel Sat	.001	.04
M OBV CR ↔ F Rel Sat	-.03	.04
M OBV CR ↔ F OBV CR	.70***	.05
F OBV CR ↔ F Sex Sat	.41***	.03
F OBV CR ↔ M Sex Sat	.30**	.03
F OBV CR ↔ F Rel Sat	.28**	.04
F OBV CR ↔ M Rel Sat	.30**	.04
M Sex Sat ↔ F Sex Sat	.67***	.03
M Sex Sat ↔ M Rel Sat	.77***	.04
M Sex Sat ↔ F Rel Sat	.49***	.04
F Sex Sat ↔ F Rel Sat	.74***	.04
F Sex Sat ↔ M Rel Sat	.63***	.04
M Rel Sat ↔ F Rel Sat	.67***	.05

Note. F = female partner; M = male partner; Conversation = conversation orientation; Conformity = conformity orientation; OBV CR = observational coding of communicative responsiveness during conversation; Sex Sat = sexual satisfaction; Rel Sat = relationship satisfaction. Correlations are standardized estimates. [a]$p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.

Table 14

Factor Loadings for FCP and Observational Communicative Responsiveness
Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Path	Estimate
M Conversation → M Conv P1	.92
M Conversation → M Conv P2	.92
M Conversation → M Conv P3	.96
F Conversation → F Conv P1	.89
F Conversation → F Conv P2	.94
F Conversation → F Conv P3	.94
M Conformity → M ECOS P1	.87
M Conformity → M ECOS P2	.89
M Conformity → M ECOS P3	.90
F Conformity → F ECOS P1	.93
F Conformity → F ECOS P2	.96
F Conformity → F ECOS P3	.92
M OBV CR → M OBV Receptivity	.73
M OBV CR → M OBV Immediacy	.98
M OBV CR → M OBV Similarity	.78
F OBV CR → F OBV Receptivity	.76
F OBV CR → F OBV Immediacy	1.04
F OBV CR → F OBV Similarity	.64
M Sexual Satisfaction → M Sex Sat P1	.92
M Sexual Satisfaction → M Sex Sat P2	.87
M Sexual Satisfaction → M Sex Sat P3	.88
F Sexual Satisfaction → F Sex Sat P1	.92

F Sexual Satisfaction → F Sex Sat P2	.91
F Sexual Satisfaction → F Sex Sat P3	.84
M Relationship Satisfaction → M Rel Sat P1	.94
M Relationship Satisfaction → M Rel Sat P2	.97
M Relationship Satisfaction → M Rel Sat P3	.90
F Relationship Satisfaction → F Rel Sat P1	.95
F Relationship Satisfaction → F Rel Sat P2	.94
F Relationship Satisfaction → F Rel Sat P3	.94

Note. F = female partner; M = male partner; Conversation = conversation orientation; Conformity = conformity orientation; OBV CR = observational coding of communicative responsiveness during conversation; Sex Sat = sexual satisfaction; Rel Sat = relationship satisfaction; P1, P2, and P3 = Parcels 1, 2, and 3. All parameters are significant at $p < .001$.

Table 15

FCP and Fear of Emotional Intimacy Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results

Path	Estimate	SE
M Conversation ↔ F Conversation	.002	.18
M Conversation ↔ M Conformity	-.46***	.12
M Conversation ↔ F Conformity	.16[a]	.13
M Conversation ↔ M Fear of Intimacy	-.36***	.07
M Conversation ↔ F Fear of Intimacy	-.08	.06
M Conversation ↔ M Sex Sat	.17[a]	.06
M Conversation ↔ F Sex Sat	-.05	.06
M Conversation ↔ M Rel Sat	.12	.09
M Conversation ↔ F Rel Sat	.01	.09
F Conversation ↔ F Fear of Intimacy	-.15	.06
F Conversation ↔ M Fear of Intimacy	-.04	.06
F Conversation ↔ F Sex Sat	.11	.06
F Conversation ↔ M Sex Sat	.08	.06
F Conversation ↔ F Rel Sat	.24*	.09
F Conversation ↔ M Rel Sat	.15	.09
F Conversation ↔ F Conformity	-.44***	.14
F Conversation ↔ M Conformity	-.06	.11
M Conformity ↔ F Conformity	-.04	.07
M Conformity ↔ M Fear of Intimacy	.14	.04
M Conformity ↔ F Fear of Intimacy	-.14	.04
M Conformity ↔ M Sex Sat	-.09	.04
M Conformity ↔ F Sex Sat	.18[a]	.04
M Conformity ↔ M Rel Sat	-.10	.05

M Conformity ↔ F Rel Sat	.02	.05
F Conformity ↔ F Fear of Intimacy	-.03	.04
F Conformity ↔ M Fear of Intimacy	-.10	.04
F Conformity ↔ F Sex Sat	.05	.04
F Conformity ↔ M Sex Sat	.06	.04
F Conformity ↔ F Rel Sat	-.01	.06
F Conformity ↔ M Rel Sat	.03	.06
M Fear of Intimacy ↔ M Sex Sat	-.68***	.03
M Fear of Intimacy ↔ F Sex Sat	-.48***	.02
M Fear of Intimacy ↔ M Rel Sat	-.70***	.04
M Fear of Intimacy ↔ F Rel Sat	-.47***	.03
M Fear of Intimacy ↔ F Fear of Intimacy	.48***	.02
F Fear of Intimacy ↔ F Sex Sat	-.69***	.03
F Fear of Intimacy ↔ M Sex Sat	-.38***	.02
F Fear of Intimacy ↔ F Rel Sat	-.66***	.04
F Fear of Intimacy ↔ M Rel Sat	-.47***	.03
M Sex Sat ↔ F Sex Sat	.68***	.03
M Sex Sat ↔ M Rel Sat	.77***	.04
M Sex Sat ↔ F Rel Sat	.50***	.04
F Sex Sat ↔ F Rel Sat	.74***	.04
F Sex Sat ↔ M Rel Sat	.63***	.04
M Rel Sat ↔ F Rel Sat	.67***	.05

Note. F = female partner; M = male partner; Conversation = conversation orientation; Conformity = conformity orientation; Sex Sat = sexual satisfaction; Rel Sat = relationship satisfaction. Correlations are standardized estimates. [a]$p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.

Table 16

Factor Loadings for FCP and Fear of Emotional Intimacy Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Path	Estimate
M Conversation → M Conv P1	.92
M Conversation → M Conv P2	.92
M Conversation → M Conv P3	.96
F Conversation → F Conv P1	.89
F Conversation → F Conv P2	.94
F Conversation → F Conv P3	.94
M Conformity → M ECOS P1	.87
M Conformity → M ECOS P2	.89
M Conformity → M ECOS P3	.90
F Conformity → F ECOS P1	.93
F Conformity → F ECOS P2	.96
F Conformity → F ECOS P3	.92
M Fear of Intimacy → M FIS P1	.91
M Fear of Intimacy → M FIS P2	.90
M Fear of Intimacy → M FIS P3	.92
F Fear of Intimacy → F FIS P1	.91
F Fear of Intimacy → F FIS P2	.90
F Fear of Intimacy → F FIS P3	.91
M Sexual Satisfaction → M Sex Sat P1	.92
M Sexual Satisfaction → M Sex Sat P2	.88
M Sexual Satisfaction → M Sex Sat P3	.87
F Sexual Satisfaction → F Sex Sat P1	.92
F Sexual Satisfaction → F Sex Sat P2	.91

F Sexual Satisfaction → F Sex Sat P3	.84
M Relationship Satisfaction → M Rel Sat P1	.94
M Relationship Satisfaction → M Rel Sat P2	.96
M Relationship Satisfaction → M Rel Sat P3	.90
F Relationship Satisfaction → F Rel Sat P1	.95
F Relationship Satisfaction → F Rel Sat P2	.94
F Relationship Satisfaction → F Rel Sat P3	.94

Note. F = female partner; M = male partner; Conversation = conversation orientation; Conformity = conformity orientation; Sex Sat = sexual satisfaction; Rel Sat = relationship satisfaction; P1, P2, and P3 = Parcels 1, 2, and 3. All parameters are significant at $p < .001$.

Table 17

FCP and General Sexual Communication Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results

Path	Estimate	SE
M Conversation ↔ F Conversation	.001	.18
M Conversation ↔ M Conformity	-.46***	.12
M Conversation ↔ F Conformity	.16[a]	.13
M Conversation ↔ M Sexual Communication	.27*	.10
M Conversation ↔ F Sexual Communication	.08	.11
M Conversation ↔ M Sex Sat	.17[a]	.06
M Conversation ↔ F Sex Sat	-.06	.06
M Conversation ↔ M Rel Sat	.12	.09
M Conversation ↔ F Rel Sat	.01	.09
F Conversation ↔ F Sexual Communication	.11	.11
F Conversation ↔ M Sexual Communication	.06	.10
F Conversation ↔ F Sex Sat	.11	.06
F Conversation ↔ M Sex Sat	.08	.06
F Conversation ↔ F Rel Sat	.24*	.09
F Conversation ↔ M Rel Sat	.15	.09
F Conversation ↔ F Conformity	-.44***	.14
F Conversation ↔ M Conformity	-.06	.11
M Conformity ↔ F Conformity	-.04	.07
M Conformity ↔ M Sexual Communication	-.16	.06
M Conformity ↔ F Sexual Communication	.02	.06
M Conformity ↔ M Sex Sat	-.10	.04
M Conformity ↔ F Sex Sat	.18[a]	.04
M Conformity ↔ M Rel Sat	-.10	.05

M Conformity ↔ F Rel Sat	.02	.05
F Conformity ↔ F Sexual Communication	.09	.07
F Conformity ↔ M Sexual Communication	.02	.07
F Conformity ↔ F Sex Sat	.06	.04
F Conformity ↔ M Sex Sat	.06	.04
F Conformity ↔ F Rel Sat	-.01	.06
F Conformity ↔ M Rel Sat	.03	.06
M Sexual Communication ↔ M Sex Sat	.89***	.05
M Sexual Communication ↔ F Sex Sat	.55***	.05
M Sexual Communication ↔ M Rel Sat	.72***	.06
M Sexual Communication ↔ F Rel Sat	.39***	.05
M Sexual Communication ↔ F Sexual Communication	.50***	.07
F Sexual Communication ↔ F Sex Sat	.78***	.05
F Sexual Communication ↔ M Sex Sat	.51***	.04
F Sexual Communication ↔ F Rel Sat	.66***	.07
F Sexual Communication ↔ M Rel Sat	.60***	.06
M Sex Sat ↔ F Sex Sat	.67***	.03
M Sex Sat ↔ M Rel Sat	.77***	.04
M Sex Sat ↔ F Rel Sat	.49***	.04
F Sex Sat ↔ F Rel Sat	.74***	.04
F Sex Sat ↔ M Rel Sat	.63***	.04
M Rel Sat ↔ F Rel Sat	.67***	.05

Note. F = female partner; M = male partner; Conversation = conversation orientation; Conformity = conformity orientation; Sex Sat = sexual satisfaction; Rel Sat = relationship satisfaction. Correlations are standardized estimates. $^a p < .10$; $*p < .05$; $**p < .01$; $***p < .001$.

Table 18

Factor Loadings for FCP and General Sexual Communication Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Path	Estimate
M Conversation → M Conv P1	.92
M Conversation → M Conv P2	.93
M Conversation → M Conv P3	.96
F Conversation → F Conv P1	.89
F Conversation → F Conv P2	.94
F Conversation → F Conv P3	.94
M Conformity → M ECOS P1	.87
M Conformity → M ECOS P2	.89
M Conformity → M ECOS P3	.90
F Conformity → F ECOS P1	.93
F Conformity → F ECOS P2	.96
F Conformity → F ECOS P3	.92
M Sexual Communication → M DSC P1	.74
M Sexual Communication → M DSC P2	.87
M Sexual Communication → M DSC P3	.78
F Sexual Communication → F DSC P1	.79
F Sexual Communication → F DSC P2	.85
F Sexual Communication → F DSC P3	.79
M Sexual Satisfaction → M Sex Sat P1	.93
M Sexual Satisfaction → M Sex Sat P2	.87
M Sexual Satisfaction → M Sex Sat P3	.87
F Sexual Satisfaction → F Sex Sat P1	.91

F Sexual Satisfaction → F Sex Sat P2	.92
F Sexual Satisfaction → F Sex Sat P3	.84
M Relationship Satisfaction → M Rel Sat P1	.94
M Relationship Satisfaction → M Rel Sat P2	.96
M Relationship Satisfaction → M Rel Sat P3	.90
F Relationship Satisfaction → F Rel Sat P1	.95
F Relationship Satisfaction → F Rel Sat P2	.94
F Relationship Satisfaction → F Rel Sat P3	.94

Note. F = female partner; M = male partner; Conversation = conversation orientation; Conformity = conformity orientation; Sex Sat = sexual satisfaction; Rel Sat = relationship satisfaction; P1, P2, and P3 = Parcels 1, 2, and 3. All parameters are significant at *p* < .001.

Table 19

ACEs and Partner Communicative Responsiveness Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results

Path	Estimate	SE
M ACEs ↔ F ACEs	.12	.19
M ACEs ↔ M PCR	.03	.10
M ACEs ↔ F PCR	.10	.11
M ACEs ↔ M Sex Sat	-.07	.06
M ACEs ↔ F Sex Sat	.07	.06
M ACEs ↔ M Rel Sat	-.08	.09
M ACEs ↔ F Rel Sat	-.04	.09
F ACEs ↔ F PCR	-.05	.11
F ACEs ↔ M PCR	.01	.10
F ACEs ↔ F Sex Sat	-.17[a]	.06
F ACEs ↔ M Sex Sat	.01	.07
F ACEs ↔ F Rel Sat	-.28**	.10
F ACEs ↔ M Rel Sat	-.03	.09
M PCR ↔ F PCR	.62***	.07
M PCR ↔ M Sex Sat	.72***	.04
M PCR ↔ F Sex Sat	.65***	.04
M PCR ↔ M Rel Sat	.75***	.06
M PCR ↔ F Rel Sat	.49***	.06
F PCR ↔ F Sex Sat	.64***	.04
F PCR ↔ M Sex Sat	.50***	.04
F PCR ↔ F Rel Sat	.64***	.06
F PCR ↔ M Rel Sat	.52***	.06
M Sex Sat ↔ F Sex Sat	.68***	.03

M Sex Sat ↔ M Rel Sat	.76***	.04
M Sex Sat ↔ F Rel Sat	.50***	.04
F Sex Sat ↔ F Rel Sat	.74***	.04
F Sex Sat ↔ M Rel Sat	.63***	.04
M Rel Sat ↔ F Rel Sat	.67***	.05

Note. F = female partner; M = male partner; ACEs = adverse childhood experiences; PCR = partner communicative responsiveness during conversation; Sex Sat = sexual satisfaction; Rel Sat = relationship satisfaction. Correlations are standardized estimates.
[a]$p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.

Table 20

*Factor Loadings for ACEs and Partner Communicative Responsiveness Confirmatory
Factor Analysis*

Path	Estimate
M PCR → M Receptivity	.84
M PCR → M Immediacy	.84
M PCR → M Similarity	.48
M PCR → M Composure	.78
F PCR → F Receptivity	.81
F PCR → F Immediacy	.81
F PCR → F Similarity	.74
F PCR → F Composure	.76
M Sexual Satisfaction → M Sex Sat P1	.91
M Sexual Satisfaction → M Sex Sat P2	.88
M Sexual Satisfaction → M Sex Sat P3	.88
F Sexual Satisfaction → F Sex Sat P1	.93
F Sexual Satisfaction → F Sex Sat P2	.91
F Sexual Satisfaction → F Sex Sat P3	.84
M Relationship Satisfaction → M Rel Sat P1	.94
M Relationship Satisfaction → M Rel Sat P2	.96
M Relationship Satisfaction → M Rel Sat P3	.90
F Relationship Satisfaction → F Rel Sat P1	.95
F Relationship Satisfaction → F Rel Sat P2	.93
F Relationship Satisfaction → F Rel Sat P3	.94

Note. F = female partner; M = male partner; PCR = partner communicative responsiveness
during conversation; Sex Sat = sexual satisfaction; Rel Sat = relationship satisfaction; P1,
P2, and P3 = Parcels 1, 2, and 3. All parameters are significant at $p < .001$.

Table 21

ACEs and Observational Communicative Responsiveness Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results

Path	Estimate	SE
M ACEs ↔ F ACEs	.12	.19
M ACEs ↔ M OBV CR	.06	.08
M ACEs ↔ F OBV CR	.08	.08
M ACEs ↔ M Sex Sat	-.07	.06
M ACEs ↔ F Sex Sat	.07	.06
M ACEs ↔ M Rel Sat	-.07	.09
M ACEs ↔ F Rel Sat	-.04	.09
F ACEs ↔ F OBV CR	-.03	.08
F ACEs ↔ M OBV CR	.01	.09
F ACEs ↔ F Sex Sat	-.17[a]	.06
F ACEs ↔ M Sex Sat	.01	.07
F ACEs ↔ F Rel Sat	-.28**	.10
F ACEs ↔ M Rel Sat	-.02	.09
M OBV CR ↔ F OBV CR	.70***	.04
M OBV CR ↔ M Sex Sat	.13	.03
M OBV CR ↔ F Sex Sat	.09	.03
M OBV CR ↔ M Rel Sat	.00	.04
M OBV CR ↔ F Rel Sat	-.03	.04
F OBV CR ↔ F Sex Sat	.41***	.03
F OBV CR ↔ M Sex Sat	.30***	.03
F OBV CR ↔ F Rel Sat	.28**	.04
F OBV CR ↔ M Rel Sat	.31***	.04

M Sex Sat ↔ F Sex Sat	.67***	.03
M Sex Sat ↔ M Rel Sat	.77***	.04
M Sex Sat ↔ F Rel Sat	.49***	.04
F Sex Sat ↔ F Rel Sat	.74***	.04
F Sex Sat ↔ M Rel Sat	.63***	.04
M Rel Sat ↔ F Rel Sat	.67***	.05

Note. F = female partner; M = male partner; ACEs = adverse childhood experiences; OBV CR = observational coding communicative responsiveness during conversation; Sex Sat = sexual satisfaction; Rel Sat = relationship satisfaction. Correlations are standardized estimates. [a]$p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.

Table 22

Factor Loadings for ACEs and Observational Communicative Responsiveness
Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Path	Estimate
M OBV CR → M OBV Receptivity	.73
M OBV CR → M OBV Immediacy	.98
M OBV CR → M OBV Similarity	.78
F OBV CR → F OBV Receptivity	.76
F OBV CR → F OBV Immediacy	1.04
F OBV CR → F OBV Similarity	.65
M Sexual Satisfaction → M Sex Sat P1	.92
M Sexual Satisfaction → M Sex Sat P2	.87
M Sexual Satisfaction → M Sex Sat P3	.88
F Sexual Satisfaction → F Sex Sat P1	.92
F Sexual Satisfaction → F Sex Sat P2	.91
F Sexual Satisfaction → F Sex Sat P3	.84
M Relationship Satisfaction → M Rel Sat P1	.94
M Relationship Satisfaction → M Rel Sat P2	.97
M Relationship Satisfaction → M Rel Sat P3	.90
F Relationship Satisfaction → F Rel Sat P1	.95
F Relationship Satisfaction → F Rel Sat P2	.93
F Relationship Satisfaction → F Rel Sat P3	.94

Note. F = female partner; M = male partner; OBV CR = observational coding
communicative responsiveness during conversation; P1, P2, and P3 = Parcels 1, 2, and 3.
All parameters are significant at *p* < .001.

Table 23

ACEs and Fear of Emotional Intimacy Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results

Path	Estimate	SE
M ACEs ↔ F ACEs	.12	.19
M ACEs ↔ M Fear of Intimacy	.09	.06
M ACEs ↔ F Fear of Intimacy	-.004	.06
M ACEs ↔ M Sex Sat	-.07	.06
M ACEs ↔ F Sex Sat	.07	.06
M ACEs ↔ M Rel Sat	-.08	.09
M ACEs ↔ F Rel Sat	-.04	.09
F ACEs ↔ F Fear of Intimacy	.06	.07
F ACEs ↔ M Fear of Intimacy	-.05	.06
F ACEs ↔ F Sex Sat	-.17[a]	.06
F ACEs ↔ M Sex Sat	.01	.07
F ACEs ↔ F Rel Sat	-.28**	.10
F ACEs ↔ M Rel Sat	-.03	.09
M Fear of Intimacy ↔ F Fear of Intimacy	.48***	.02
M Fear of Intimacy ↔ M Sex Sat	-.68***	.03
M Fear of Intimacy ↔ F Sex Sat	-.48***	.02
M Fear of Intimacy ↔ M Rel Sat	-.70***	.04
M Fear of Intimacy ↔ F Rel Sat	-.47***	.03
F Fear of Intimacy ↔ F Sex Sat	-.69***	.03
F Fear of Intimacy ↔ M Sex Sat	-.38***	.02
F Fear of Intimacy ↔ F Rel Sat	-.66***	.04
F Fear of Intimacy ↔ M Rel Sat	-.47***	.03
M Sex Sat ↔ F Sex Sat	.68***	.03

M Sex Sat ↔ M Rel Sat	.77***	.04
M Sex Sat ↔ F Rel Sat	.50***	.04
F Sex Sat ↔ F Rel Sat	.74***	.04
F Sex Sat ↔ M Rel Sat	.63***	.04
M Rel Sat ↔ F Rel Sat	.67***	.05

Note. F = female partner; M = male partner; ACEs = adverse childhood experiences; Sex Sat = sexual satisfaction; Rel Sat = relationship satisfaction. Correlations are standardized estimates. [a]*p* < .10; **p* < .05; ***p* < .01; ****p* < .001.

Table 24

Factor Loadings for ACEs and Fear of Emotional Intimacy Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Path	Estimate
M Fear of Intimacy → M FIS P1	.90
M Fear of Intimacy → M FIS P2	.90
M Fear of Intimacy → M FIS P3	.93
F Fear of Intimacy → F FIS P1	.91
F Fear of Intimacy → F FIS P2	.90
F Fear of Intimacy → F FIS P3	.91
M Sexual Satisfaction → M Sex Sat P1	.92
M Sexual Satisfaction → M Sex Sat P2	.88
M Sexual Satisfaction → M Sex Sat P3	.88
F Sexual Satisfaction → F Sex Sat P1	.92
F Sexual Satisfaction → F Sex Sat P2	.91
F Sexual Satisfaction → F Sex Sat P3	.84
M Relationship Satisfaction → M Rel Sat P1	.94
M Relationship Satisfaction → M Rel Sat P2	.96
M Relationship Satisfaction → M Rel Sat P3	.90
F Relationship Satisfaction → F Rel Sat P1	.95
F Relationship Satisfaction → F Rel Sat P2	.93
F Relationship Satisfaction → F Rel Sat P3	.94

Note. F = female partner; M = male partner; FIS = fear of intimacy; Sex Sat = sexual satisfaction; Rel Sat = relationship satisfaction; P1, P2, and P3 = Parcels 1, 2, and 3. All parameters are significant at $p < .001$.

Table 25

ACEs and General Sexual Communication Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results

Path	Estimate	SE
M ACEs ↔ F ACEs	.12	.19
M ACEs ↔ M Sexual Communication	-.09	.10
M ACEs ↔ F Sexual Communication	.02	.11
M ACEs ↔ M Sex Sat	-.07	.06
M ACEs ↔ F Sex Sat	.07	.06
M ACEs ↔ M Rel Sat	-.07	.09
M ACEs ↔ F Rel Sat	-.04	.09
F ACEs ↔ F Sexual Communication	-.05	.11
F ACEs ↔ M Sexual Communication	.03	.10
F ACEs ↔ F Sex Sat	-.17[a]	.06
F ACEs ↔ M Sex Sat	.01	.06
F ACEs ↔ F Rel Sat	-.28**	.10
F ACEs ↔ M Rel Sat	-.02	.09
M Sexual Communication ↔ F Sexual Communication	.50***	.07
M Sexual Communication ↔ M Sex Sat	.89***	.05
M Sexual Communication ↔ F Sex Sat	.55***	.04
M Sexual Communication ↔ M Rel Sat	.72***	.06
M Sexual Communication ↔ F Rel Sat	.39***	.05
F Sexual Communication ↔ F Sex Sat	.78***	.05
F Sexual Communication ↔ M Sex Sat	.51***	.04
F Sexual Communication ↔ F Rel Sat	.66***	.07
F Sexual Communication ↔ M Rel Sat	.60***	.06
M Sex Sat ↔ F Sex Sat	.67***	.03

M Sex Sat ↔ M Rel Sat	.77***	.04
M Sex Sat ↔ F Rel Sat	.49***	.04
F Sex Sat ↔ F Rel Sat	.74***	.04
F Sex Sat ↔ M Rel Sat	.63***	.04
M Rel Sat ↔ F Rel Sat	.67***	.05

Note. F = female partner; M = male partner; ACEs = adverse childhood experiences; Sex Sat = sexual satisfaction; Rel Sat = relationship satisfaction. Correlations are standardized estimates. [a]$p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.

Table 26

Factor Loadings for ACEs and General Sexual Communication Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Path	Estimate
M Sexual Communication → M Sex Comm P1	.74
M Sexual Communication → M Sex Comm P2	.86
M Sexual Communication → M Sex Comm P3	.78
F Sexual Communication → F Sex Comm1	.79
F Sexual Communication → F Sex Comm2	.85
F Sexual Communication → F Sex Comm3	.79
M Sexual Satisfaction → M Sex Sat P1	.93
M Sexual Satisfaction → M Sex Sat P2	.87
M Sexual Satisfaction → M Sex Sat P3	.87
F Sexual Satisfaction → F Sex Sat P1	.92
F Sexual Satisfaction → F Sex Sat P2	.92
F Sexual Satisfaction → F Sex Sat P3	.84
M Relationship Satisfaction → M Rel Sat P1	.94
M Relationship Satisfaction → M Rel Sat P2	.96
M Relationship Satisfaction → M Rel Sat P3	.90
F Relationship Satisfaction → F Rel Sat P1	.95
F Relationship Satisfaction → F Rel Sat P2	.93
F Relationship Satisfaction → F Rel Sat P3	.94

Note. F = female partner; M = male partner; Sex Comm = sexual communication; Sex Sat = sexual satisfaction; Rel Sat = relationship satisfaction; P1, P2, and P3 = Parcels 1, 2, and 3. All parameters are significant at *p* < .001.

Table 27

Indirect and Direct Effects for the Attachment and Partner Communicative Responsiveness Mediation Model

Parameter	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	95% CI		*p*	Conclusion
			Lower	Upper		
F Anx → F PCR → F Sex Sat	**-.10**	**-.03**	**-.10**	**.00**	**.04**	**Partial Mediation**
F Anx → F PCR → F Rel Sat	**-.14**	**-.05**	**-.17**	**-.001**	**.046**	**Partial Mediation**
F Avoid → F PCR → F Sex Sat	**-.18**	**-.06**	**-.23**	**-.004**	**.03**	**Partial Mediation**
F Avoid → F PCR → F Rel Sat	**-.25**	**-.10**	**-.31**	**-.01**	**.02**	**Partial Mediation**
M Anx → M PCR → M Sex Sat	**-.07**	**-.08**	**-.20**	**-.01**	**.02**	**Full Mediation**
M Anx → M PCR → M Rel Sat	**-.03**	**-.11**	**-.26**	**-.03**	**.01**	**Full Mediation**
M Anx → M PCR → F Sex Sat	**.004**	**-.07**	**-.19**	**-.01**	**.01**	**Full Mediation**
M Avoid → M PCR → M Sex Sat	**-.12**	**-.10**	**-.24**	**-.002**	**.046**	**Partial Mediation**
M Avoid → M PCR → M Rel Sat	**-.19**	**-.15**	**-.34**	**-.01**	**.04**	**Partial Mediation**
M Avoid → M PCR → F Sex Sat	**.04**	**-.09**	**-.24**	**-.01**	**.03**	**Full Mediation**
M Avoid → M PCR → F Rel Sat	-.10	-.06	-.26	.02	.14	No Mediation

Note. Unstandardized coefficients reported. Bootstrap sample = 5,000 with replacement. F = female partner; M = male partner; Anx = attachment anxiety; Avoid = attachment avoidance; PCR = partner communicative responsiveness; Sex Sat = sexual satisfaction; Rel Sat = relationship satisfaction. Significant paths are bolded.

Table 28

Indirect and Direct Effects for the Attachment and Observational Communicative
Responsiveness Mediation Model

Parameter	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	95% CI		*p*	Conclusion
			Lower	Upper		
F Avoid → F OBV CR→ M Rel Sat	-.04	-.09	-.32	.06	.19	No Mediation
F Avoid → F OBV CR → F Rel Sat	-.32	-.09	-.34	.05	.19	No Mediation

Note. Unstandardized coefficients reported. Bootstrap sample = 5,000 with replacement. F = female partner; M = male partner; Avoid = attachment avoidance; OBV CR = observational coding of communicative responsiveness during the intimacy conversation; Rel Sat = relationship satisfaction. Significant paths are bolded.

Table 29

Indirect and Direct Effects for the Attachment and Fear of Emotional Intimacy Mediation Model

Parameter	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	95% CI		*p*	Conclusion
			Lower	Upper		
F Anx → F FIS → F Sex Sat	**-.07**	**-.06**	**-.12**	**-.01**	**.02**	**Partial Mediation**
F Anx → F FIS → F Rel Sat	**-.11**	**-.06**	**-.16**	**-.01**	**.02**	**Partial Mediation**
F Avoid → F FIS → F Sex Sat	**-.04**	**-.25**	**-.43**	**-.13**	**< .001**	**Full Mediation**
F Avoid → F FIS → F Rel Sat	**-.11**	**-.28**	**-.57**	**-.09**	**.003**	**Full Mediation**
F Avoid → F FIS → M Rel Sat	**.07**	**-.14**	**-.31**	**-.01**	**.04**	**Full Mediation**
M Anx → M FIS → M Sex Sat	**-.06**	**-.08**	**-.19**	**-.02**	**.01**	**Full Mediation**
M Anx → M FIS → M Rel Sat	**-.01**	**-.11**	**-.23**	**-.04**	**.003**	**Full Mediation**
M Avoid → M FIS → M Sex Sat	**.01**	**-.25**	**-.43**	**-.11**	**.002**	**Full Mediation**
M Avoid → M FIS → M Rel Sat	**.01**	**-.36**	**-.58**	**-.19**	**< .001**	**Full Mediation**
M Avoid → M FIS → F Sex Sat	.06	-.11	-.25	.02	.08	No Mediation

Note. Unstandardized coefficients reported. Bootstrap sample = 5,000 with replacement. F = female partner; M = male partner; Anx = attachment anxiety; Avoid = attachment avoidance; FIS = fear of emotional intimacy; Sex Sat = sexual satisfaction; Rel Sat = relationship satisfaction. Significant paths are bolded.

Table 30

Indirect and Direct Effects for the Attachment and General Sexual Communication Mediation Model

Parameter	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	*p*	Conclusion
F Anx → F Sex Comm → F Sex Sat	**-.06**	**-.07**	**-.15**	**-.02**	**.02**	**Full Mediation**
F Anx → F Sex Comm → F Rel Sat	**-.12**	**-.08**	**-.20**	**-.02**	**.01**	**Partial Mediation**
F Avoid → F Sex Comm → F Rel Sat	**-.28**	**-.11**	**-.31**	**-.004**	**.04**	**Partial Mediation**
M Anx → M Sex Comm → M Sex Sat	**.003**	**-.14**	**-.28**	**-.05**	**.01**	**Full Mediation**
M Anx → M Sex Comm → M Rel Sat	**-.002**	**-.12**	**-.26**	**-.05**	**.002**	**Full Mediation**
M Avoid → M Sex Comm → M Sex Sat	**.03**	**-.26**	**-.44**	**-.13**	**.001**	**Full Mediation**
M Avoid → M Sex Comm → M Rel Sat	**-.05**	**-.23**	**-.42**	**-.10**	**.001**	**Full Mediation**
M Avoid → F Sex Comm → F Sex Sat	**.13**	**-.16**	**-.33**	**-.02**	**.02**	**Full Mediation**
M Avoid → F Sex Comm → F Rel Sat	**-.06**	**-.16**	**-.38**	**-.03**	**.02**	**Full Mediation**

Note. Unstandardized coefficients reported. Bootstrap sample = 5,000 with replacement. F = female partner; M = male partner; Anx = attachment anxiety; Avoid = attachment avoidance; Sex Comm = general sexual communication; Sex Sat = sexual satisfaction; Rel Sat = relationship satisfaction. Significant paths are bolded.

Table 31

Indirect and Direct Effects for the FCP and Partner Communicative Responsiveness Mediation Model

Parameter	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	95% CI		*p*	Conclusion
			Lower	Upper		
M Conversation → M PCR → M Sex Sat	.01	.05	-.004	.13	.08	No Mediation
M Conversation → M PCR → M Rel Sat	-.02	.07	-.01	.17	.08	No Mediation
M Conformity → F PCR → M Rel Sat	-.15	.03	-.002	.13	.07	No Mediation
M Conformity → M PCR → M Sex Sat	-.12	.08	-.001	.21	.052	No Mediation
M Conformity → M PCR → M Rel Sat	-.15	.12	.00	.29	.05	No Mediation
M Conformity → M PCR → F Rel Sat	-.10	.04	-.01	.16	.08	No Mediation
M Conformity → F PCR → F Rel Sat	-.10	.10	-.01	.28	.08	No Mediation
M Conformity → M PCR → F Sex Sat	.07	.06	.00	.16	.051	No Mediation
M Conformity → F PCR → F Sex Sat	.07	.05	-.10	.17	.10	No Mediation

Note. Unstandardized coefficients reported. Bootstrap sample = 5,000 with replacement. F = female partner; M = male partner; Conversation = conversation orientation; Conformity = conformity orientation; PCR = partner communicative responsiveness; Sex Sat = sexual satisfaction; Rel Sat = relationship satisfaction.

Table 32

Indirect and Direct Effects for the FCP and Fear of Emotional Intimacy Mediation Model

Parameter	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	95% CI		*p*	Conclusion
			Lower	Upper		
F Conversation → F FIS → F Sex Sat	.002	.05	-.003	.11	.07	No Mediation
F Conversation → F FIS → F Rel Sat	.07	.06	-.001	.14	.06	No Mediation
M Conversation → M FIS → M Sex Sat	**-.004**	**.08**	**.02**	**.16**	**.001**	**Full Mediation**
M Conversation → M FIS → M Rel Sat	**-.04**	**.11**	**.03**	**.22**	**.001**	**Full Mediation**
M Conversation → M FIS → F Sex Sat	**-.08**	**.04**	**.01**	**.10**	**.001**	**Partial Mediation**
M Conversation → M FIS → F Rel Sat	**-.02**	**.05**	**.01**	**.11**	**.01**	**Full Mediation**
M Conformity → F FIS → F Sex Sat	**.07**	**.09**	**.01**	**.18**	**.02**	**Full Mediation**
M Conformity → F FIS → F Rel Sat	**-.09**	**.12**	**.02**	**.26**	**.02**	**Full Mediation**

Note. Unstandardized coefficients reported. Bootstrap sample = 5,000 with replacement. F = female partner; M = male partner; Conversation = conversation orientation; Conformity = conformity orientation; FIS = fear of emotional intimacy; Sex Sat = sexual satisfaction; Rel Sat = relationship satisfaction. Significant paths are bolded.

Table 33

Indirect and Direct Effects for the FCP and General Sexual Communication Mediation Model

Parameter	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	95% CI		p	Conclusion
			Lower	Upper		
F Conversation → F Sex Comm → F Sex Sat	.00	.05	-.002	.12	.06	No Mediation
F Conversation → F Sex Comm → M Sex Sat	.004	.01	-.001	.04	.07	No Mediation
F Conversation → F Sex Comm → F Rel Sat	.09	.06	-.002	.15	.06	No Mediation
F Conversation → F Sex Comm → M Rel Sat	.03	.03	-.002	.10	.07	No Mediation
M Conversation → M Sex Comm → M Sex Sat	**-.01**	**.07**	**.01**	**.15**	**.04**	**Full Mediation**
M Conversation → M Sex Comm → M Rel Sat	**-.03**	**.07**	**.01**	**.14**	**.03**	**Full Mediation**
M Conversation → M Sex Comm → F Sex Sat	**-.08**	**.03**	**.01**	**.08**	**.02**	**Partial Mediation**
M Conversation → M Sex Comm → F Rel Sat	-.04	.02	-.001	.07	.06	No Mediation

Note. Unstandardized coefficients reported. Bootstrap sample = 5,000 with replacement. F = female partner; M = male partner; Conversation = conversation orientation; Conformity = conformity orientation; Sex Comm = general sexual communication; Sex Sat = sexual satisfaction; Rel Sat = relationship satisfaction. Significant paths are bolded.

FIGURES

Figure 1

Hypothesized APIM with Attachment Avoidance and Anxiety as Predictors
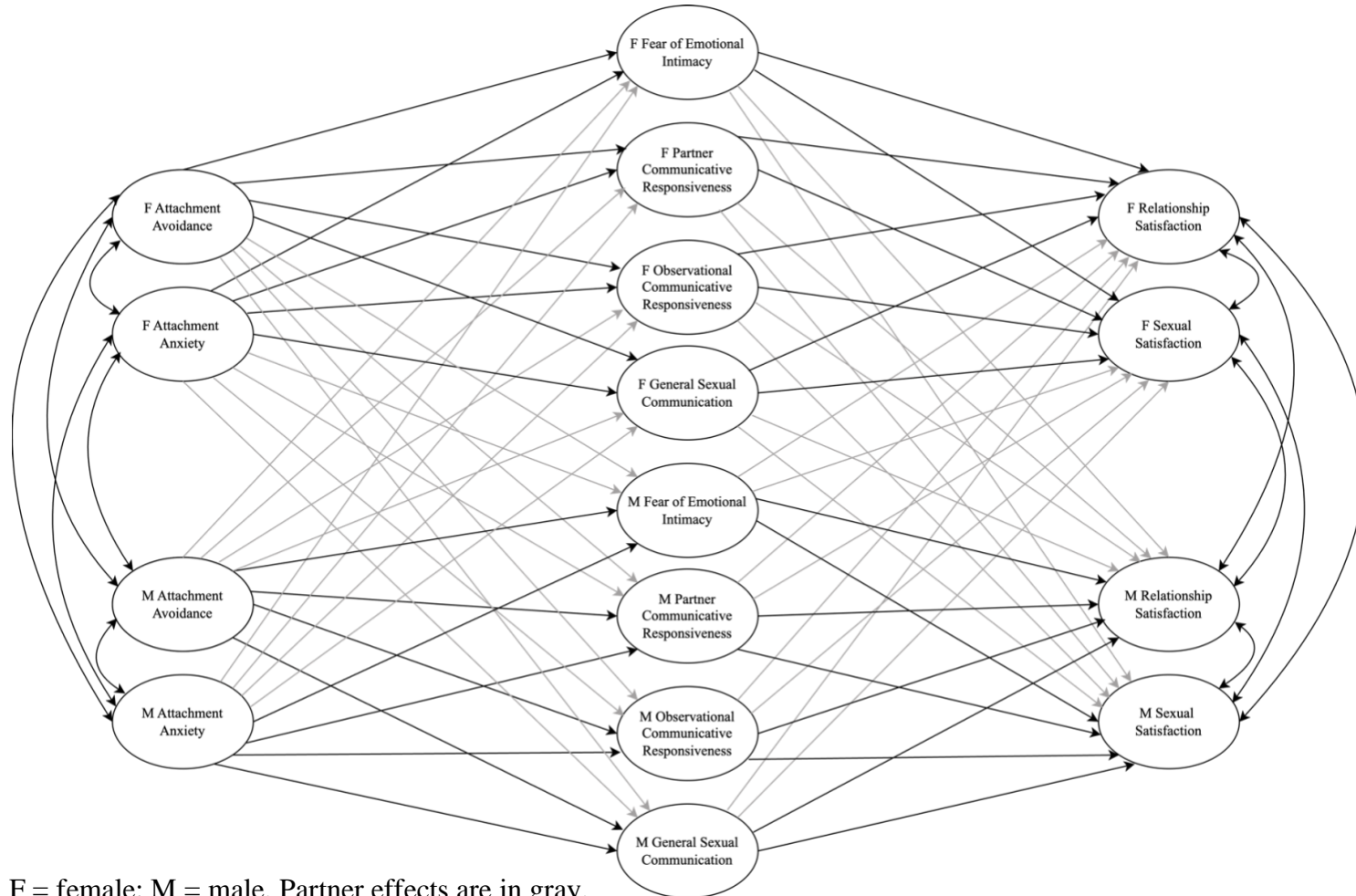
Note. F = female; M = male. Partner effects are in gray.

Figure 2

Hypothesized APIM with FCP Conversation and Conformity Orientations as Predictors
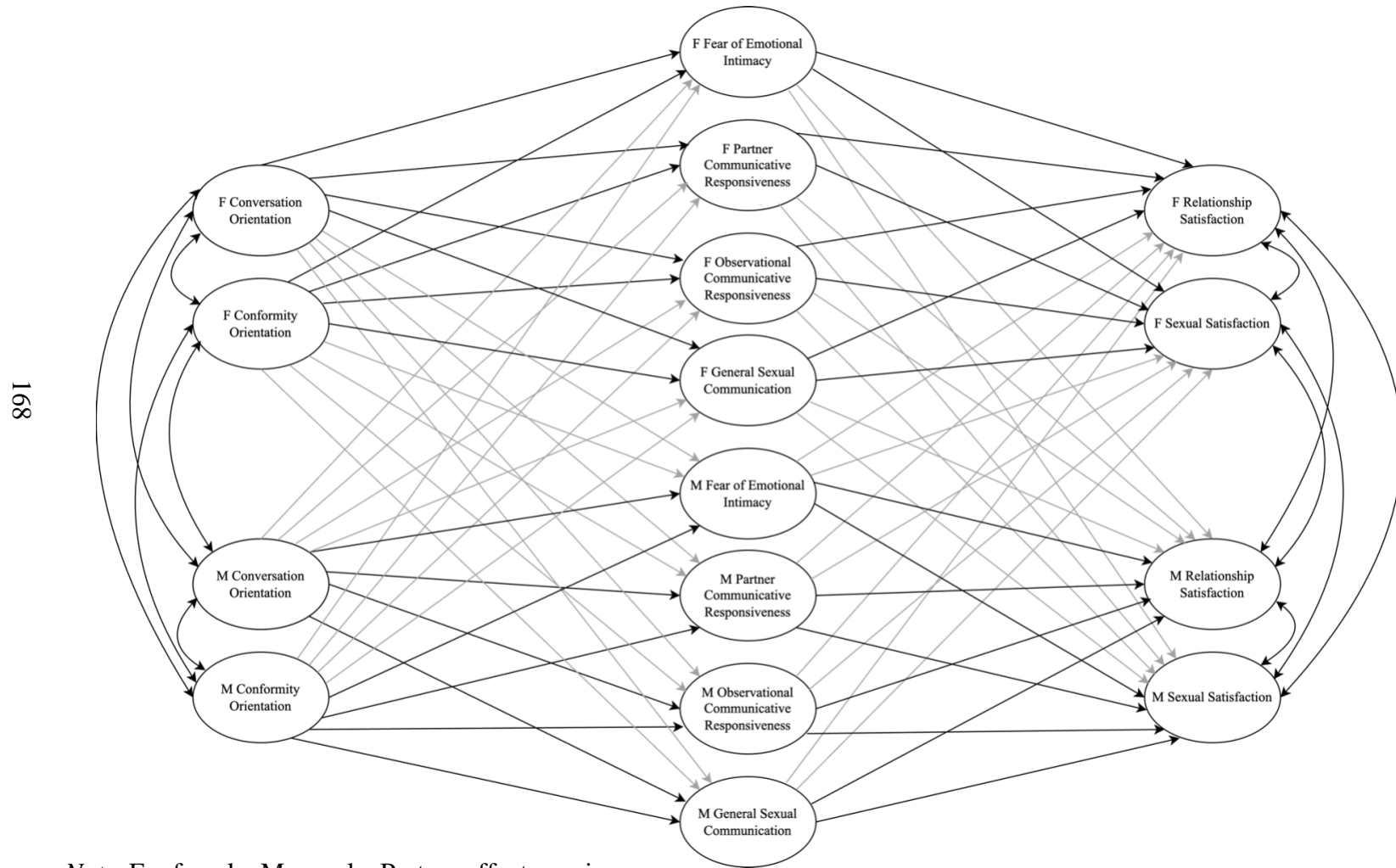
Note. F = female; M = male. Partner effects are in gray.

Figure 3

Hypothesized APIM with ACEs as Predictors
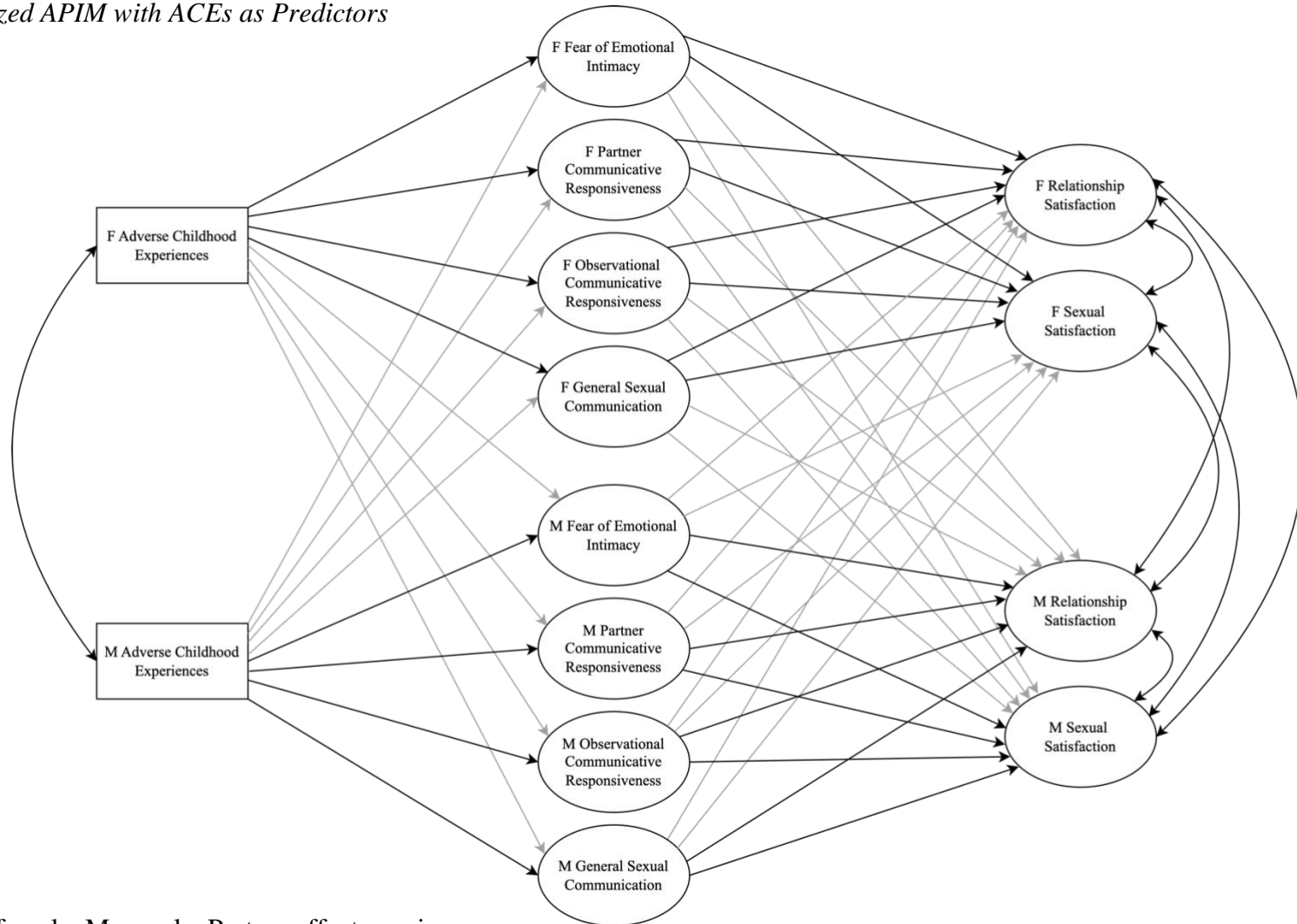
Note. F = female; M = male. Partner effects are in gray.

Figure 4

APIM with Attachment and Partner Communicative Responsiveness
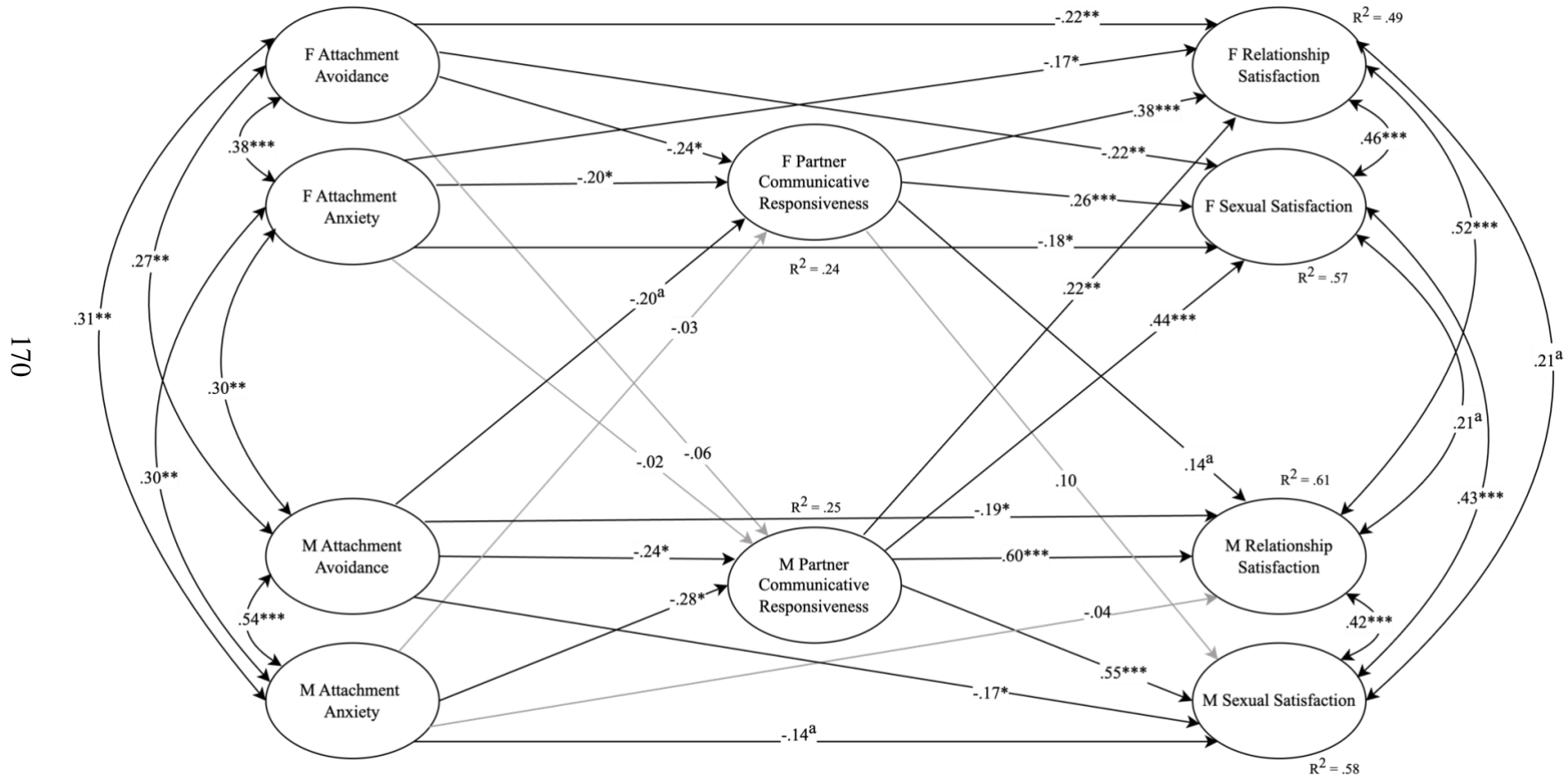
Note. All paths are standardized estimates. F = female; M = male; [a]*p* < .10; *p* < .05; **p* < .01; ***p* < .001. Gray paths are not significant. Not all direct paths displayed for clarity.

Figure 5

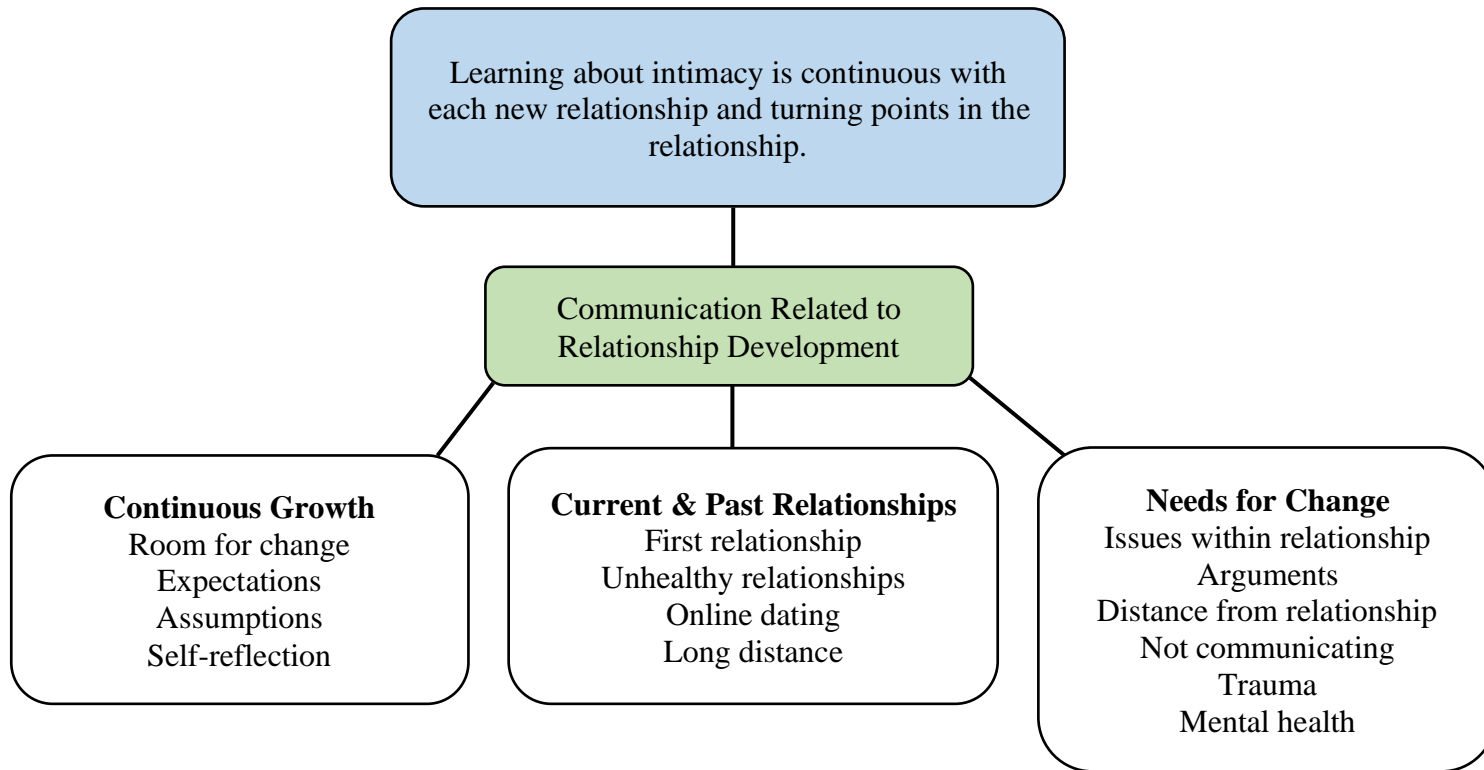*APIM with Attachment and Observational Communicative Responsiveness*
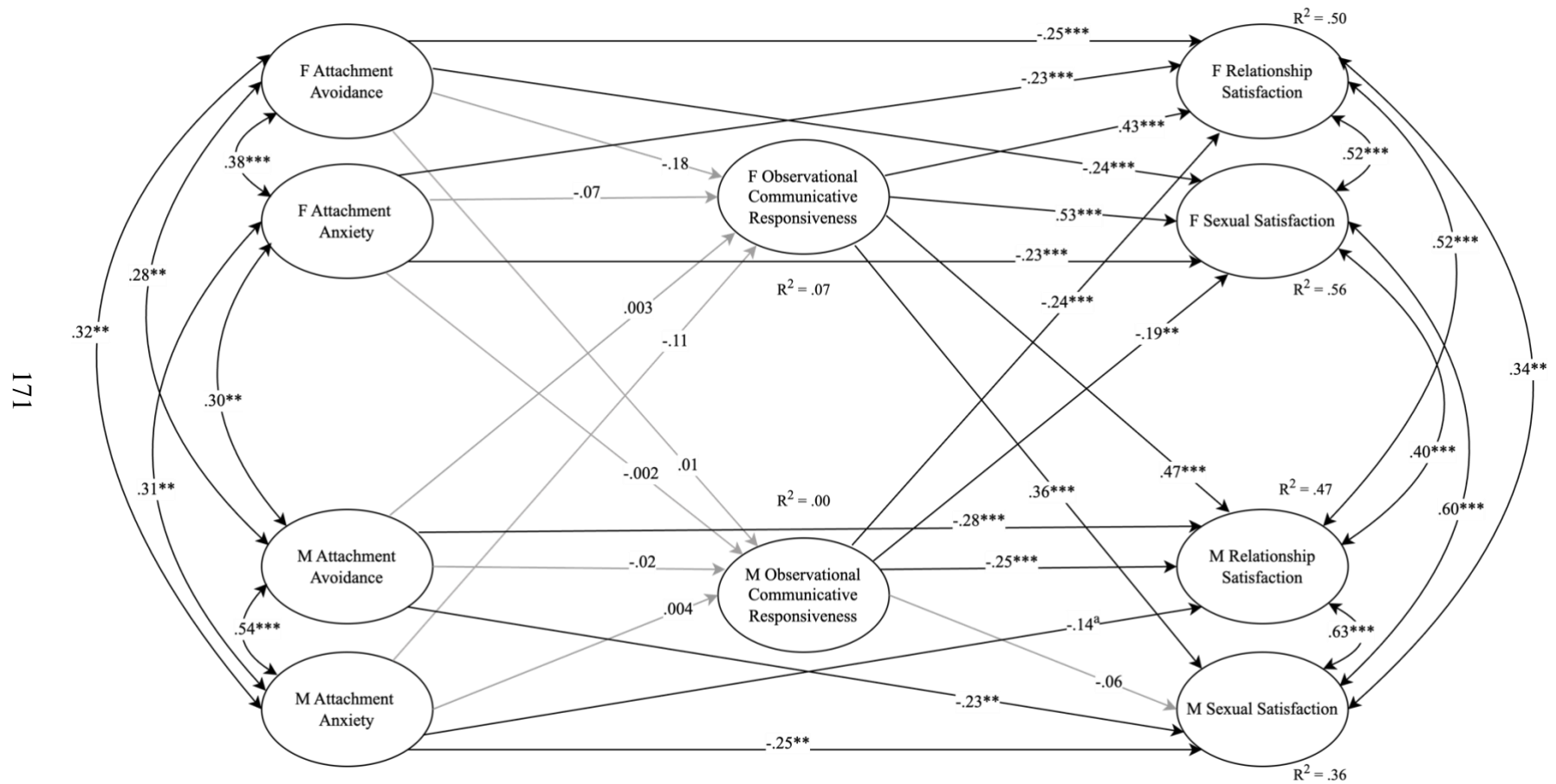
Note. All paths are standardized estimates. F = female; M = male; [a]$p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$. Gray paths are not significant. Not all direct paths displayed for clarity.

Figure 6

APIM with Attachment and Fear of Intimacy
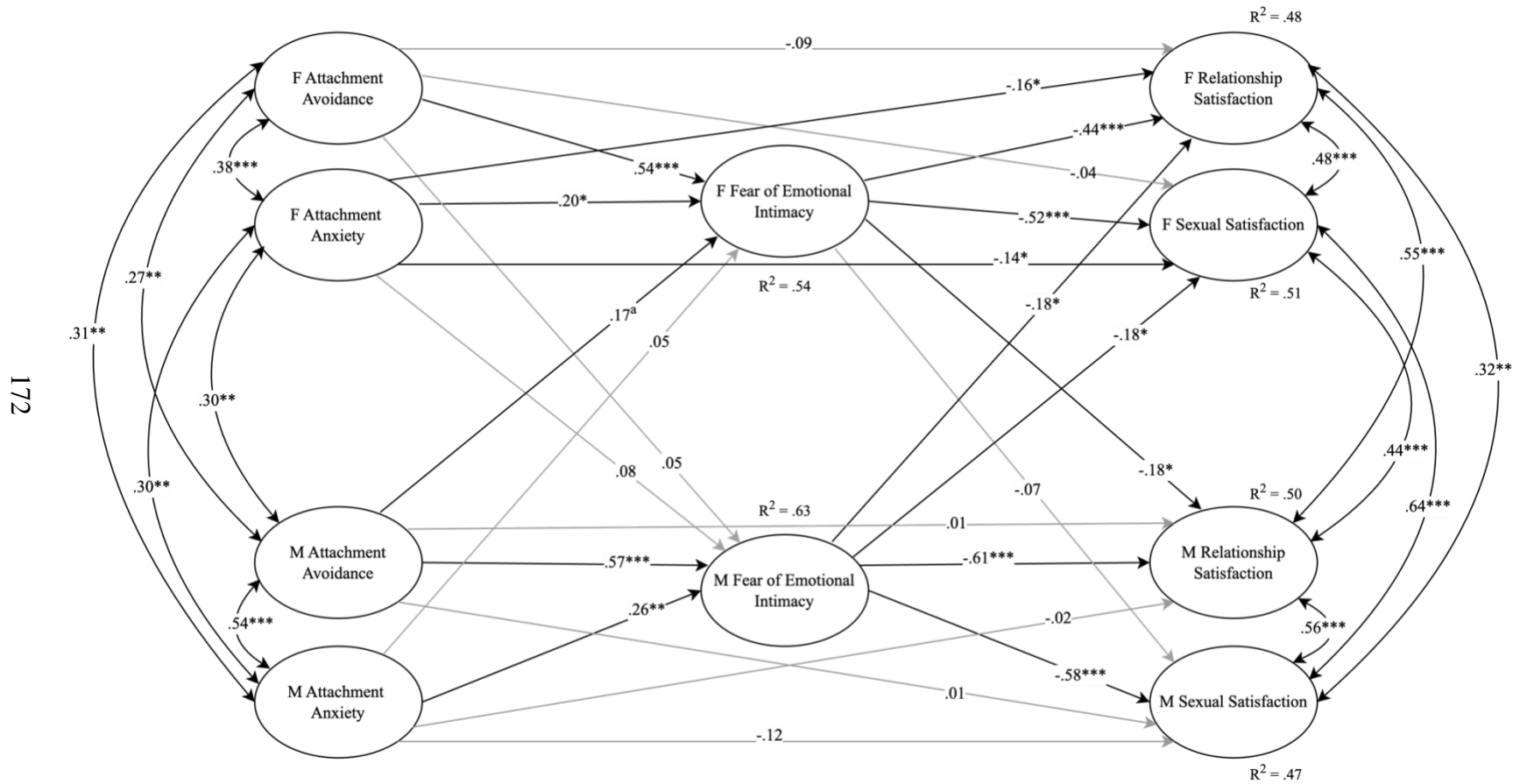
Note. All paths are standardized estimates. F = female; M = male; [a]$p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$. Gray paths are not significant. Not all direct paths displayed for clarity.

Figure 7

APIM with Attachment and General Sexual Communication
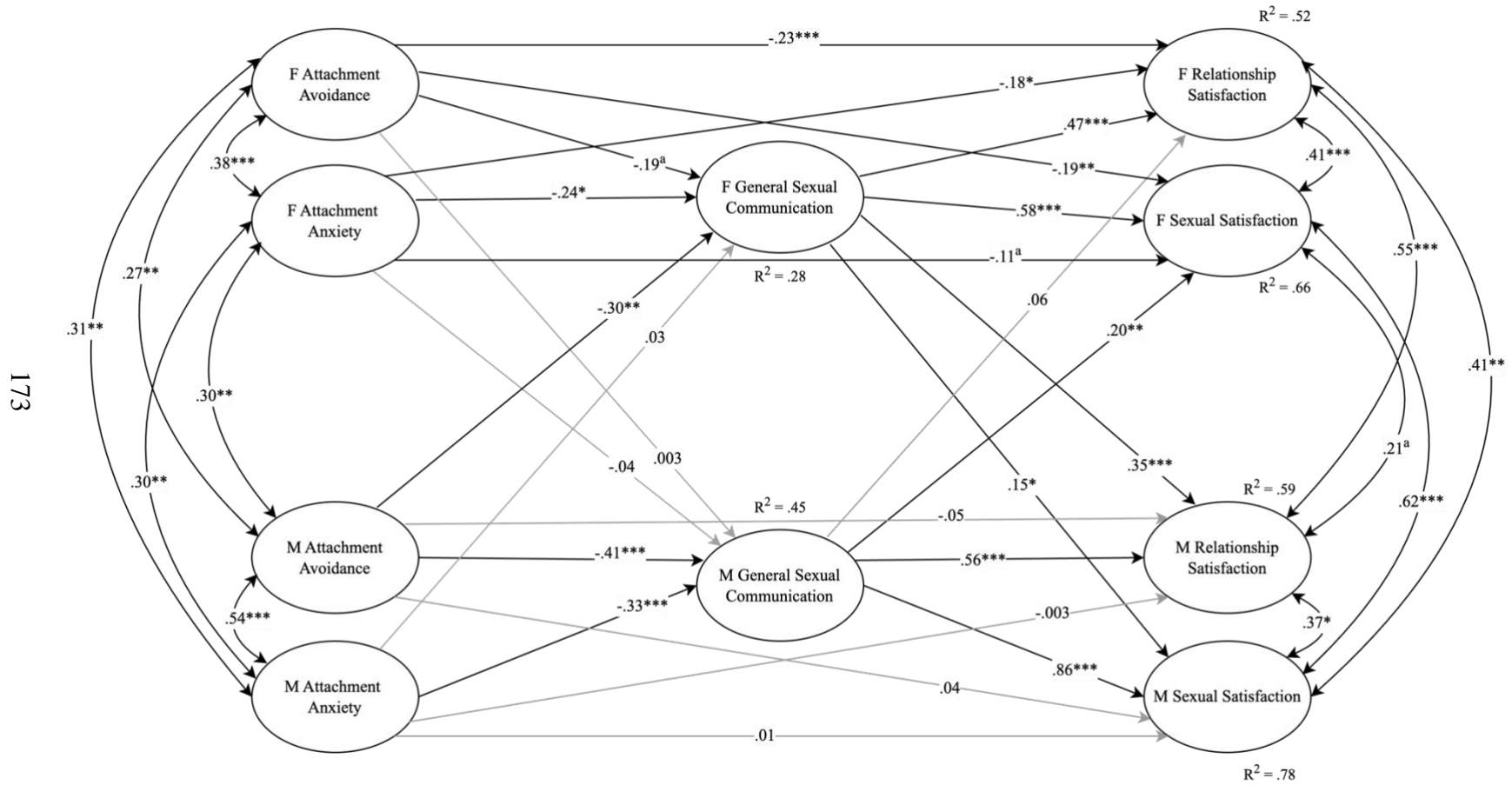
Note. All paths are standardized estimates. F = female; M = male; [a]$p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$. Gray paths are not significant. Not all direct paths displayed for clarity.

Figure 8

APIM with FCP and Partner Communicative Responsiveness
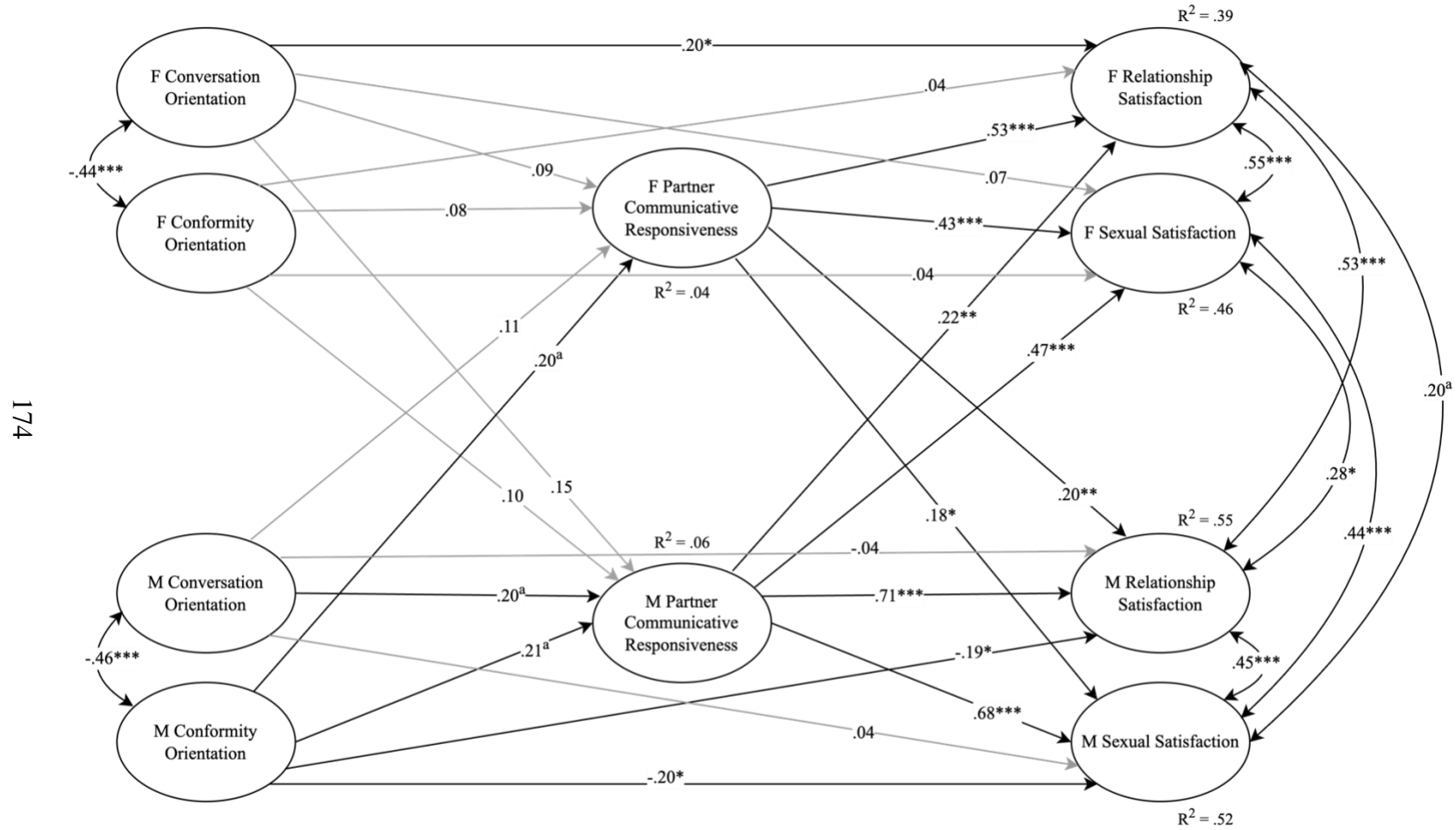
Note. All paths are standardized estimates. F = female; M = male; [a]*p* < .10; *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001. Gray paths are not significant. Not all direct paths displayed for clarity.

Figure 9

APIM with FCP and Observational Communicative Responsiveness
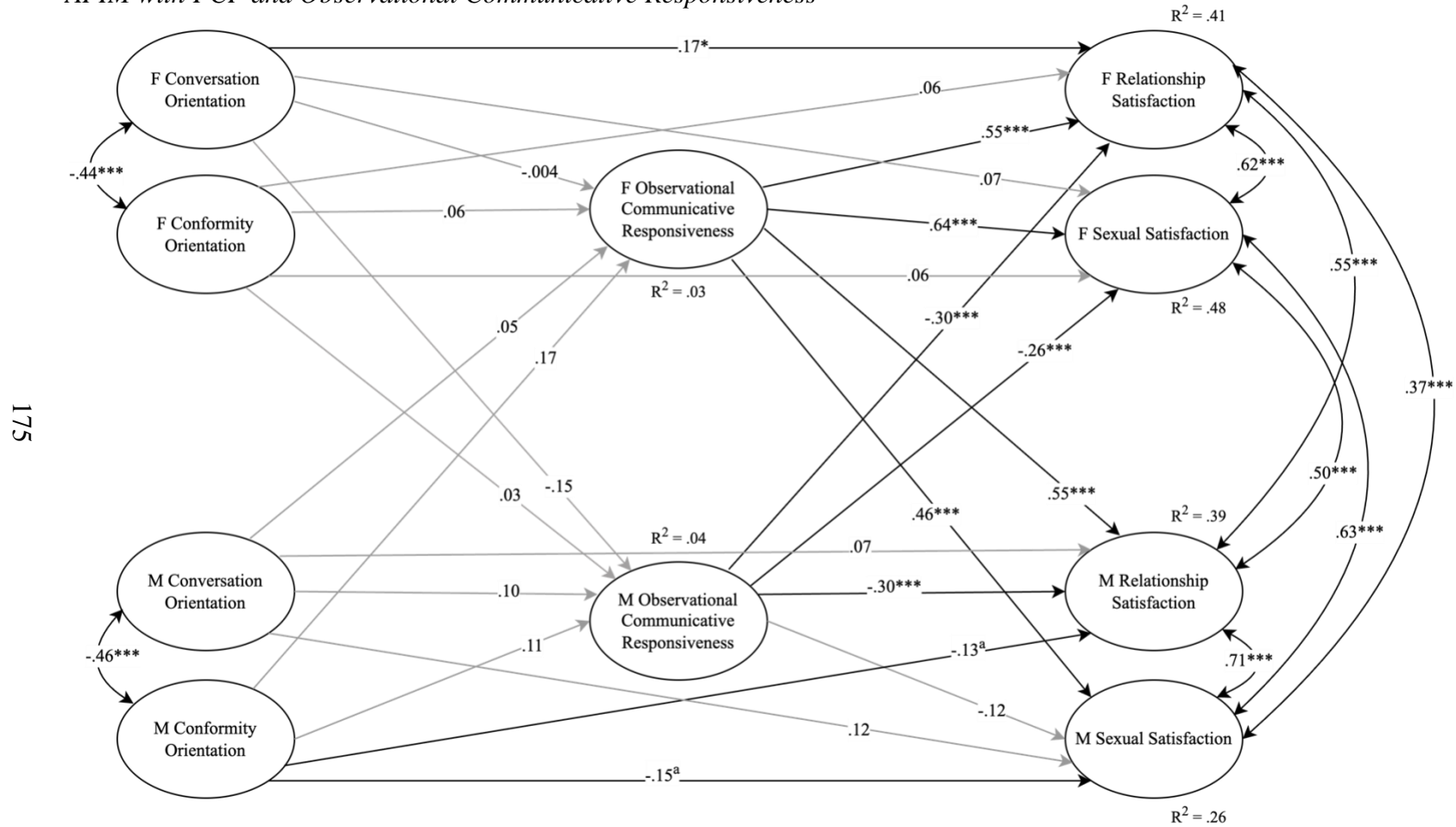
Note. All paths are standardized estimates. F = female; M = male; [a]$p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$. Gray paths are not significant. Not all direct paths displayed for clarity.

Figure 10

APIM with FCP and Fear of Intimacy
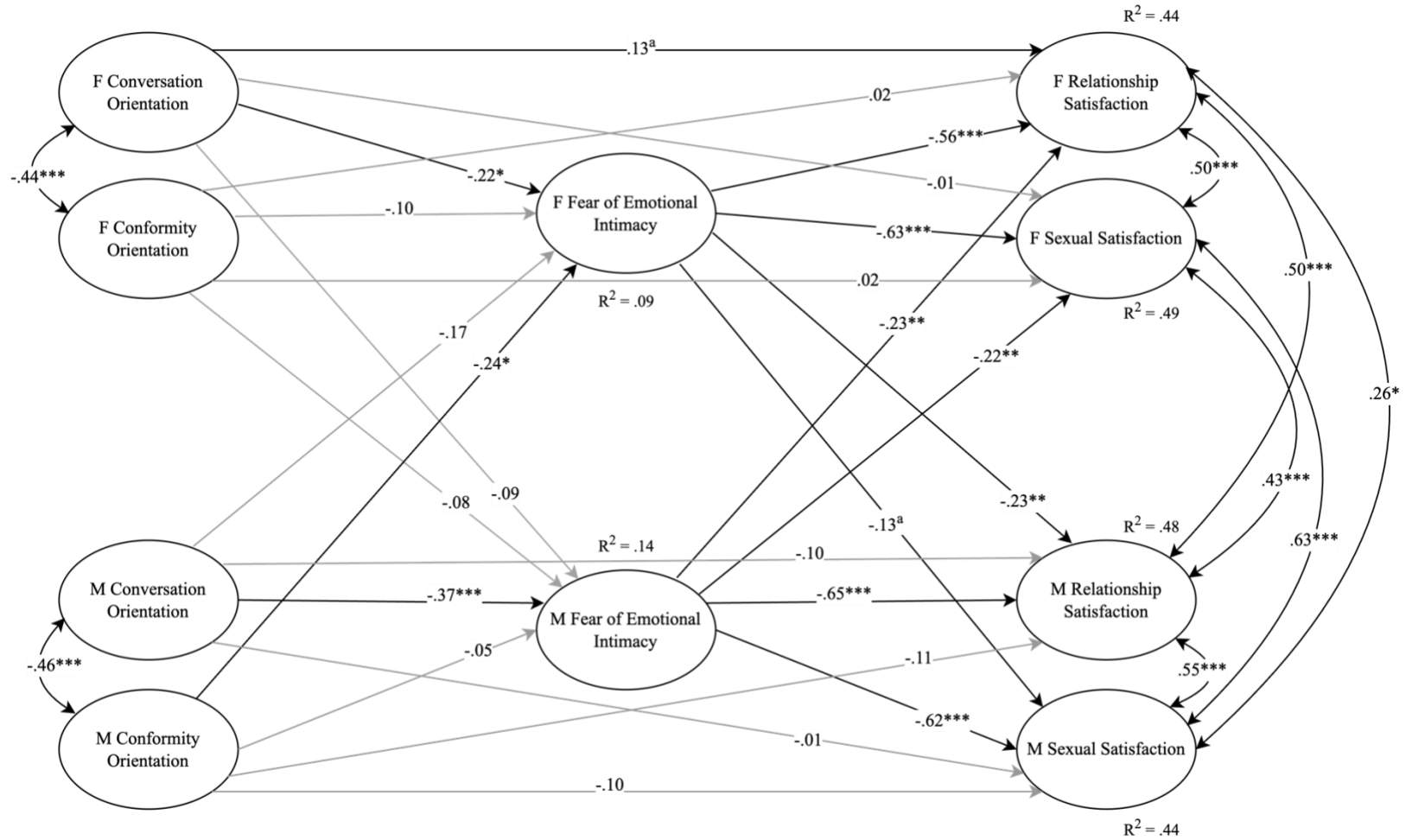
Note. All paths are standardized estimates. F = female; M = male; [a]$p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$. Gray paths are not significant. Not all direct paths displayed for clarity.

Figure 11

APIM with FCP and General Sexual Communication
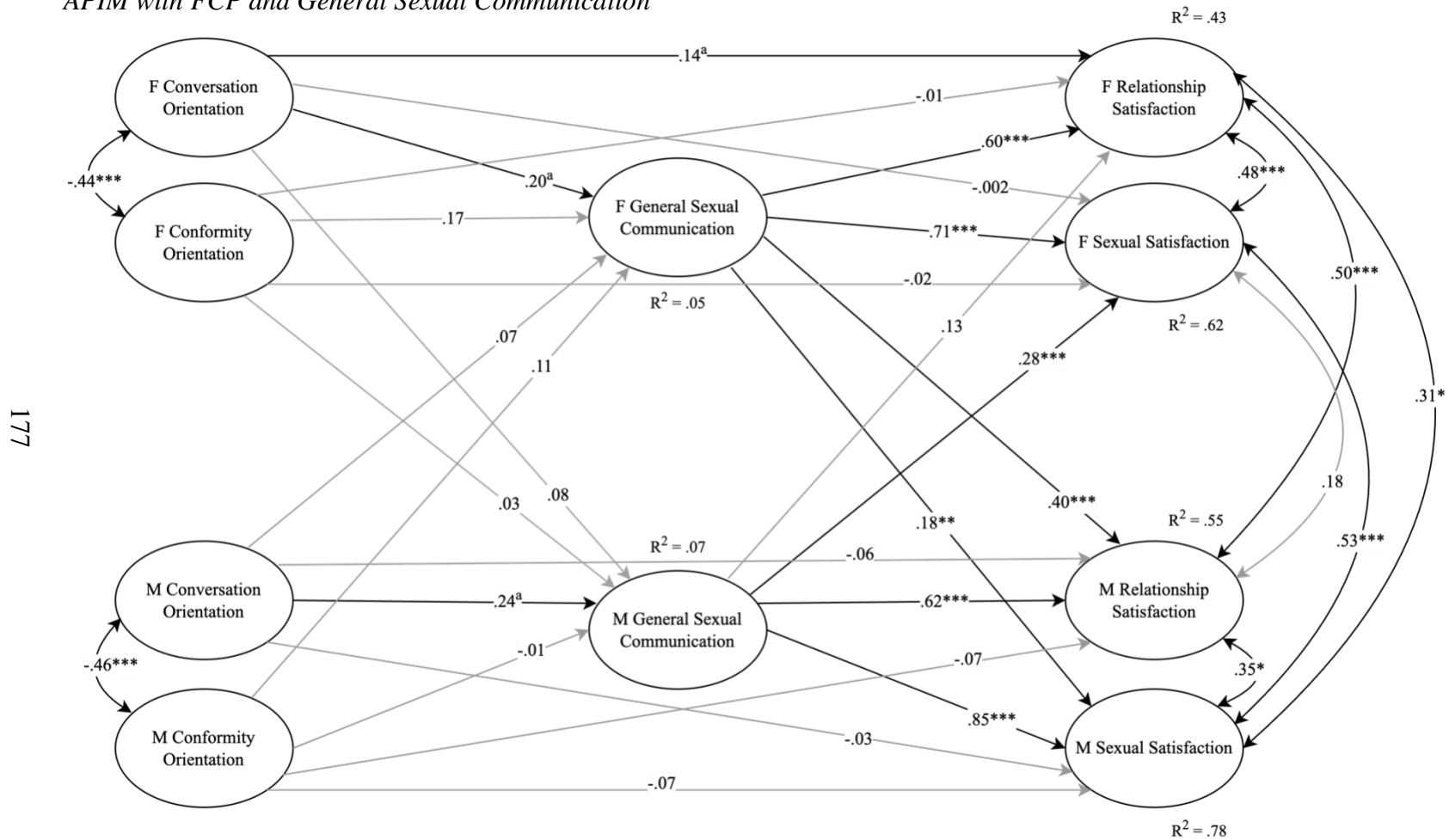
Note. All paths are standardized estimates. F = female; M = male; [a]$p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$. Gray paths are not significant. Not all direct paths displayed for clarity.

Figure 12

APIM with ACEs and Partner Communicative Responsiveness
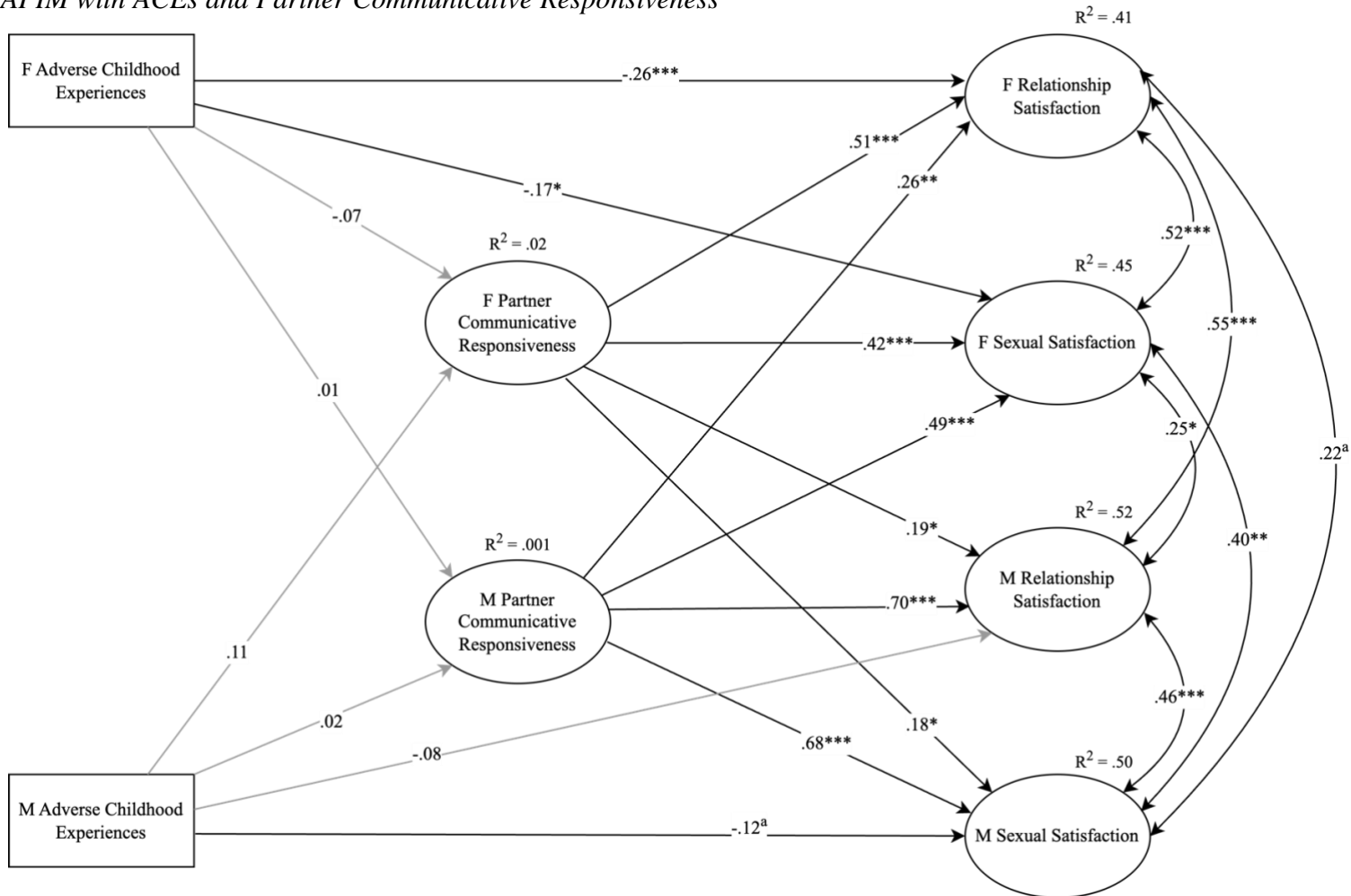
Note. All paths are standardized estimates. F = female; M = male; [a]$p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$. Gray paths are not significant. Not all direct paths displayed for clarity.

Figure 13

APIM with ACEs and Observational Communicative Responsiveness
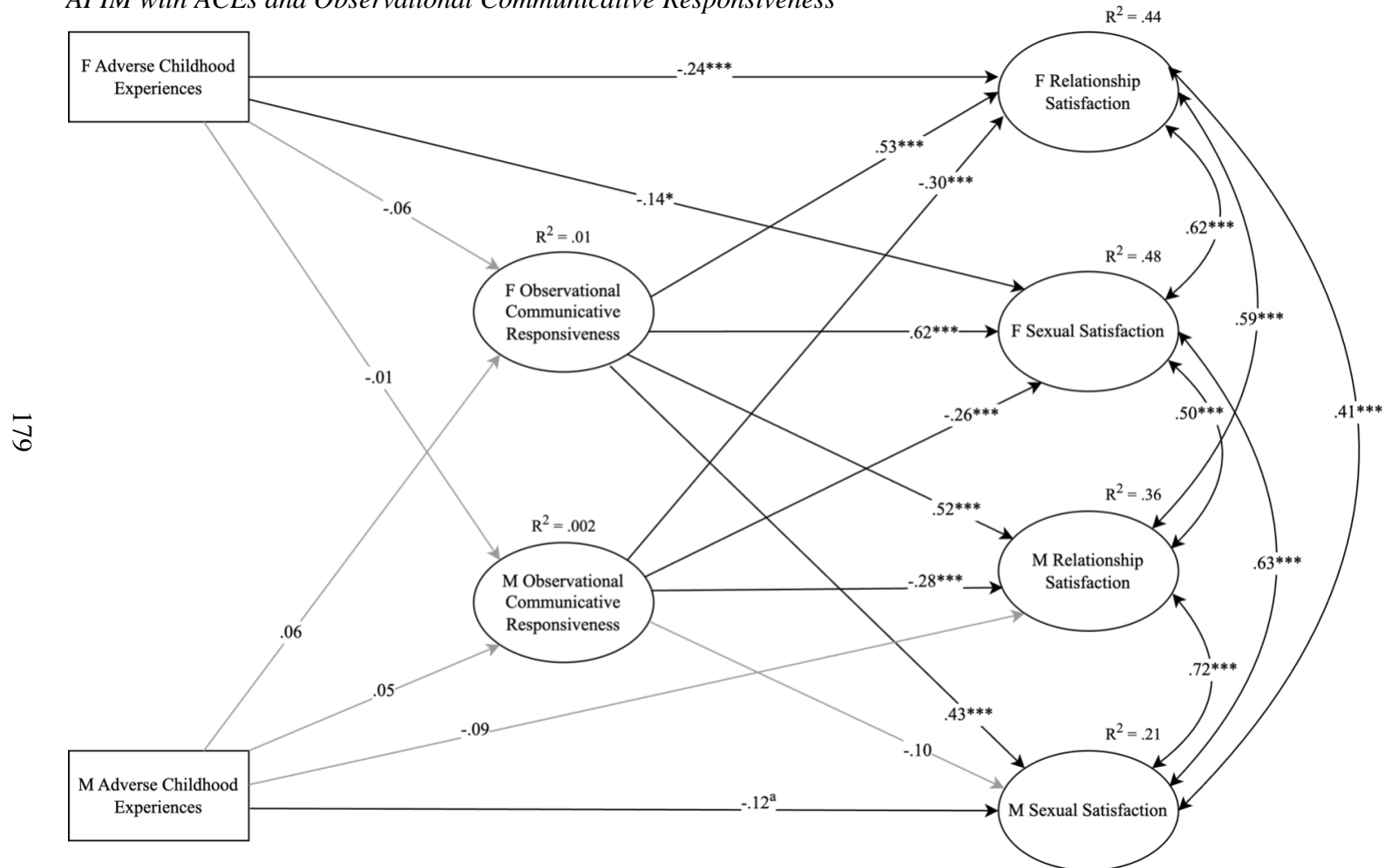
Note. All paths are standardized estimates. F = female; M = male; [a]$p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$. Gray paths are not significant. Not all direct paths displayed for clarity.

Figure 14

APIM with ACEs and Fear of Intimacy
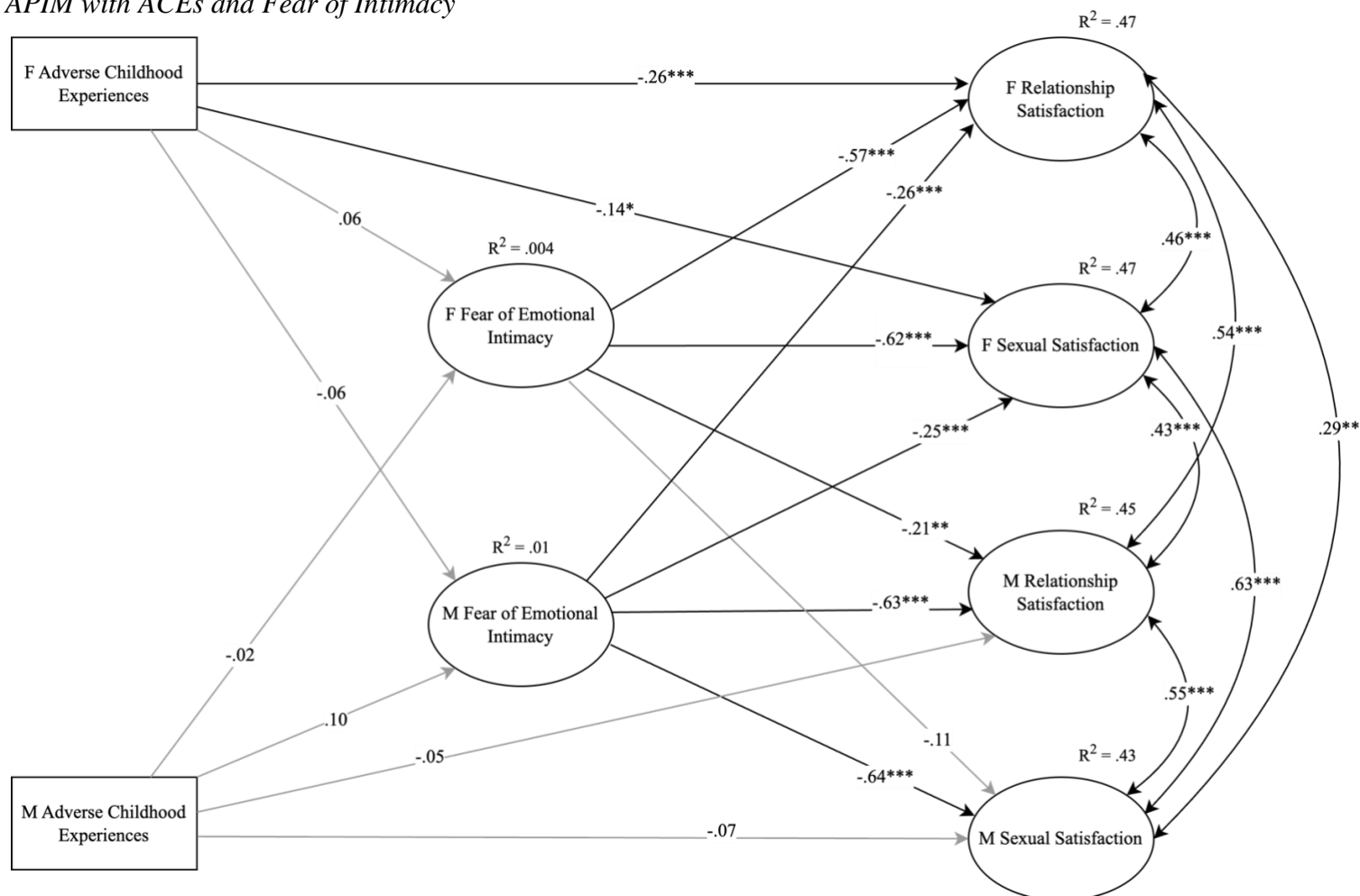
Note. All paths are standardized estimates. F = female; M = male; [a]$p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$. Gray paths are not significant. Not all direct paths displayed for clarity.

Figure 15

APIM with ACEs and General Sexual Communication
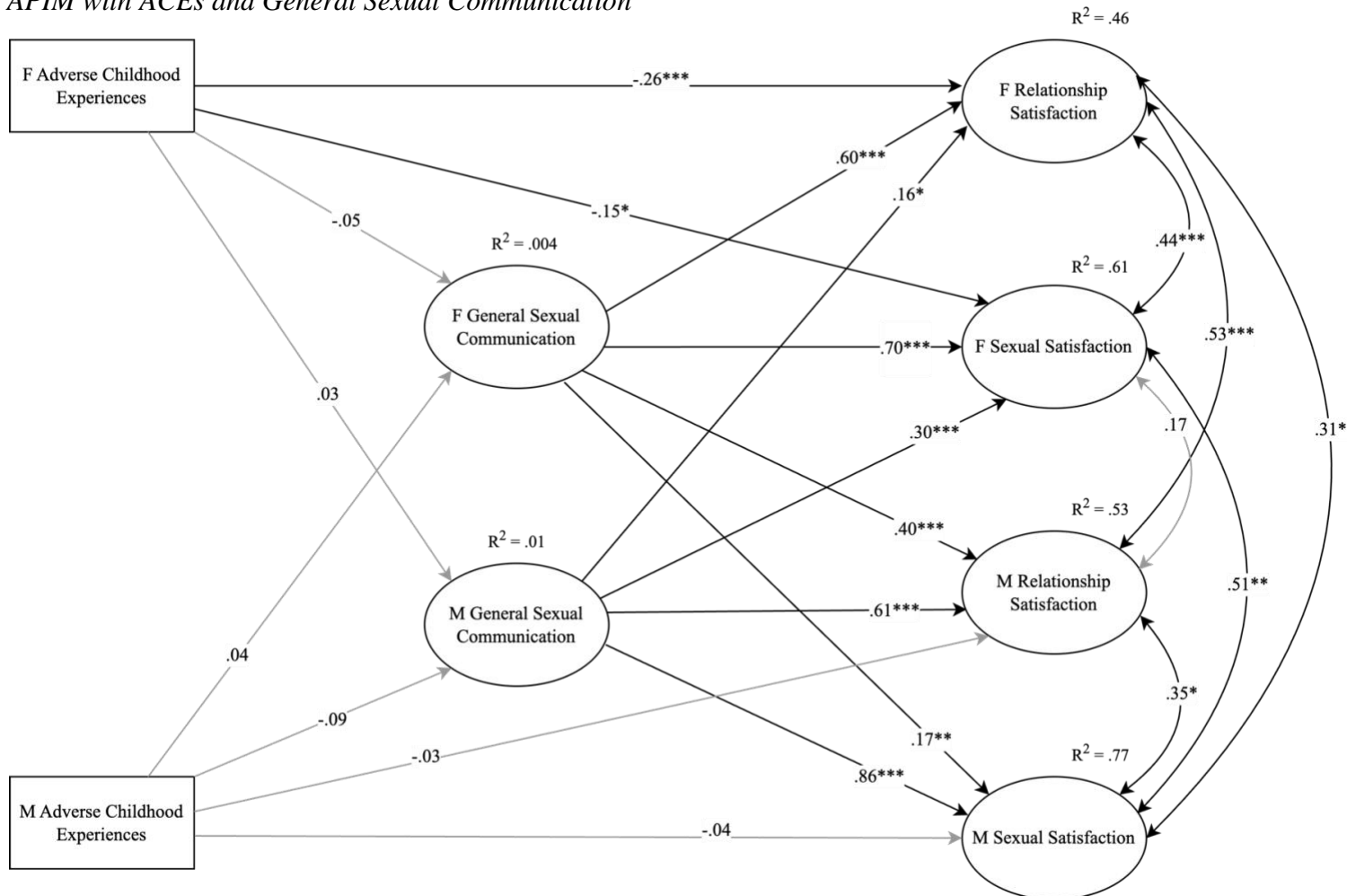
Note. All paths are standardized estimates. F = female; M = male; [a]*p* < .10; *p* < .05; **p* < .01; ***p* < .001. Gray paths are not significant. Not all direct paths displayed for clarity.

Figure 16

Qualitative Theme #1: The Socialization of Intimacy

Perceptions of intimacy develop from external factors, life stages, and informal/formal learning.

Learning

Attitudes about sex
Boundaries
Pressure
Shame
Validation
Anxieties
Avoiding taboo or sexual topics
Emotional intimacy makes sex better

External factors
Culture
Religion
School
Media
Masculinity
Stress

Life stages
Future
Living together
Marriage
Having kids

Informal/Formal Sources
Family
Friends
Sexual experiences
Sex Education
Reading
Pornography

Figure 17

Qualitative Theme #2: Learning About Intimacy is a Continuous Process

Figure 18

Qualitative Theme #3: Intimacy Displays are Either Modeled or Compensated
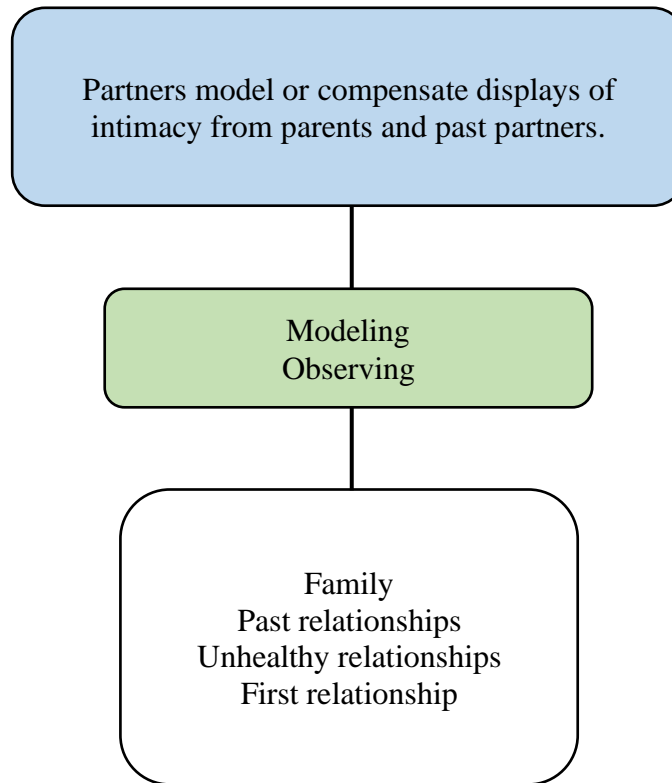
Figure 19

Qualitative Theme #4: Emotional and Sexual Intimacy Build Over Time
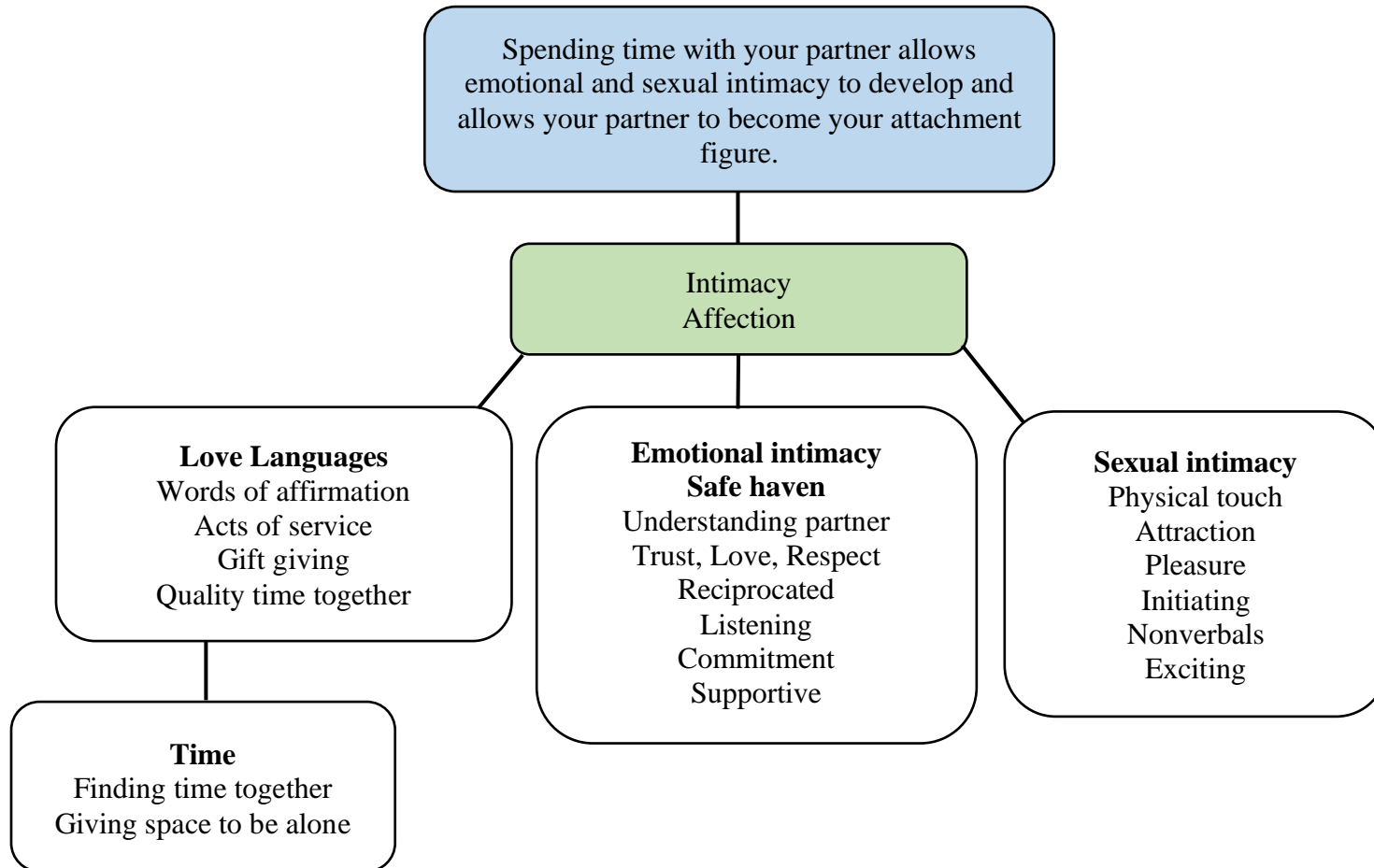
APPENDICES

Appendix A

Couple Intimacy Study Interview Questions

Instructions: Thank the participant for agreeing to a follow-up interview. Let them know that these interviews are confidential, meaning that what they tell you will not be shared with their partner and vice versa (they will not know what their partner says).

1. First, I am going to ask you to reflect on the Zoom conversation you had with your partner about intimacy. How did you feel <u>right after</u> the intimacy conversation with your partner? Why did you feel that way?
   a. In what ways did you feel heard/understood by your partner? In what ways did you feel misunderstood or not heard by your partner?
   b. Have you had similar conversations before this one? Can you give me an example or two? How did you communicate with each other then? How did you each respond? What happened?

2. How did you feel <u>during</u> the conversation?
   a. Can you describe your feelings in detail? How, if at all, did your feelings change throughout the conversation?
   b. To what degree did you feel like you could be open with your partner? To what degree did you feel like you needed to avoid talking about certain topics with your partner? Were there certain parts of the conversation that you were more or less open/avoidant than others? What parts were those and why?

3. How did you feel in the days following the conversation?
   a. Did you and your partner discuss the conversation or study?
   b. Have you had another conversation (or more) about emotional or sexual intimacy since the Zoom with your partner for this study? If so, what did you talk about? How do you feel you each communicated during those conversations? In what ways, if any, did being in the study with each other impact those conversations?

4. Have you engaged in sexual activity with your partner since the conversation?
   a. In what ways, if any, do you think the conversation impacted your sexual activity?

5. Lastly, I am going to ask you some questions about intimacy, broadly.
   a. How do you think family experiences have affected how you think about intimacy?

       i.   What are some memorable things your parents or family told you about intimacy or sex?

b. How do you think your current or past romantic relationships have affected how you think about intimacy?

       i.   Did a past or current partner say something that influenced how you think about sex or intimacy?

c. How has the media affected how you think about intimacy?

d. Are there any other factors, besides family, partners, and the media, that have influenced how you think about and show intimacy?

       i.   Perhaps things like religion, politics, or school?

e. Finally, is there anything else you would like us to know?

Appendix B

Revised Experiences in Close Relationships Scale (R-ECR)

Directions: Please take a moment to think about your overall experiences in romantic/love relationships, including both your previous and current relationship experiences. Please answer the following questions with these experiences in mind.

Avoidance Subscale
1. I prefer not to be too close to romantic partners.
2. I prefer not to show a partner how I feel deep down.
3. I usually discuss my problems and concerns with my partner. *
4. I tell my partner just about everything. *
5. I get uncomfortable when a romantic partner wants to get very close.
6. It helps to turn to my romantic partner times of need. *
7. I am nervous when partners too close to me.
8. It's easy for me to be affectionate with my partner. *
9. It's not difficult for me to get close to my partner. *
10. I am very comfortable being close to romantic partners. *
11. I talk things over with my partner. *
12. I feel comfortable sharing my private thoughts and feelings with my partner. *
13. I don't feel comfortable opening up to romantic partners.
14. I find it relatively easy to get close to my partner. *
15. I find it easy to depend on romantic partners. *
16. I feel comfortable depending on romantic partners. *
17. I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on romantic partners.
18. My partner really understands me and my needs. *

Anxiety Subscale
1. I'm afraid that I will lose my partner's love.
2. I often worry that my partner will not want to stay with me.
3. I worry that romantic partners won't care about me as much as I care about them.
4. I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me.
5. I often wish that my partner's feelings for me were as strong as my feelings for them.
6. When my partner is out of sight, I worry that they might become interested in someone else.
7. When I show feelings for romantic partners, I'm afraid they won't feel the same way about me.
8. I worry a lot about relationships.
9. I find that my partners don't want to get as close as I would like.
10. My desire to be very close sometimes scares people away.
11. I worry that I won't measure up to other people.

12. It makes me mad that I don't get the affection and support I need from my partner.
13. I rarely worry about my partner leaving me. *
14. My romantic partner makes me doubt myself.
15. I'm afraid that once a romantic partner gets to know me, they won't like who I really am.
16. I do not often worry about being abandoned. *
17. Sometimes romantic partners change their feelings about me for no apparent reason.
18. My partner only seems to notice me when I'm angry.

* = Item is reverse coded.

Revised Family Communication Patterns Instrument (RFCP)

Ritchie, L. D., & Fitzpatrick, M. A. (1990). Family communication patterns: Measuring intrapersonal perceptions of interpersonal relationships. *Communication Research*, *17*(4), 523-544. https://doi.org/10.1177/009365090017004007

Conversation Subscale
1. In our family we often talk about topics like politics and religion where some persons disagree with others.
2. My parents often say something like "Every member of the family should have some say in family decisions."
3. My parents often ask my opinion when the family is talking about something.
4. My parents encourage me to challenge their ideas and beliefs.
5. My parents often say something like "You should always look at both sides of an issue."
6. I usually tell my parents what I am thinking about things.
7. I can tell my parents almost anything.
8. In our family we often talk about our feelings and emotions.
9. My parents and I often have long, relaxed conversations about nothing in particular.
10. I really enjoy talking with my parents, even when we disagree.
11. My parents like to hear my opinions, even when they don't agree with me.
12. My parents encourage me to express my feelings.
13. My parents tend to be very open about their emotions.
14. We often talk as a family about things we have done during the day.
15. In our family we often talk about our plans and hopes for the future.

Appendix D

Expanded Conformity Orientation Scale (ECOS)

Horstman, H. K., Schrodt, P., Warner, B., Koerner, A., Maliski, R., Hays, A., & Colaner, C. W. (2018). Expanding the conceptual and empirical boundaries of family communication patterns: The development and validation of an expanded conformity orientation scale. *Communication Monographs*, *85*(2), 157-180. https://doi.org/10.1080/03637751.2018.1428354

Respecting Parental Authority Subscale
1. My parents expect us to respect our elders.
2. In our home, I am expected to speak respectfully to my parents.
3. My parents have clear expectations about how a child is supposed to behave.
4. When I am at home, I am expected to obey my parents' rules.
5. My parents insist that I respect those who have been placed in positions of authority.
6. My parents emphasize certain attitudes that they want the children in our family to adopt.
7. In our home, my parents have the last word.
8. My parents expect me to trust their judgment on important matters.
9. I am expected to follow my parents' wishes.

Experiencing Parental Control Subscale
10. My parents feel it is important to be the boss.
11. My parents become irritated with my views if they are different from their views.
12. My parents try to persuade me to views things the way they see them.
13. My parents say things like "You'll know better when you grow up."
14. My parents say things like "You may not understand why we are doing this right now, but someday you will."
15. My parents say things like "My ideas are right and you should not question them."

Adopting Parents' Values/Beliefs Subscale
16. In my family, family members are expected to hold similar values.
17. I am expected to adopt my parents' views.
18. My parents encourage me to adopt their values.
19. Our family has a particular way of seeing the world.
20. I feel pressure to adopt my parents' beliefs.

Questioning Parents' Beliefs/Authority Subscale
21. I am expected to challenge my parents' beliefs. *
22. In our home, we are allowed to question my parents' authority. *
23. My parents encourage open disagreement. *
24. In our home, we are encouraged to question my parents' authority. *

* = Item is reverse coded.

Appendix E

Revised Adverse Childhood Experiences Scale

Karatekin, C., & Hill, M. (2019). Expanding the original definition of adverse childhood
experiences (ACEs). *Journal of Child & Adolescent Trauma*, *12*(3), 289-306.
https://doi.org/10.1007/s40653-018-0237-5

Directions: These are questions about some things that might have happened during your
childhood. Your 'childhood' begins when you are born and continues through age 17. It
might help to take a minute and think about the different schools you attended, different
places you might have lived, or different people who took care of you during your childhood.
Try your best to think about your entire childhood as you answer these questions.

1. **Did you get scared or feel really bad because grown-ups who took care of you
    (for example, parents, adult relatives, other adults who lived with you) called
    you names, said mean things to you, or said they didn't want you?**
2. Did you often feel that no one in your family loved you or thought you were
    important or special? Or did you feel that your family members didn't look out for
    each other, feel close to each other, or support each other?
3. **Not including spanking on your bottom, did grown-ups who took care of you
    (for example, parents, adult relatives, other adults who lived with you) ever hit,
    beat, kick, or physically hurt you in any way?**
4. **Did any grown-up in your life (whether you knew them or not) touch your
    private parts when they shouldn't have or make you touch their private parts?
    Or did a grown-up force you to have sex, that is sexual intercourse of any kind?**
5. When someone is neglected, it means that the grown-ups in their life didn't take care
    of them the way they should. They might not get them enough food, take them to the
    doctor when they are sick, or make sure they have a safe place to stay. Were you
    neglected?
6. **Was a member of your household diagnosed with depression, bipolar disorder,
    anxiety, or other psychiatric disorder? Or did a household member attempt
    suicide?**
7. **Was there a time that a member of your household drank or used drugs so often
    that it caused problems?**
8. Was there a time when a grown-up member of your household (for example, a parent,
    step-parent, an adult relative, your parent's boyfriend or girlfriend) was arguing with,
    yelling at, and angry at another grown-up family member a lot of the time?
9. **Did you SEE a grown-up in your household get pushed, slapped, hit, punched,
    beat up, or hurt with or threatened with a weapon by another grown-up in the
    house?**
10. Did you SEE a grown-up member of your household hit, beat, kick or physically hurt
    your brothers or sisters, not including a spanking on the bottom?
11. **Did a parent, or someone who was like a parent to you (for example, a step-
    parent, guardian, close adult relative), have to go to prison?**

12. Did a parent, or someone who was like a parent to you, die for reasons other than being murdered?
13. Were your parents separated or divorced?
14. Did a parent, or someone who was like a parent to you, have to leave the country to fight in a war and was gone for several months or longer?
15. Were you sent away or taken away from a parent or your family for any reason (not including voluntary separations, such as going to summer camp)?
16. Sometimes people are attacked with sticks, rocks, guns, knives, or other things that would hurt. Did other kids, your siblings, or a girlfriend or boyfriend hit or attack you on purpose WITH an object or weapon? Somewhere like: at school, at a store, in a car, on the street, or anywhere else?
17. Did other kids, your siblings, or a girlfriend or boyfriend threaten to physically hurt you when you thought they might really do it?
18. Did you get scared or feel really bad because other kids, your siblings, your girlfriend or boyfriend were calling you names, saying mean things to you, or saying they didn't want you around?
19. Did other kids, your siblings, a boyfriend, or a girlfriend force you to do sexual things?
20. Were you hit or attacked because of your skin color, religion, or where your family comes from? Because of a physical problem you have? Or because someone said you were gay?
21. Excluding instances where you were hit or attacked because of your skin color, religion, physical disability, sexual orientation, or where your family comes from, did you FEEL discriminated against because of these characteristics?
22. Did you SEE anyone in real life get attacked on purpose WITH a stick, rock, gun, knife, or other thing that would hurt? Somewhere like: at school, at a store, in a car, on the street, or anywhere else outside of home?
23. Did anyone steal something from your house that belongs to your family or someone you lived with? Things like a TV, stereo, car, or anything else?
24. Was anyone close to you (for example, a family member, a friend, or neighbor) murdered?
25. Did you see someone murdered in real life (not on TV, video games, or in the movies)?
26. Were you in any place in real life where you could see or hear people being shot, bombs going off, or street riots?
27. Were you in the middle of a war where you could hear real fighting with guns or bombs?
28. Did anyone steal something from you and never give it back? Things like a backpack, money, watch, clothing, bike, stereo, or anything else?
29. Did anyone use force to take something away from you that you were carrying or wearing?
30. Did anyone break or ruin any of your things on purpose?
31. Was there a period of time when you had no really good friends and there was no one else you felt close to?

Note. Bolded items were retained for the structural equation model analyses.

Fear of Intimacy Scale (FIS)

Descutner, C. J., & Thelen, M. H. (1991). Development and validation of a fear-of-intimacy scale. *Psychological Assessment, 3*, 218–225. https://doi.org/10.1037/1040-3590.3.2.218

<u>Directions</u>: Think about your current romantic partner and relationship when responding to these statements. Please rate how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

1. I feel uncomfortable telling my partner about things in the past that I have felt ashamed of.
2. I feel uneasy talking with my partner about something that has hurt me deeply.
3. I feel comfortable expressing my true feelings to my partner. *
4. If my partner is upset, I am sometimes afraid of showing that I care.
5. I am afraid to confide my innermost feelings to my partner.
6. I feel at ease telling my partner that I care about them. *
7. I have a feeling of complete togetherness with my partner. *
8. I am comfortable discussing significant problems with my partner. *
9. A part of me is afraid to make a long-term commitment to my partner.
10. I feel comfortable telling my experiences, even sad ones, to my partner. *
11. I feel nervous showing my partner strong feelings of affection.
12. I find it difficult being open with my partner about my personal thoughts.
13. I feel uneasy with my partner depending on me for emotional support.
14. I am not afraid to share what I dislike about myself with my partner. *
15. I am afraid to take the risk of being hurt to establish a closer relationship with my partner.
16. I feel comfortable keeping very personal information to myself.
17. I am not nervous about being spontaneous with my partner. *
18. I feel comfortable telling my partner things that I do not tell other people. *
19. I feel comfortable trusting my partner with my deepest thoughts and feelings. *
20. I sometimes feel uneasy when my partner tells me about very personal matters.
21. I feel comfortable revealing my shortcomings to my partner. *
22. I feel comfortable having a close emotional tie with my partner. *
23. I am afraid of sharing my private thoughts with my partner.
24. I am afraid that I might not always feel close to my partner.
25. I am comfortable telling my partner what my needs are. *
26. I am afraid that my partner is more invested in the relationship than me.
27. I feel comfortable having open and honest communication with my partner. *
28. I sometimes feel uncomfortable listening to my partner's personal problems.
29. I feel at ease being myself around my partner. *
30. I feel relaxed being with my partner and talking about our personal goals. *
31. I have shied away from opportunities to be close to someone.
32. I have held back my feelings in previous relationships.
33. There are people who think I am afraid to get close to them.

34. There are people who think I am not an easy person to get to know.
35. I have done things in previous relationships to keep me from developing closeness.

* = Item is reverse coded.

Dyadic Sexual Communication Scale (DSC)

Catania, J. A. (2013). Dyadic sexual communication scale. In T. D. Fisher, C. M. Davis, & W. L. Yarber (Eds.), *Handbook of sexuality-related measures* (pp. 152-164). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315881089-22

<u>Directions:</u> Below are a list of statements different people have made about discussing sex with their partner. As you read each one, please answer how much you agree or disagree with it.

1. My partner rarely responds when I want to talk about our sex life. *
2. Some sexual matters are too upsetting to discuss with my sexual partner. *
3. There are sexual issues or problems in our sexual relationship that we have never discussed. *
4. My partner and I never seem to resolve our disagreements about sexual matters. *
5. Whenever my partner and I talk about sex, I feel like they are lecturing me. *
6. My partner often complains that I am not very clear about what I want sexually. *
7. My partner and I have never had a heart-to-heart talk about our sex life together. *
8. My partner has no difficulty talking to me about their sexual feelings or desires.
9. Even when angry with me, my partner is able to appreciate my views on sexuality.
10. Talking about sex is a satisfying experience for both of us.
11. My partner and I can usually talk calmly about our sex life.
12. I have little difficulty in telling my partner what I do or don't do sexually.
13. I seldom feel embarrassed when talking about the details of our sex life with my partner.

* = Item is reverse coded.

Index of Sexual Satisfaction (ISS)

Hudson, W. W., Harrison, D. F., & Crosscup, P. C. (1981). A short-form scale to measure sexual discord in dyadic relationships. *Journal of Sex Research, 17*, 157–174. https://doi.org/10.1080/00224498109551110

Directions: The following statements ask you about how much satisfaction you get out of your sexual relationship with your partner. There are no right or wrong answers. Please answer each question as carefully and accurately as you can.

1. I feel that my partner enjoys our sex life. *
2. My sex life is very exciting. *
3. Sex is fun for my partner and me. *
4. I feel that my partner sees little in me except for the sex I can give.
5. I feel that sex is dirty and disgusting.
6. My sex life is monotonous.
7. When we have sex it is too rushed and completed quickly.
8. I feel that my sex life is lacking in quality.
9. My partner is sexually very exciting. *
10. I enjoy the sex techniques that my partner likes or uses. *
11. I feel that my partner wants too much sex from me.
12. I think that sex is wonderful. *
13. My partner dwells on sex too much.
14. I feel that sex is something that has to be endured in our relationship.
15. My partner is too rough or brutal when we have sex.
16. My partner observes good personal hygiene. *
17. I feel that sex is a normal function of our relationship. *
18. My partner does not want to have sex when I do.
19. I feel that our sex life really adds a lot to our relationship. *
20. I would like to have sexual contact with someone other than my partner.
21. It is easy for me to get sexually excited by my partner. *
22. I feel that my partner is sexually pleased with me. *
23. My partner is very sensitive to my sexual needs and desires. *
24. I feel that I should have sex more often.
25. I feel that my sex life is boring.

* = Item is reverse coded.

Appendix I

Couples Satisfaction Index-16 (CSI-16)

Funk, J. L., & Rogge, R. D. (2007). Testing the ruler with item response theory: Increasing precision of measurement for relationship satisfaction with the Couples Satisfaction Index. *Journal of Family Psychology*, *21*(4), 572–583. https://doi.org/10.1037/0893-3200.21.4.572

Directions: Please rate how much you agree or disagree with each statement about your current relationship.

1. Please indicate the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship.
5. In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?
9. Our relationship is strong.
11. My relationship with my partner makes me happy.
12. I have a warm and comfortable relationship with my partner.
17. I really feel like part of a team with my partner.
19. How rewarding is your relationship with your partner?
20. How well does your partner meet your needs?
21. To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?
22. In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?

26. How do you feel about your relationship: INTERESTING…BORING*
27. How do you feel about your relationship: BAD…GOOD
28. How do you feel about your relationship: FULL…EMPTY*
30. How do you feel about your relationship: STURDY…FRAGILE*
31. How do you feel about your relationship: DISCOURAGING…HOPEFUL
32. How do you feel about your relationship: ENJOYABLE…MISERABLE*

* = Item is reverse coded.

Relational Topoi

Burgoon, J. K., & Hale, J. L. (1987). Validation and measurement of the fundamental themes of relational communication. *Communication Monographs*, *54*(1), 19–41. https://doi.org/10.1080/03637758709390214

Directions: Think about the conversation you just had with your romantic partner. Rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the statements about your partner's behavior.

Immediacy Subscale
1. My partner did not want a deeper relationship between us. *
2. My partner was intensely involved in our conversation.
3. My partner found the conversation stimulating.
4. My partner communicated coldness rather than warmth. *
5. My partner created a sense of distance between us. *
6. My partner acted bored by our conversation. *

Similarity Subscale
1. My partner made me feel that they were similar to me.
2. My partner tried to move the conversation to a deeper level.
3. My partner acted like we were good friends.
4. My partner seemed to desire further communication with me.

Receptivity Subscale
1. My partner was sincere.
2. My partner was interested in talking to me.
3. My partner was willing to listen to me.
4. My partner was open to my ideas.
5. My partner was honest in communicating with me.

Composure Subscale
1. My partner felt very tense talking to me. *
2. My partner was calm with me.
3. My partner felt very relaxed talking with me.
4. My partner seemed nervous in my presence. *

* = Item is reverse-coded.

Couple Intimacy Study Observational Coding Sheet

Coder: (please write your first and last name)

_____

Which participant are you coding for? (ex. 18F, 43M, etc.) *Remember to code for each participant <u>SEPARATELY</u>.*

_____

Did you come across any issues while coding? Ex. issues with the video, sound, any confusion on your end, etc.

_____

Rate the extent to which the partner you are coding for engaged in each behavior.

The partner:

	1	2	3	4	5	
never smiled	○	○	○	○	○	smiled a lot
conveyed negative emotion	○	○	○	○	○	conveyed positive emotion
never laughed	○	○	○	○	○	laughed a lot

The partner:

	1	2	3	4	5	
leaned away from their partner	○	○	○	○	○	leaned toward their partner
faced away from their partner	○	○	○	○	○	faced toward their partner
leaned back a lot	○	○	○	○	○	leaned forward a lot

The distance between partners' bodies was:

	1	2	3	4	5	
far	○	○	○	○	○	close

The distance between partners' faces was:

	1	2	3	4	5	
far	○	○	○	○	○	close

Overall, the partner's body position was:

	1	2	3	4	5	
closed off	○	○	○	○	○	open
rigid	○	○	○	○	○	loose

The partner's voice:

	1	2	3	4	5	
was monotone	○	○	○	○	○	was animated
sounded cold	○	○	○	○	○	sounded warm

The partner showed:

	1	2	3	4	5	
very little facial expression	○	○	○	○	○	a lot of facial expression
lots of nervous movement	○	○	○	○	○	very little nervous movement
frequent rocking or twisting	○	○	○	○	○	infrequent rocking or twisting
little gesturing	○	○	○	○	○	a lot of gesturing

Based on the partner's nonverbal behavior, they seemed:

	1	2	3	4	5	
anxious	○	○	○	○	○	calm
inattentive	○	○	○	○	○	attentive
distracted	○	○	○	○	○	focused
flustered	○	○	○	○	○	composed
bored	○	○	○	○	○	interested
detached	○	○	○	○	○	involved

The partner's speech was:

	1	2	3	4	5	
very choppy	○	○	○	○	○	very smooth
marked by long pauses	○	○	○	○	○	marked by short pauses

The conversation was characterized by:

	1	2	3	4	5	
a lot of interruptions	○	○	○	○	○	no interruptions
a lot of awkward silence	○	○	○	○	○	very little awkward silence

Instructions: Rate the extent to which the partner you are coding for engaged in each behavior.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The partner did not want a deeper relationship between them.	○	○	○	○	○
The partner was intensely involved in the conversation.	○	○	○	○	○
The partner found the conversation stimulating.	○	○	○	○	○
The partner communicated coldness rather than warmth.	○	○	○	○	○
The partner created a sense of distance between them.	○	○	○	○	○
The partner acted bored by the conversation.	○	○	○	○	○

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The partner made their partner feel that they were similar.	○	○	○	○	○
The partner tried to move the conversation to a deeper level.	○	○	○	○	○
The partner seemed to desire further communication with their partner.	○	○	○	○	○

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The partner was sincere.	○	○	○	○	○
The partner was interested in talking to their partner.	○	○	○	○	○
The partner was willing to listen to their partner.	○	○	○	○	○
The partner was open to their partner's ideas.	○	○	○	○	○

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The partner seemed very tense talking to their partner.	○	○	○	○	○
The partner seemed calm.	○	○	○	○	○
The partner seemed very relaxed talking with their partner.	○	○	○	○	○
The partner seemed nervous in their partner's presence.	○	○	○	○	○

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The partner dominated the conversation.	○	○	○	○	○
The partner tried to control the interaction.	○	○	○	○	○
The partner was competitive.	○	○	○	○	○
The partner didn't treat their partner as an equal.	○	○	○	○	○
The partner communicated aggressiveness.	○	○	○	○	○
The partner was very passive.	○	○	○	○	○