

A QUALITATIVE EXAMINATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP ATTACHMENT
MODEL (RAM) WITH MARRIED INDIVIDUALS

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ABSTRACT

The current study explored the theoretical underpinnings of the Relationship Attachment Model, an alternative model to understanding closeness in relationships, using deductive qualitative analysis (DQA; Gilgun, 2010). Qualitative data from married couples was used to explore whether the five bonding dynamics (i.e. know, trust, rely, commit, and sex), proposed by the RAM, existed in their marital relationships. Additionally, this study examined whether the RAM could explain fluctuations in closeness and distance in the couple's marriage and how married couples described and talked about love in their relationship. The findings of this research indicated that the five bonding dynamics put forth by the RAM did exist in marital relationships of these couples and that the complicated dynamics that occur in marital relationships could be captured on the RAM. This research supported findings from past research on close relationships and added to the literature by proposing another model to understanding and conceptualizing close relationship dynamics. The findings of this study are discussed in terms of implications for therapists who work with couples and relationship researchers.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In Chapter one, I will provide a brief overview of the literature and it will be organized in the following manner. First, I will review the research on the importance of close relationships and marriage. Second, I will discuss the theoretical foundation of the study. I will then review the theories historically used to assess love feelings and present an alternative theoretical model for assessing relational bonds, the Relationship Attachment Model (RAM). For the third section, I will provide the statement of the problem, review the methods for evaluating love and highlight the need for a more comprehensive model of assessing love in relationships. Finally, I will provide the purpose of the study.

Background

Forming and maintaining close relationships are essential human needs (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). The presence or absence of close relationship has consequences for one's happiness, mental health, mortality, suicidality, and overall life experience (Baumeister & Leary; Goldsmith, 2007; McAdams & Bryant, 1987; Qualter & Munn, 2002). For instance, mental health patients whose spouses engaged in unsupportive behaviors experienced more anxiety, depression, and hostility (Frazier, Tix & Barnett, 2003). Also, the perception of having adequate amounts of social support has

been shown to buffer the ill effects of stress (Goldsmith). For adolescents, one of the strongest predictors of mental health is a sense of connection with peers (Qualter & Munn). In addition, McAdams and Bryant found that people with high levels of motivation to seek out intimate relationships, reported higher levels of happiness than do people with low levels of motivation. Baumeister and Leary make a strong statement by drawing the conclusion that “ultimately, happiness in life is strongly related to the presence of close relationships” (p. 506). These authors argue that this is demonstrated through research that has shown that the absence of close social relationships is strongly linked to unhappiness and depression (Argyle, 1987; Freedman, 1978; Myers, 1992). These studies are examples of the large body of research which supports the importance of forming and maintaining close relationships to psychological and overall well-being (Baumeister & Leary; Goldsmith; McAdams & Bryant; Qualter & Munn). Conversely, the lack of meaningful close relationships has negative effects for humans. Harlow, Harlow, and Suomi (1971) found that children who grow up without receiving enough attention from caregivers later exhibit emotional and behavioral problems. In addition, research on adults has shown that people who do not have intimate relationships experienced more stress and illness (Prager, 1999) and were, overall, unhappy, and had increased depression (Argyle; Myers). Anxiety is another manifestation of the ill-effects of the lack of connections. The mere exclusion from a social group has been demonstrated to increase anxiety, whereas subsequent inclusion removes it (Berdin, Garber, Leiman, Ford & Masters, 1985). An increased risk for committing suicide was also linked to a lack of social connections (Durkein, 1963; Hall-Lande, Eisenberg, Christenson, & Neumark-Sztainer, 1997).

Overall, these research studies support the notion that humans need to connect and belong. The presence of connections proves to be beneficial and, in some cases, protective factors. On the other hand, the absence of close connections and relationships can negatively impact mental and physical health and overall happiness.

One of the closest and most influential relationships humans establish is the marital relationship. Research has found that this relationship has similar and consistent, if not even more protective benefits than the other close relationships. For instance being married has been shown, throughout the research, to serve as a protective factor against stress, depression, and illness (Kamp Dush & Amato, 2005; Waite & Gallagher, 2000). In general, married individuals have a lower mortality rate than people who are divorced, widowed, or unattached (Brown & DiMeo, 2007). Specifically, single and divorced people have been shown to have higher rates of suicide than marrieds (Rothberg & Jones, 1987).

Married people have also been shown to suffer fewer psychological and somatic health problems than singles (DeLongis, Folkman, & Lazarus, 1988). For instance, the admission rate into a mental hospital was lowest among married individuals and highest for divorced and separated people (Bloom, White, & Asher, 1979). Additionally, in a study that looked at marital happiness and stability, those who were divorced had lower levels of psychological well-being on measures of depressive symptoms, hostility, and alcohol consumption (Waite, Luo, & Lewin, 2008). The authors concluded by saying that, “in no case do those whose marriages dissolved show better outcomes than those who remain married, regardless of whether they divorced, separated, or remarried” (p. 205).

This research strongly supports the benefits of greater health, happiness, and longevity that marriage provides to individuals. However the benefits one can get from marriage have been argued, by some, to depend on the degree of satisfaction in the relationship (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). In other words, the status of being married seems to contribute a portion of the benefits. However, the quality of the relationship bond within a marriage contributes to the benefits over and above those gained from just the marital status.

Individuals who report being happily married are typically much healthier than those who report that their relationship is unhappy (DeLongis, et al., 1988). Myers (1992) took that claim further and argued that while happy relationships within marriages may promote positive outcomes, unhappy relationships within marriages may thwart them. Frazier, Tix, and Barnett (2003) examined perceptions of spousal support and mental health outcomes. The authors found that general social support from outsiders could not compensate for inadequate spousal support. Additionally, those who reported inadequate support from their spouse experienced higher levels of depression, anxiety, and hostility (Frazier, Tix, & Barnett). This research suggests that the absence or presence of spousal support is central to one's overall life experience and mental health. These findings have resulted in some researchers drawing the conclusion that those who remain in a bad relationship in their marriage may be worse off than those who remain alone in regard to health and happiness (Coyne & DeLongis, 1986).

The research on examining those who choose to opt out of a marriage has found different results depending on whether the marriage was high or low-distress. Overall, the research has consistently found that low-distress couples who divorce report a

decrease in happiness following their divorce, whereas those in high-distress relationships reported an increase in happiness (Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007; Amato & Previti, 2009). This finding suggests that differing amounts of distress within marriage are predictive of whether one will feel good about their decision to divorce. This finding also implies that in some marriages, people may be better off leaving, whereas in others the married individuals may be better off working on their issues. High-distress marriages are characterized by physical or emotional abuse or infidelity and may be better off ending in divorce because of fear for one's safety and well-being; however low-distress marriages are often the marriages that can be rectified. Helping these marriages is especially important because the psychological, physical, and relational effects of divorce can be devastating (Amato, 2001; Bloom, Asher, and White, 1978; Cherlin, 1992; Gove, Style, & Hughes, 1990; Gove & Shin, 1989). Overall, this research suggests that the protective factors of marriage are not guaranteed based on status alone. Rather the quality of the relationship bond contributes either to the benefits or harmful effects above and beyond those gained from just the marital status. The importance of the quality of the relationship bond is echoed in the research that examined the perspectives of those who remain married and those who divorced.

The reasons for divorcing and for not divorcing from the perspective of the partners involved are fairly new subjects of research. Amato and Previtti (2003) made one of the first attempts and asked married individuals, "What are the most important factors keeping your marriage together?" The authors found that respondents listed love, respect, friendship, communication, shared past, friendship, happiness, compatibility, emotional security, commitment to the spouse, and sex as the primary reward-type

reasons for staying with their spouse (Amato & Previtti). And, overall, love was the most common reason for staying married and was mentioned by 60% of the sample.

Bodenmann, et al. (2006) examined retrospective recollections of attractors and barriers to divorce among German, Italian, and Swiss participants. Overall, the most influential attractor to divorce was a feeling of alienation or loss of love (Bodenmann, et al.). The authors concluded that, “lack of love and affection is more important in the decision to dissolve a close relationship than social pressures or alternatives (p. 18).”

More recently, Amato and Previtti (2009) conducted a study on perceptions of divorce contributors. This time the authors asked participants “what do you think caused the divorce?” Infidelity was the most common reported reason for divorce followed by more general complaints about relationship quality (Amato & Previtti). These complaints included lack of communication, growing apart, lack of love, and incompatibility (Amato & Previtti).

The findings across these three studies are reasonably consistent and provide a first step in understanding divorced partners’ perceptions. Infidelity, loss of love, lack of communication, and overall decline in relationship quality were commonly cited reasons for why respondents’ marriages failed. The presence of love, children, financial constraints, friendship, and commitment were some of the most common reasons given for remaining in a marriage. These findings provide a unique perspective on maintaining a close relationship in marriage and lend insight into possible points of intervention for struggling couples.

The presence or absence of love was a common theme throughout all of the reviewed studies. This finding is not surprising considering the shift in reasons for

entering into marriage. Today the basis for marriage as a religious, economic, or parental partnership has diminished with the primary focus now on finding a compatible soul mate (Dafoe & Popenoe, 2001). This shift in values is demonstrated in a study by Buss, Shackelford, Kirkpatrick, and Larsen (2001). These authors examined the changes in mate preferences from 1939 to 1996. Their results indicated that mate preferences have changed to become more focused on love and attraction. In 1939 men ranked a “dependable character” as the most important quality, and women ranked “emotional” stability and “maturity” as the most important quality in a mate. However, by 1996 both men and women ranked mutual attraction and love as the number one quality to find in a mate (Buss, et al.).

The importance of love in marriage was also highlighted in an evaluation of 204 already married couples. The authors examined themes that relate to a couple’s connectedness and their findings indicated that love was the most important factor in the reported quality and stability of a marriage (Riehl-Emede, Thomas, & Willi, 2003). Specifically, love and reported identification with the couple relationship were the only two variables that distinguished between happily married couples and couples who were in therapy (Riehl-Emede, Thomas, & Willi).

These research findings clearly established the vital role love has in long-term marriages. This background section has provided an overview of the importance of belonging to others, and more specifically the importance of having a relationship with strong bonds of love in marriage. Research has consistently demonstrated that having a marriage characterized by love is beneficial to psychological and physical health (Brown & DiMeo, 2007; DeLongis, Folkman, & Lazarus, 1988; Waite, Luo, & Lewin, 2008).

Conversely, the potentially devastating effects of poor relationship quality within a marriage or from a divorce further establish the importance of building and maintaining feelings of love within marriage. These findings strongly support the notion that marriages succeed by maintaining strong feelings of love within the marital relationship.

Theoretical Foundations for the Study

The second section will review the research, theoretical models, and inventories that have been used to describe and assess love feelings. This body of literature is derived from three major categories of theory: Love, closeness and intimacy, and attachment. These three categories of theory have explored the ways in which humans bond and form close relational connections.

Theories of love was first pioneered by Zick Rubin (1970) who defined love as “an interpersonal attitude held by a person toward another person involving the predisposition to think, feel, and behave a certain way” (p. 268). Rubin translated his definition of love into a measure, that differentiated loving versus liking, and it is still widely used today.

John Lee (1977) also studied love in terms of styles of loving. His theory inspired the development of scales by Lasswell and Lasswell (1976) and Hendrick and Hendrick (1986). Another important contribution to understanding love was made by Sternberg (1986) who developed a theory that described different types. Sternberg’s theory, the triangular theory of love, is comprised of three components: intimacy, passion, and decision/commitment. Sternberg’s theory was then translated into a measure of love that described different love experiences such as: nonlove, liking, infatuated love, empty love, romantic love, companionate love, fatuous love, and consummate love (Sternberg, 1997).

Intimacy and closeness in relationships is the second theory that has examined love feelings and bondedness within relationships. Intimacy has often been used interchangeably with closeness throughout the literature (Helgeson, Shaver, & Dsyer, 1987); however for the sake of consistency, intimacy will be used throughout this dissertation. Intimacy has been defined differently throughout the literature but definitions typically include constructs such as: love, trust, self-disclosure, affection, emotion, dependence, and mutual need fulfillment (Berscheid, Snyder, & Omoto, 1989; Derlega & Chaikin, 1975; Moss & Schwebel, 1993; Schaefer & Olson, 1981). Several influential measures have been developed based on these definitions of intimacy and closeness such as the Personal Assessment of Intimacy in Relationships (PAIR; Schaefer & Olson, 1981), the Miller Social Intimacy Scale (MSIS; Miller & Lefcourt, 1982), and the Inclusion of Other in Self Scale (IOS Scale; Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992). These measures have provided significant research findings to the understanding of intimacy and the bonds which form close relationships.

Attachment theory takes a different perspective on love and closeness. Attachment theory and research has grown from Bowlby's (1969, 1973, 1980) three-volume exploration of attachment, separation, and loss that extrapolated the varying styles of unidirectional attachment which occur from the infant to the mother. Later, Bowlby's work was applied to adult romantic relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Generally, research has shown that there is continuity between an infant's early experience of attachment and the style of attachment experienced later in adult relationships (Cassidy & Shaver, 1999; Hazan & Shaver, 1999). Romantic attachment styles have been shown to relate meaningfully to several outcome variables. For

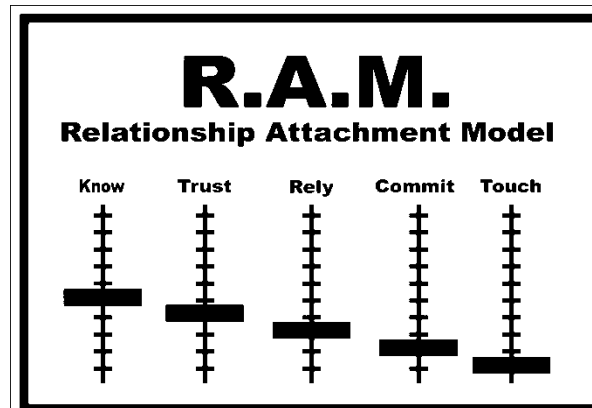
example, adults with different attachment styles experience and perceive love differently (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Attachment styles have also been linked to marital satisfaction, loneliness, anxiety, depression, sexual behavior, relationship beliefs, and commitment behavior (Bogaert & Sadava, 2002; Crowell, Treboux, & Waters, 2002; Cryanowski & Anderson, 1998; Davis, 2004; Kobak & Hazan, 1991; Mikulincer, 1998; Onishi, Gjerde, & Block, 2001; Simpson, 1990; Volling, Notaro, & Laresen, 1998).

These theories have made advancements toward defining and measuring the complex phenomena of love, intimacy, and attachment. Although many commonalities exist across these theories, none of them provides a comprehensive model integrating the major bonds of a close relationship and representing various types of relationship experiences. For example, Sternberg's (1986) theory is static. Specifically, the theory categorizes individuals into a type of love experience but does not account for changes in the love experience over time. Additionally, intimacy theories do not explicitly measure or address commitment, even though commitment theoretically relates to intimate relationships and the ability to enact dependence, self-disclosure, and sexual closeness without overwhelming vulnerability. Also, attachment theory categorizes individuals into specific attachment styles but then provides little understanding as to how to change a particular style. Additionally, attachment theory does not include an integrated understanding of the relations among the attachment, caregiving, and sexual behavioral systems, which results in an incomplete understanding of adult romantic relationships (Fraley & Shaver, 2000).

More recently, an alternative model for examining close relationships, the Relationship Attachment Model (RAM; see figure 1), was introduced (Van Epp, 1997,

2006; Van Epp, Futris, Van Epp, Campbell, 2008). This theoretical model was developed by Van Epp (1997) and is a visual representation of the relational bonds in a relationship. The RAM consists of five dynamic bonds: know, trust, rely, commit, and touch. Each of these five bonds provides a range of separate contribution to the feelings of connection in a relationship. The composite of these five bonds also provides a picture of the overall feeling of closeness in the relationship. Thus, the individual dynamic bonds and the composite of all five dynamic bonds provide meaningful information about the feeling of love, bondedness, and closeness within relationships.

Figure 1.1 The Relationship Attachment Model (RAM)



The RAM is a dynamic model that allows for various combinations of each of the dynamic bonds at any given point in time. This composite picture is useful because various combinations of the dynamic bonds provide insight as to where vulnerabilities exist in the relationship and how to subsequently repair these vulnerabilities.

Fluctuations in the feelings of love are normal in close relationships and especially within marital relationships. These fluctuations can occur due to life transitions, normal day-to-

day stressors, marital infidelities, busy work schedules, children, job loss, death of a loved one, and many more. Yet these fluctuations do not need to permanently stifle feelings of love in marital relationships (Ahlborg, Rudeblad, Linner, & Linton, 2008; Belsky, Lang, & Rovine, 1985; Doohan, Carrere, Siler, & Beardslee, 2009; Millner, 2008; Orbuch, House, Mero, & Webster, 1996; Van Epp, 1997). Contrary to popular belief, persevering through fluctuations in love feelings, marital conflicts, and normal stressors is related to more marital satisfaction over time (Bodenmann, Ledermann, & Bradbury, 2007; Finchman, 2003; Story & Bradbury, 2004). Everett Worthington (2005) summarizes by saying,

We know more about marriages that people call troubled—and have learned to our surprise that many find healing. Marital troubles are not the kiss of death for a marriage, as we thought them to be in 1997. Beneath these findings, we discover the buried treasure. The emotional bond between couples is the golden thread that holds partners together. (p. 259)

The five dynamic bonds represented in the RAM are a picture of the “emotional bond”. This bond is vital in sustaining couples through the fluctuations that often occur through the course of a marriage (Bodenmann, Ledermann, & Bradbury, 2007; Worthington, 2005). The RAM provides a simple picture that can help give couples a visual of their bond. Often, marital struggles are difficult to describe in words, particularly because of the deep emotions involved in the struggles, and the abstract nature of love, trust, intimacy, and commitment. Therefore, a picture of the bonds that form their relationship will also prove useful in counseling couples.

Statement of the Problem

There are few practical tools or models for couples or therapists to use to understand, assess, and address love feelings. The theories of love, intimacy, and attachment have made progress toward defining and measuring the complex feelings of love and bondedness within relationships; however these theories have not been translated into usable tools to either help couples maintain the love feelings in a relationship or help therapists address the difficult issue of identifying and treating the loss of love feelings in marital and close relationships.

According to therapists, loss of love feelings is one of the most difficult issues to treat in marital counseling and one of the most damaging to the relationship (Riehl-Emede, Thomas, & Willi, 2003; Whisman, Dixon, & Johnson, 1997). Past authors have suggested that effective methods of treating these problems in therapy be researched and developed (Whisman, Dixon, & Johnson).

This dissertation will advance the study of close relationships by exploring the theoretical underpinnings of the RAM, a potentially more comprehensive model of relationships, with married individuals. The RAM has been applied in relationship education programs to both relationship development and maintenance (Van Epp, 1997; Van Epp, Futris, Van Epp, & Campbell, 2008); however the theoretical underpinnings of the RAM have yet to be explored or tested. This study will provide the first examination of the plausibility of the RAM and will contribute to the research on developing more effective methods of identifying and treating loss of love feelings for couples and therapists.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the current study is to explore the theoretical underpinnings of the Relationship Attachment Model using deductive qualitative analysis (DQA; Gilgun, 2010). Specifically, qualitative data from married individuals will be used to explore whether the five bonding dynamics (i.e. know, trust, rely, commit, and sex), proposed by the RAM, exist in their marital relationships. Qualitative research is recommended for exploring complex human experiences and processes in depth (Morrow, 2007) and for areas of focus that have little to no previous empirical research (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). Because the RAM has not been empirically explored, and is used to explain complicated relational processes, qualitative methodology may provide a richer and more complete understanding of these processes. The general research question that will be examined in this study is as follows “do the five bonding dynamics of the RAM exist as contributions to feelings of love and closeness in marital relationships”.

Definition of Key Terms

This section will provide the definitions of key terms used throughout the study. These terms will be used consistently throughout this dissertation based on the definitions provided below.

Dynamic bond. A dynamic bond is a universal characteristic of a relationship that has varying degrees of depth, which ultimately provides a contribution to the closeness within the relationship (Van Epp, 1997). Five dynamic bonds characterize the Relationship Attachment Model and they are: know, trust, rely, commit, and touch.

Relational bond. The relational bond represents the overall feeling of connection and closeness within the relationship; according to the RAM each dynamic bond contributes to the overall relational bond (Van Epp, 1997).

Bonding. Bonding represents the act of becoming closer. Bonding, as applied to the RAM, is represented as a dynamic bond of the RAM moving up or increasing (Van Epp, 1997).

Close relationship. Close relationship refers to a range of relationships that are characterized by deep feelings of connection. Examples of the relationship types that may be characterized as a “close relationship” are: parent-child, sibling, best friend, dating partner, cohabiting partner, and spouse.

Closeness. Closeness is the degree to which people are bound by mutual interests, loyalties, affections, and is synonymous with intimacy. Closeness refers to a feeling of being connected to another.

Intimacy. Intimacy is a feeling of belonging to another and a sense of closeness. Intimacy is considered to be synonymous with closeness.

Summary

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the literature highlighting the need for the current study. The chapter explained the research on the importance of relationships and marital relationships, specifically. The importance of love feelings in marital relationships and the difficulty in treating loss of love feelings for practitioners was outlined. Additionally, the theories used to assess love feelings were presented and the RAM was introduced. An explanation of how the RAM will uniquely contribute to

existing research and clinical tools was explained, and the purpose of the study was given. Finally, the definitions of the key terms were elucidated.

Chapter 2 will provide an overview of the existing theories of love, closeness and intimacy, and attachment. Then, it will highlight the deficiencies in the theories, introduce the RAM as a more comprehensive model, and present the theoretical and empirical underpinnings of the RAM. Chapter 3 will discuss the methodology of the current study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Various theories have attempted to capture aspects of human bonding. One of the shortcomings in the study of human bonding is the lack of clear terminology and the overlap in definitions. Although not all theories will fall into the following three categories most research on this subject falls under theories of: love, closeness and intimacy, or attachment. Closeness and intimacy are often used interchangeably in the literature (Helgeson, Shaver, & Dyer, 1987); therefore to avoid confusion the term intimacy will be used throughout this dissertation. Researchers who write about these three areas have explored different ways in which humans bond and form relational connections. This chapter explores current theories of love, intimacy, and attachment in order to provide an overview of how relational connections are understood and studied throughout the literature. These theories paved the way for research on close relationships and were the foundation for the development of measures on these constructs. This chapter will also review some of the most used and influential measures of love, intimacy, and attachment. Limitations of these theories will be discussed and an alternative model, the Relationship Attachment Model (RAM), for explaining the relational bond and feelings of love in a relationship will be presented. The theoretical underpinnings of the RAM will be reviewed as well as relevant research on the dynamic bonds that comprise the model.

Love

This section will explore the development of the construct love throughout literature. First, this section will highlight the difficulties in defining the construct love. Next, this section will review major love theories and how these theories have been translated into widely used measures of love.

Throughout centuries the mystical word, love, has caused pain, wonderment, exploration, research, poetic expression, suicide, bliss, connection, and loss. Love has also been a central theme in books, sitcoms, films, theatre, and music. Our curiosity about love is nothing new and one thing about love is certain, it never ceases to bewilder. Researchers have examined the question of love for decades and several variations on what love is have developed. As Brehm (1985) commented,

Social scientists have had as much trouble defining love as philosophers and poets. We have books on love, theories on love, and research on love. Yet no one has a single, simple definition that is widely accepted by other social scientists. (p. 90)

Despite lack of agreement on defining the construct, researchers have offered definitions of love, theories for loving, and some attempts to measure love.

Zick Rubin (1970) was one of the first social scientists to explore the construct of romantic love. He was also the first to attempt to measure the construct of love. He proposed that his measurement of love was based on the following assumption, “that love is an attitude held by a person toward a particular other person, involving predispositions to think, feel, and behave in certain ways toward that person” (p. 265). To measure love he developed a measure consisting of 13 liking and 13 loving items. The items for the questionnaire originated from two sources. The first source was empirical literature on feelings that were believed to be associated with romantic love and the second source was

speculation by Rubin on the nature of love. Students and faculty were used to sort the items into loving and liking categories and the revised survey was administered to 198 psychology students who were asked to respond in reference to a romantic partner and a platonic friend. This was done to establish discriminant validity meaning that the liking and loving scales would be conceptually different from one another (Rubin). The factor analysis suggested that the items that loaded highest on the general factor, particularly for romantic partners, were exclusively those which were categorized as love items (Rubin). The liking scale was formed based on the items that loaded the highest on the second factor. The love factor was thought to be comprised of three important characteristics. The first was a dependent need for another, second the predisposition to help their partner, and third a sense of ownership over their partner (Rubin). The liking factor was defined as a positive evaluation or opinion of another, a sense of respect for the other, and a feeling that the other is similar to oneself (Rubin). This first study resulted in the revised measure of 26 total items, 13 liking and 13 loving items that respondents answered on a 9 point Likert-type scale. The revised measure was administered to 158 dating college-aged couples who were asked to complete the survey first with their dating partner in mind and second with respect to a friend (Rubin). Findings revealed that the love scale had high internal consistency ($\alpha = .84$ for women and $\alpha = .86$ for men) and was only somewhat correlated with the liking scale ($r = .39$ for women and $r = .60$ for men).

To evaluate the predictive validity of the liking and loving scales, Rubin (1970) conducted a laboratory experiment to determine whether the scales predicted gazing behaviors. This experiment was based on the assumption that romantic partners gaze into each other's eyes more than nonromantic partners and strangers. Based on love scale

scores, couples were categorized as either strong together, weak together, strong strangers, or weak strangers (Rubin). The dyads were then asked to read and then discuss a vignette about a couple considering marriage. Their gazing behaviors were recorded by observers using stop watches as either mutual gazing or individual gazing. Overall, the main finding was the strong together couples, as indicated by their love scale scores, spent more time gazing into each other's eyes than did couples only weakly in love (Rubin).

This attempt at measuring the complicated construct of love was important for several reasons. First, this study demonstrated that there is a distinction between liking and loving. For example, Rubin (1970) found that the respondents who indicated a high likelihood that they would marry their partner had high love scores, but not necessarily high liking scores. Additionally, the study demonstrated the link between a self-reported feeling of love and behavior.

John Lee (1977) took the notion of studying love one step further. Instead of studying the construct of love, he examined styles of loving. His research produced three primary (i.e., Eros, Ludus and Storge) and three secondary (i.e. Mania, Agape and Pragma) love-styles. Lee's typology of love has been translated into scales by Lasswell and Lasswell (1976) and Hendrick and Hendrick (1986).

Lee's (1977) approach to love was different because he was not concerned with defining love but was interested in distinguishing between styles of loving. His styles were derived from a review of fictional and nonfictional literature. He used a panel of judges to arrive at definitions for his three primary love styles and three secondary love styles. His primary love styles are Eros, Ludus, and Storge. Eros is defined as the search

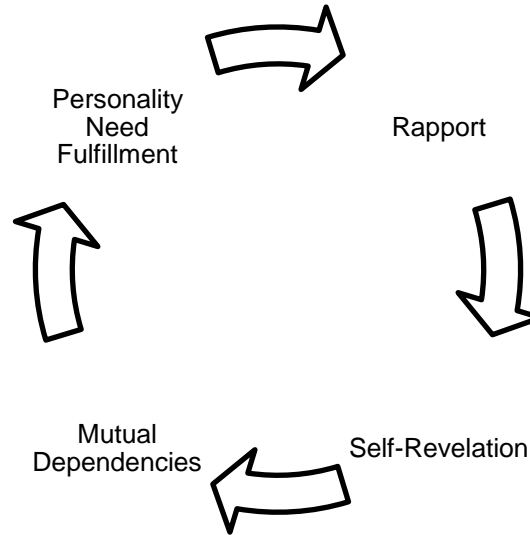
for the physical ideal or someone that is beautiful, the Ludus love style is constructed of short and numerous relationships characterized by minimal emotional involvement, and the Storge love style is defined as a style that develops slowly and is based on companionship (Lee). The secondary love styles are based on combinations of the primary styles and are Mania, Agape, and Pragma (Lee). Mania, a combination of Eros and Ludus, is an emotionally laden love style that is intense and obsessive; Agape, a combination of Storge and Eros, is guided by the head more than the heart and is a selfless love; Pragma, a combination of Ludus and Storge, is a style of loving based on demographic characteristics of the partner, meaning that this style is concerned with education, vocation, age, finances, and religion (Lee).

Lee's (1977) work inspired the development of scales by Lasswell and Lasswell (1976) and Hendrick and Hendrick (1986). Hendrick and Hendrick devised a 42-item measure of love styles with 7 items comprising each scale. Each item was rated on a 5 point Likert-type scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The scale was administered to 330 college students. The 42 items were factor analyzed and yielded 6 factors that accounted for 44.2% of the total variance. Based on their findings, the authors revised five items and conducted a second study administering the scale to 567 college students. Six factors were extracted after a principal components analysis and the six factors explained 43.1% of the total variance. This finding was similar to the first study and suggests that the scale structure is clear. This scale has been widely used throughout research (Hendrick & Hendrick, 2008; July, 2006; White, Hendrick, & Hendrick, 2004) and provides support for the usefulness and viability of Lee's theory of love styles (Hendrick & Hendrick).

While the definitions and styles of love are important to understand, equally important is identifying the ways in which one falls in love and maintains love. Ira Reiss (1960) presented one of the first dynamic theories of love development entitled the Wheel Theory of Love. Reiss's theory examined love from a sociological framework that not only included the psychological aspects of love but also the social and cultural aspects. Reiss's theory is comprised of four dynamics which operate in a circular fashion and can be either negative or positive, meaning that the relationship can either evolve or dissolve depending on how each of the four dynamics is maintained. The four dynamics are rapport, self-revelation, mutual dependencies or interdependent habit systems and personality need fulfillment (see Figure 1).

Rapport is characterized by a feeling of ease around the other and a willingness to talk and get to know the other and is regulated by cultural background. For example, the cultural background of individuals may regulate their values and standards and how they operate in relationships. After rapport is established, individuals may feel more at ease in the relationship and more willing to reveal intimate aspects of their life. This second process is self-revelation. When individuals engage in self-revelation, they are more likely to disclose their hopes, dreams, fears, and engage in sexual activity. Only after the first two processes are developed can mutual dependencies or interdependent habit

Figure 2.1 Reiss's Wheel Theory of Love



systems form. This stage is characterized by an individual's need or dependency to have the other fulfill his/her habits. Examples are, the fulfillment of sexual needs, or the need to have someone with whom they can share their humor. The final dynamic is personality need fulfillment. These needs parallel some of the same reasons individuals may feel rapport from the beginning. Some of the needs are: someone in whom to confide, someone who will stimulate ambition, and someone to admire. These four processes always occur throughout the development of relationships. The continuation of building rapport and self-revelation along with meeting one another's needs will make a relationship stronger and more intense as the individuals evolve together. Similarly, if the processes stop occurring and the individuals stop maintaining and building rapport the relationship will unravel. Reiss's (1960) Wheel Theory made it possible to describe the dynamic development of love relationships; however his theory was not translated into an empirical measure.

Another important contribution to understanding love was made by Sternberg (1986) who developed a theory in order to describe different types of love and explain

why some loves last and others do not. Sternberg described three components which comprise his triangular theory of love: intimacy, passion and decision/commitment. The process by which Sternberg arrived at these three components was not explicitly given in the research articles written on his theory of love; however it can be inferred from his “Triangular Theory of Love” research article that the three components of love were derived from a review and integration of previous literature (Sternberg). Intimacy is indicative of feelings of closeness and connectedness in relationships. Thus, intimacy is what develops into feelings of warmth within a relationship. Passion serves as the motivational component, giving rise to feelings of physical attraction, romance and sexual desires. Commitment, or the decision component, is the assessment that one loves another and ultimately, the decision to maintain that love. Overall the intimacy component is somewhat like the emotional investment one makes in a relationship, the passion component the motivational drive and the commitment component the cognitive force guiding the decision making process. It is critical to Sternberg’s theory that to understand love relationships one must realize how these components differ from one relationship to another.

Sternberg (1986) posits that eight types of love are possible through various combinations of intimacy, passion and decision/commitment: nonlove, liking, infatuated love, empty love, romantic love, companionate love, fatuous love and consummate love (see Table 1 for a description of each). Each of these types of love, formed through different combinations of the components, gives rise to different relationship experiences. Sternberg argued, “that the framework for understanding love generated by the triangular theory seems to make intuitive sense in terms of people’s everyday experience and also

seems to capture some of the kinds of love that are perhaps missed by frameworks that are not theoretically generated” (p. 124). Sternberg’s triangular theory of love made it possible to develop a measure to assess the eight types of love described and was the first theory to assert that the presence or absence of aspects (i.e. intimacy, passion, commitment) of love can result in different love experiences.

Table 2.1 Sternberg’s Types of Love

Types of love	Intimacy	Passion	Decision/ Commitment	Example
<i>Nonlove</i>	-	-	-	Acquaintances
<i>Liking</i>	+	-	-	Friendships
<i>Infatuated</i>	-	+	-	Love at first sight
<i>Empty</i>	-	-	+	Long bland relationships, where commitment is holding it together
<i>Romantic</i>	+	+	-	Liking plus physical attraction
<i>Companionate</i>	+	-	+	Close friendship or marriage when the passion has died
<i>Fatuous</i>	-	+	+	Whirlwind romance
<i>Consummate</i>	+	+	+	Ideal romance

In 1997 Sternberg presented the Triangular Love Scale. Sternberg argued that if the triangular theory of love is correct that his study on the assessment of his measure would find four things: (1) the three components could be measured; (2) the components would correlate to some degree; (3) factor analysis would find three separate but correlated factors; and (4) the components would predict relationship satisfaction (Sternberg).

Sternberg (1997) conducted two studies to assess these predictions. The first study administered the 36 item questionnaire to 84 adults who took it several times with different relationship targets in mind (i.e. mother, lover, friend, sibling, etc). This study served to refine the questions in the measure and provide preliminary validity and

reliability information. Results indicated that the measure was able to differentiate between different types of relationships (i.e. friendship, mother relationship, sibling, romantic other) based on the passion and decision/commitment scores. The reliability coefficients for the internal consistency for intimacy were all at least $\alpha = .90$, passion $\alpha = .80$, and decision/commitment $\alpha = .80$ (Sternberg). This finding suggested that, overall the items within each subscale were consistently measuring the same construct. Factor analysis revealed a three factor solution that explained 60% of the variance (Sternberg, 1997). The triangular love scale was also compared to Rubin's (1970) Liking and Loving Scales and to a measure of relationship satisfaction. Sternberg's scale was highly correlated with Rubin's Liking Scale ($r = .69$) and Loving Scale ($r = .80$) and Sternberg's scale was more highly correlated with a measure of relationship satisfaction than Rubin's Liking and Love Scales both for all items individually and for the overall score (Sternberg, 1997).

The second study was completed with 101 adults and incorporated an increase from 12 to 15 items in each subscale to increase internal-consistency reliability (Sternberg, 1997). This study asked participants to only respond to the questionnaire with a close romantic relationship in mind. The results of study two were similar to study one. Specifically the scale demonstrated high correlations with overall relationship satisfaction (median $r = .76$ for all three subscales) and results suggested a three-factor structure (Sternberg).

Sternberg's work to develop a measure of his triangular theory of love was critically important to the advancement of the study of love, particularly because he was

the first to study love in a way that originated with a theory which then developed into a valid theory-based measure (Sternberg, 1997).

Intimacy

This next section will explore the literature and research on intimacy. Various definitions of intimacy will be provided and theories of intimacy in relationships will be reviewed. Finally, measures developed to assess the constructs of intimacy will be described.

Similar to defining love, defining intimacy within relationship research has proved to be challenging (Moss & Schwebel, 1993; Fehr, 1988). The importance of intimacy has been acknowledged by several notable psychological theorists. Erikson (1950) included intimacy versus isolation as an important developmental task in moving from adolescence to adulthood. He believed that it was necessary for young adults to meet their intimacy needs in order to avoid isolation (Erikson). Maslow (1959) also acknowledged the importance of intimacy in his hierarchy of needs designating the third level of needs to love and belonging. Harlow and Zimmerman's (1959) groundbreaking research with primates and human infants suggested that without some degree of intimacy humans cannot adequately develop.

The importance of intimacy in relationships has long been acknowledged, but researchers have struggled with reaching a consistent conceptualization of the construct (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992; Berscheid, Snyder, & Omoto, 1989). The majority of the constructs such as love, trust, commitment, affection, emotion, dependence, and needs are all thought to contribute to feelings of or overlap with intimacy; however they are difficult to conceptualize, integrate, and reach an agreed upon meaning (Moss &

Schwebel, 1993). Intimacy, which is often used interchangeably with closeness (Helgeson, Shaver, & Dyer, 1987), has been defined several ways throughout the literature. Derlega and Chaikin (1975) equated intimacy with self-disclosure. Aron, Aron, and Smollan viewed intimacy as overlapping selves or including the other in the view of the self. Intimacy has been described as a process of growing mutual self-disclosure that results in each individual feeling cared for, validated, and understood (Reis & Shaver, 1988). Intimacy has also been described as sharing what is most private with another (McAdams, 1988). Birtchnell (1993) described intimacy as a mutual exchange of giving and receiving closeness. Berscheid, et al. (1989), however, viewed intimacy as multidimensional, consisting of the amount of time spent together (frequency); the variety of interactions engaged in together (diversity), and the perceived influence one has on the other's plans, decisions, and activities (strength).

Researchers still disagree on the definition of intimacy, and some have abandoned the idea of a singular definition and have decided that intimacy is multifaceted and thus have explored the different facets of intimacy through their research.

For example, Schaefer and Olson (1981) developed a measure called the Personal Assessment of Intimacy in Relationships (PAIR) that was based on seven types of intimacy. These seven types were developed by Olson (1975) and were drawn from previous work by Dahms (1971) and Clinebell and Clinebell (1970). The seven types of intimacy proposed by Olson were: (1) emotional-which involves experiencing a closeness of feelings; (2) social- having common friends and similar social networks; (3) intellectual- sharing ideas and thoughts; (4) sexual-exchanging general affections and/or sexual activity; (5) recreational- participating in mutual hobbies or interests; (6) spiritual-

experience of sharing a similar meaning in life and/or faith; (7) aesthetic- closeness that develops from sharing beauty (Shaefer & Olson). These seven areas were then translated into a measure of specific domains of intimacy.

The measure was developed in three phases. The first phase focused on the development of items for the PAIR. In order to develop items to assess the seven domains of intimacy, statements regarding the nature of intimacy were solicited from family therapists, lay persons, and graduate students in family sciences and marriage and family therapy programs (Schaefer & Olson, (1981). Based on these statements 350 items were developed for the PAIR and marriage and family therapy students selected 113 items that were deemed the clearest, most appropriate, and related to the a priori dimensions of intimacy. Next, a sample of 85 participants took the PAIR. The authors used this data and four criteria to determine which items to retain. The criteria were as follows: (1) items should have a frequency split close to 50%-50% to avoid selection of items that do not discriminate between participants; (2) must correlate higher with their own scale than the others; (3) must have a sufficient factor loading, which the authors deemed as .20; and (4) each subscale must have an equal number of items that are positively and negatively scored (Schaefer & Olson). The aesthetic dimension failed to meet the criteria and was dropped at this point of the inventory development. Seventy-five items were selected, 10 for each subscale and 15 for a social desirability scale.

In the second phase, the 75-item pair was administered along with the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment scale (Locke & Wallace, 1953), the Self-disclosure scale (Jourrd, 1964), the Empathy scale (Truax & Carkhoff, 1967), and six of the Moos' Family Environment scales (Moos & Moos, 1976). The same four criteria explained

above were used to reduce the number of items for a second time. The final measure consisted of a 36-item measure made up of six subscales. All of the six subscales had Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients of at least .70 (Schaefer & Olson, 1981). In addition, the PAIR was compared to the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment scale, a measure of marital satisfaction, and it was found that all of the PAIR subscales were positively correlated with the Locke-Wallace coefficients, all exceeding .30 (Schaefer & Olson). This finding suggests that the more intimacy one experiences in his/her relationship, the more satisfied he/she is in the relationship. The PAIR was also correlated with all of the self-disclosure subscales and positively correlated with the cohesion, independence, and expressiveness aspects of the Moos' scale and negatively correlated, as hypothesized, with the conflict and control subscales of the Moos' Family Environment Scale. Additionally, the reliability was tested using a split-half method, which reflected Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficients of at least .70 per scale (Schaefer & Olson).

In addition to advancing the study of intimacy, the development of the PAIR has several important clinical implications as an assessment tool. For example, the PAIR produces a profile of couples' intimacy experiences versus a total intimacy score. This type of outcome can be useful clinically because it demonstrates where discrepancies in intimacy occur and offers specific areas (i.e. recreation, sexual, etc) of intimacy where the couple can direct their focus. Also, the PAIR measures the experienced and expected levels of intimacy in a relationship and can be useful in counseling for identifying discrepancies in what clients experience and what they expect out of their intimate

relationship. The PAIR can also be useful in helping clients articulate the different types of intimacy in their relationship (Shaefer & Olson, 1981).

Moss and Schwebel (1993) expanded on Schaefer and Olson's (1981) attempt to define intimacy in romantic relationships. They conducted an extensive review of the subject of intimacy in research and literature and found 61 unique definitions. Seven themes were identified in these definitions and were reduced to five components: commitment, affective intimacy, cognitive intimacy, physical intimacy and mutuality. Commitment refers to the desire to permanently remain with the partner. Affective intimacy refers to the depth of awareness individuals have about their partner's emotional world and the exchanges of emotions they share. Cognitive intimacy specifies the depth of awareness individuals have of their partner's cognitive world and the exchanges of cognitions they share. Physical intimacy indicates the extent of shared physical encounters as well as the physiological arousal state experienced toward the partner at each level of the physical encounter. Finally, mutuality refers to the reciprocal exchange that occurs in intimate relationships, indicating that partners may differ in the energy invested in maintaining intimacy as well as the value they place on the intimacy obtained. Different degrees of each of these areas of closeness can be used to describe themes in various relationships. For example, intimacy between romantic partners would consist of high degrees of closeness across all components, while intimacy between friends would be low in physical intimacy while high in the other components of intimacy.

Moss and Schwebel (1993) concluded that their more parsimonious, comprehensive definition of intimacy may be of value to researchers who wish to study this complicated construct. These researchers furthered the study of intimacy by

identifying the components that contribute to intimacy in relationships. Moss and Schwebel developed a comprehensive definition of intimacy, while also allowing for different degrees of intimacy within a variety of interpersonal relationships; however their conceptualization of intimacy has yet to be translated into a measure.

The Miller Social Intimacy Scale (MSIS), developed by Miller and Lefcourt (1982) was one of the first attempts at measuring intimacy in relationships. The initial 30 items were produced through interviews with undergraduate students that explored the nature of their close relationships. The interviews were examined for defining qualities of intimacy and the researchers concluded that intimacy was important in terms of both the frequency and the depth. Based on these interviews, a 17-item measure using a 10 point likert-scale was developed. Six of the items assessed the frequency of intimate experiences (i.e. *when you have leisure time how often do you choose to spend it with him/her along*) and 11 items measured depth (i.e. *how important is your relationship with him/her in your life*). All of the responses are summed to reveal an overall intimacy score, with higher scores reflecting higher degrees of intimacy.

The MSIS was tested among three samples, totaling 252 participants. The samples were as follows: 72 male and 116 female unmarried students; 17 married student couples, and 15 married couples seeking marital therapy (Miller & Lefcourt, 1982). The Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the MSIS ranged from .86-.91, indicating that the MSIS assessed a single construct. The test-retest reliability was assessed at both 1 month ($r = .84, p < .001$) and 2 month ($r = .96, p < .001$) intervals. The findings suggested that there is some stability in the amount of intimacy experienced over time (Miller & Lefcourt). The convergent validity of the MSIS was examined by comparing

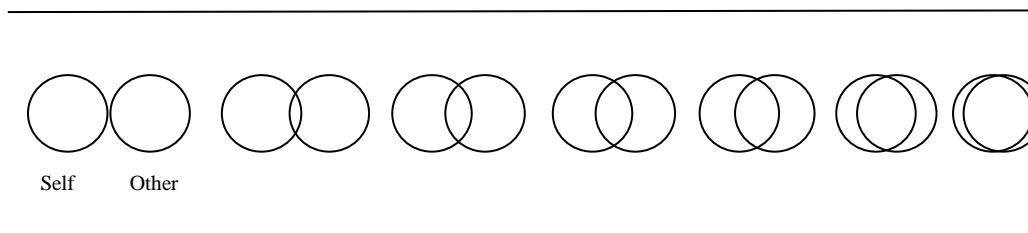
the scores on the MSIS to scores on the Interpersonal Relationship scale (IRS; Schlein, Guerney, & Stover, 1971) and the UCLA Loneliness scale (Russell, Peplau, & Ferguson, 1978). Overall, scores on the MSIS were positively correlated with scores on the IRS ($r = .71, p < .001$) and were negatively correlated with the UCLA Loneliness scale ($r = -.65, p < .001$). These findings demonstrated evidence of convergent and divergent validity for the MSIS. The MSIS also showed discriminant validity in that scores on the MSIS were significantly different from scores on the Tennessee Self-Concept scale (Fitts, 1965) and the Marlowe-Crowne Need for Approval scale (Crowne & Marlowe, 1964). The construct validity of the MSIS was assessed by having participants respond to the measure twice, once with their closest friend in mind and a second time reflecting on a casual friendship. Results indicated that the mean MSIS scores were significantly different depending on the type of relationship they had in mind when responding to the questionnaire, specifically that MSIS scores were significantly higher when thinking of their closest friend than when thinking of a casual friend ($t = 9.18, p < .001$).

Miller and Lefcourt (1982) concluded that “the psychometric data suggests [sic] that the MSIS is a reliable and valid measure of social intimacy” (p. 518). This scale paved the way for the development of numerous scales to assess intimacy and helped to further the exploration of this construct.

The final measure to be reviewed was developed by Aron, Aron, and Smollan (1992) and is called the Inclusion of Other in the Self scale (IOS scale). The authors developed this measure in response to the Relationship Closeness Inventory (RCI; Berscheid, Snyder, & Omoto, 1989) which assesses three aspects of closeness: frequency, diversity, and strength. Aron, Aron, and Smollan (1992) argued that the RCI did not

capture cognitive and affective aspects of closeness, focused too much on college only populations which impacted the usability of the diversity and strength scale, and takes 10-15 minutes to complete which makes it difficult to use if intimacy is not the main outcome variable in a study. Aron et al. instead decided to create a one-item measure of intimacy that consists of a picture of venn-like diagrams (see figure 2). The amount of overlap of the circles progresses linearly, which creates an interval level seven-step scale. Respondents are asked to circle the picture which best represents their relationships. The authors of this measure conceptualize intimacy as the degree to which individuals feel aspects of their partner are actually their own. Measuring intimacy using a picture allows the respondent to provide his/her perception of the interconnectivity of his/her relationship.

Figure 2.2 The Inclusion of Other in Self Scale (IOS Scale)



Aron et al. (1992) conducted two studies to test the validity and reliability of the IOS scale. The first study was intended to replicate the studies used to evaluate the RCI. Two hundred and eight college students completed the IOS, RCI, and SCI (Subjective Closeness Index) for part one of the survey. Respondents were asked to place their answers in sealed envelopes and then complete a measure of 27 emotional tone items, the Sternberg Intimacy subscale, the Expected Distress scale, and the IOS. Because assessing the reliability of a single-item measure is nearly impossible, the researchers

included two measures of the IOS, completed 15 minutes apart; one with circle diagrams and a second IOS with diamond diagrams ($\alpha = .93$). The IOS demonstrated convergent validity, as it was significantly associated with all the included measures, except the negative emotion ratings and the RCI frequency subscale (Aron et al.). Discriminant validity was tested by having respondents complete a one-item anger/sadness circles. This scale used the same method; however was tapping a different construct, the IOS scale was not significantly related to this measure. Two weeks later respondents completed the measures again and then three months later they were contacted in order to inquire about the status of their relationship. The IOS scale significantly related to relationship status at three months ($r = .46, p = .001$). Finally, the researchers factor analyzed the IOS, RCI, SCI, and Sternberg Intimacy subscale to find that the measures yielded a two-factor structure. The authors concluded that the factors assessed feeling close and behaving close, with only the IOS Scale and the RCI strength subscale significantly loading on both factors. This finding indicated that the IOS scale captured both intimacy behaviors and feelings.

One main purpose of the development of the IOS was to devise a measure that could successfully be used across different populations. To test this aspect of the IOS, the researchers offered their scale to be used in several other studies. The relevant studies will be reviewed. The first study by McKenna (1989) examined how the IOS compared to other measures of marital quality. The results indicated that the IOS was correlated with the Dyadic Satisfaction scale of Spanier's (1976) Dyadic Adjustment Scale ($r = .62$), was negatively correlated to McKenna's measure of boredom within relationships ($r = -.60$), and positively related to how excited the respondent felt in their relationship ($r =$

.57). All of these findings were statistically significant ($p < .001$). This study was noteworthy to the development of the IOS because it was the first to use the IOS with married couples that were not part of a college course (Aron, et al., 1992). Griffin (1990) also used the IOS with married couples in a study that examined sexual fantasy and marital commitment and satisfaction. He found that the IOS was significantly related to measures of commitment ($p < .001$) and marital satisfaction ($p < .001$). This study added further support to the concurrent validity of the IOS because marital commitment and satisfaction are conceptually related to closeness (Aron et al.). Melinat (1991) conducted a study in which intimacy was produced in a laboratory among mixed-gender stranger dyads. Each dyad spent one and a half hours completing several interaction tasks designed to create intimacy. Respondents then completed several measures of intimacy including the IOS, the Subjective Closeness Index ($r = .63$), Rubin's (1970) Liking ($r = .59$) and Loving scale ($r = .36$) and Byrne's (1971) Interpersonal Judgment scale ($r = .41$) all of which correlated significantly with the IOS at $p < .01$ (Aron et al.). This study provided confirmation of the IOS's concurrent validity by testing whether the measure would detect intimacy even in relationships where closeness was experimentally generated (Aron et al.).

Overall these studies, examining the IOS, suggested that the measure is a broad index of intimacy that assesses both the feelings and behaviors of intimacy. Additionally, the measure was shown to have adequate validity. One of the strongest aspects of the IOS is that it is able to tap the complicated construct of intimacy by using just one pictorial question. A pictorial measure serves as a strength because the IOS can be used in conjunction with several other measures due to how quickly it can be completed.

Additionally, the IOS allows the respondent to project their own definition of intimacy and interconnectivity onto the measure. Also, because the IOS uses a picture to assess intimacy it can be used among diverse populations without concern for language barriers or translations.

The measures discussed in this section were groundbreaking in regards to furthering the study of intimacy. The MSIS, PAIR inventory, and IOS scale are all useful resources for the study of intimacy; however, with the exception of the PAIR inventory, they fall short in their clinical applicability. The inventories discussed measure frequency, strength, and depth of intimacy and perceived interconnectedness of partners, thus they are descriptive of the couple's relationship. In order for a measure to be useful clinically it would be helpful for the results to not just be descriptive but also prescriptive, showing how a relationship could be improved by addressing gaps in intimacy. This is partially addressed by the PAIR Inventory, yet taking the 36-item scale twice may not always be appropriate in a setting where time is a concern.

Attachment

This next section will review attachment theory which is another important area of the literature related to close relationships. This section will explain the development of attachment theory and how it relates to romantic relationships later in life. Because attachment will not be examined as an outcome variable in this study, the measures on attachment will be briefly reviewed.

Another theory of love and intimacy, which takes a different perspective, is attachment theory. Attachment theory proposes that "close relationships among adults are influenced by enduring styles of attachment developed in childhood" (Femlee &

Sprecher, 2000, p. 366). Attachment in romantic relationships is characterized as “one of several distinct but interlocking behavioral systems, including exploration, care-giving, affiliation and sexual mating” (Hazan & Shaver, 1994, p.3).

Most attachment theory and research has grown from Bowlby’s (1969, 1973, 1980) three-volume exploration of attachment, separation, and loss, that provided an in-depth understanding of the varying styles of unidirectional attachment, which occur from the infant to the mother. Infant-caregiver attachment is a dynamic interaction in which the infant has needs, such as food, comfort, proximity, security, and love, and the caregiver has the task of meeting those needs. How the needs of the infant are addressed affects the way an infant forms a mental representation of his/her caregiver and how the caregiver will meet his/her needs. An infant’s subsequent mental representations or working models establish his/her attachment style. Bowlby identified three attachment styles: secure, anxious/ambivalent, and anxious/avoidant. The majority of research today has continued to use the three styles of attachment introduced by Bowlby.

Later, Bowlby’s three styles of attachment were applied to adult romantic relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). In two questionnaire studies, Hazan and Shaver found that: there was continuity between an infant’s early experience of attachment and the style of attachment experienced in adult relationships, one’s attachment style in adulthood was predictive of the way they experienced romantic love, and attachment style was related in theoretically meaningful ways to mental representations of self and relationships (Hazan & Shaver). Overall, Hazan and Shaver’s study supported an attachment-theoretical perspective on romantic love.

In the nineties, attachment theory continued to attract attention in the understanding of love and intimacy. In addition to hundreds of research articles, major volumes were written on this subject each year throughout the decade (Bartholomew & Perlman, 1994; Socha & Stamp, 1995; Goldberg, Muir, & Kerr, 1995; Feeney & Noller, 1996; Meins, 1997; Simpson & Rholes, 1998; Cassidy & Shaver, 1999).

One of the major debates within attachment research was whether or not individuals' mental representations or working models remain stable over time. A working model or mental representation is described as a fluid interplay between what occurs in everyday experiences and past experiences and how these experiences are used to formulate expectations of what to anticipate from yourself and others. If mental representations remain stable overtime, it leaves individuals with little room to change the way they form their attachments later in life. This is of importance because if, in fact, working models do remain stable throughout the life span these working models will play out in adult relationships throughout life, meaning that primary attachments are crucial to subsequent attachments (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). The results of much of the research in the nineties found that a person's attachment style does not change much over time (Waters, Merrick, Treboux, Crowell, & Albersheim, 2000; Waters, Hamilton, & Weinfield, 2000).

Hazan and Shaver (1987) conducted a landmark study in the investigation of romantic love as an attachment process. This study examined romantic relationship attachments and whether they are similar to how attachments are formed and maintained in early childhood. The first relevant finding of this landmark study was that the three attachment styles that constitute most of early attachment research and literature were

prevalent in adulthood. The second finding was that adults with different attachment styles perceived and experienced love differently. The final important finding was that mental representations or working models of self and relationships were related to attachment. This finding suggests that “individuals with different attachment styles entertain different beliefs about the course of love and the availability and trustworthiness of available partners” (Hazan & Shaver, p. 521).

In addition to the experience of love, attachment styles have been linked to marital satisfaction, in that individuals classified as secure were found to be most satisfied with their relationships (Treboux, Crowell & Waters, 2004). While working models are typically fairly resistant to change, alterations to working models are possible but usually occur with significant disruptive life experiences and are usually long-lasting (Waters, Merrick, Treboux, Crowell, Albersheim, 2000). Hence, the way in which individuals attach and form working models early in life has implications for their future relationship happiness and overall well-being (Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

The ability to measure attachment is critical to conducting research on how one’s attachment style impacts his/her life and relationship outcomes. Determining an adult’s attachment style proves to be more complicated considering the attachment behavior system in adults is mutual, meaning that one person in the relationship is not just the caregiver or the attachment figure, instead both individuals serve both roles and these roles may fluctuate rapidly in any given situation (Crowell & Treboux, 1995). Also, adult attachment relationships serve different functions than infant-caregiver relationships. For example, adult attachment relationships are intended to meet different needs than infant-caregiver relationships such as: sexual needs, companionship, and a

sense of shared experience (Crowell & Treboux). The majority of adult attachment measures are either interviews or self-report surveys. These measures focus on either individual differences based on attachment style or dimensions of attachment such as security (Crowell & Treboux).

The Adult Attachment Interview (AAI), one of the first measures of attachment, was developed by George, Kaplan, and Main (1985). This measure is a semi-structured interview that was designed to gather information from an adult about their childhood attachment relationships and how they have made meaning of these relationships. The responses are scored based on the respondent's description of their childhood experience, the language he/she used, and how the respondent made meaning of their experiences (Crowell & Treboux, 1995). Based on the scores, respondents are classified into either the secure/autonomous, insecure/dismissing, or insecure/preoccupied attachment style.

The AAI has been examined in relation to numerous outcome variables. The secure classification on the AAI has been found to be related to higher self-esteem in college students (Treboux, Crowell, & Colon-Downs, 1992) and higher feelings of competence and self-approval among low income mothers (Benoit, Zenanah, & Barton, 1989). Conversely, being classified as preoccupied was related to anxiety and the endorsement of more symptoms on a psychiatric check list (Kobak & Sceery, 1988).

The Attachment Style Measure (ASM) by Hazan and Shaver (1987) was one of the first self-report surveys of adult attachment styles. This survey provided respondents with three paragraphs that described attitudes toward emotional closeness and openness in romantic relationships, with each paragraph corresponding to a different attachment style. Respondents were asked to select which paragraph represented their general

attitude best. The ASM is the most widely used measure of attachment; however reliabilities have been low and inconsistent (Levy & Davis, 1988; Shaver & Brennan, 1992; Vacha-Haase, Murphy, Rotzien, & Davenport, 1994).

The ASM has been examined in relation to various outcome variables (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Levy & Davis, 1988). Findings indicated that secure attachment was positively correlated with intimacy, passion, and relationship satisfaction and negatively related to loneliness (Hazan & Shaver; Levy & Davis). Additionally, anxious-ambivalent and avoidant attachment are negatively related to intimacy, care, and relationship satisfaction and avoidant attachment is positively related to conflict-avoidance and feelings of loneliness (Levy & Davis).

The Adult Attachment Scale (AAS; Collins & Read, 1990) was based on the descriptions of attachment styles developed by Hazan and Shaver (1987). Instead of providing paragraphs for respondents to select, Collins and Read developed an 18-item measure; 6 items for each attachment style (Garbarino, 1998). The items factor analyzed into three factors: dependence, closeness, and anxiety (Collins & Read). Moderate reliabilities have been reported for this measure (Chongruska, 1994; Collins & Read).

The AAS subscale scores have been shown to be related to self-esteem, loneliness, and expressiveness in the expected directions (Garbarino, 1998). Also, AAS scores were related to different beliefs about romantic relationships, specifically that those with an avoidant style endorsed a romantic ideal the least, ambivalent styles scored highest on emotional dependency and neurotic love, while secure styles scored highest in self-confidence (Feeney & Noller, 1990).

Attachment style is one of the most widely studied topics in relationship research. Additionally, attachment styles have been shown to be related to important outcome variables in relationship research such as: marital satisfaction, loneliness, anxiety, depression, sexual behavior, relationship attitudes and beliefs, personality, and commitment behavior (Bogaert & Sadava, 2002; Crowell, Treboux, & Waters, 2002; Cryanowski & Anderson, 1998; Davis, 2004; Kobak & Hazan, 1991; Mikulincer, 1998; Onishi, Gjerde, & Block, 2001; Simpson, 1990; Volling, Notaro, & Larsen, 1998). Furthermore, attachment styles have provided researchers and clinicians insight into how early experiences with caregivers impact caregiving, sexual, and attaching behavior later in life. While attachment theory is incredibly useful in providing insight into these phenomena, it falls short in describing how to make meaningful changes in attachment style. Research has shown that attachment styles can be altered, yet the research has failed to explore how these changes come about (Waters, Merrick, Treboux, Crowell, & Albersheim, 2000; Waters, Hamilton, & Weinfield, 2000). Being cast as an avoidant attachment style can feel like a curse that is one's burden to carry indefinitely. More research or a unified, dynamic model of attachment would prove to be clinically useful in providing a better understanding of how attachment style can be changed and how characteristics of unhealthy attachment styles can be improved.

Summary of Past Perspectives

The past theories have made advancements toward defining and measuring the complex phenomena of love, closeness, intimacy and attachment. Rubin (1970) defined love as an interpersonal attitude held by a person toward another person involving the predispositions to think, feel, and behave a certain way, while Lee (1977), on the other

hand, described various styles of loving. Reiss (1960) presented the first dynamic model that demonstrated the way in which people fall in love and Sternberg (1986) was the first to describe different types of love based on varying degrees of intimacy, passion and commitment. While Schaefer & Olson (1981) were some of the first to describe different categories of intimacy in relationships and how differing amounts of intimacy can impact relationship health and satisfaction. And finally, attachment theory described the development of bonds with close others, taking a somewhat different approach on love, tracing the development of one's capacity to love in different ways back to childhood.

While these theories provided different perspectives on the meaning of love, intimacy, and attachment in close relationships, several commonalities across the theories are evident. A sense of sharing whether it is disclosure, time together, or shared interests, was a common theme throughout the theories discussed. Reiss (1960) mentioned building rapport as crucial to the development of a relationship and Sternberg (1986) described his intimacy component as the way in which a couple gets to know each other that subsequently develops into feelings of closeness and connectedness in a relationship. Intimacy was even equated with mutual self-disclosure by multiple researchers (Berscheid, et al., 1989; Derlega & Chaikin, 1975; McAdams, 1988) and Schaefer and Olson (1981) included the sharing of ideas and mutual hobbies or interests in their definition of intimacy.

Need fulfillment was also a common theme throughout the past theories. Reiss (1960) discussed personality need fulfillment and how meeting one another's needs will strengthen a relationship. One premise of attachment theory rests on need fulfillment. For instance, trust or working models are developed through the way in which a child's

needs are met by their primary caregiver. Moss and Schwebel (1993) discuss the notion of mutuality when defining intimacy and how need fulfillment is critical in intimate relationships.

Sexual expression was common among the theories discussed. Sternberg (1986) introduced passion as a component to his theory of love in that passion is a motivational force that produces feelings of physical attraction, romance and sexual desire. Also, when defining intimacy, Moss and Schwebel (1993) and Schaefer and Olson (1981) included physical intimacy, described as the extent of shared physical encounters as well as the physiological arousal state experienced toward a partner. Lee's (1977) love styles included Eros, a type of love consumed by finding a partner they believe to be physically attractive.

While many commonalities exist across these models, no one theory has integrated these ideas into one complete model. The lack of integration of the theories leaves questions unanswered. For instance, Reiss (1960) purported that in a relationship one must work to keep developing deeper levels of mutual rapport, self-revelation, dependency, and need fulfillment or the relationship will unravel. While the individuals may be unhappy if they exist in this type of relationship, the relationship itself may not unravel. Thus, what in Reiss's theory explains why some people stay in a relationship despite the unraveling?

Sternberg's theory describes three components of love and how different amounts of each will produce different love experiences but how does his theory explain changes in love feelings over time? His method of measuring the theory is static and will only provide a snapshot of where a person is at one moment in time and then will categorize

the respondent as having a particular type of relationship. For example, a respondent could be categorized as in an “empty” relationship that is said to be long, bland, and only held together by commitment, but perhaps this person is experiencing a crisis in their relationship that affected the areas of intimacy and passion temporarily. Sternberg’s theory does not address this area or account for the typical fluctuations in love feelings that occur in romantic relationships.

Additionally, attachment theory provided an incredible venue for studying close relationships; however attachment theory categorizes individuals and then provides little understanding as to how to change categories. Also, attachment theory does not include an integrated understanding of the associations among other relational systems. Fraley and Shaver (2000) stated that,

in our opinion, attachment theory cannot begin to do justice to attachment-related aspects of romantic-sexual relationships, especially to the unfolding of relational dynamics over time, unless all of these systems (attachment, care giving, and sexual behavioral systems) are included and elucidated. (p. 149)

Finally, the research on intimacy captures many aspects of close relationships yet most of the theories do not measure commitment. Commitment theoretically relates to intimate relationships and the ability to exhibit dependence, mutual-self disclosure, and sexual closeness without overwhelming vulnerability.

To address some of the shortcomings of the theories discussed, this dissertation presents an alternative model, the Relationship Attachment Model (Van Epp, 1997), which integrates past research and theory and has the potential to be a more complete model of the relational bond in close relationships.

The Relationship Attachment Model (RAM)

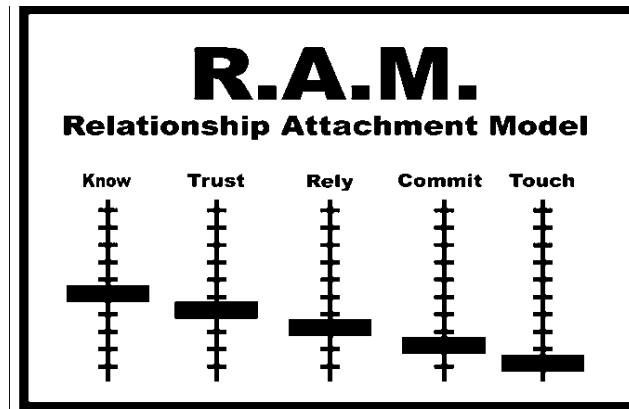
This next section presents a theoretical model for examining close relationships. The Relationship Attachment Model (RAM) was developed by Van Epp (1997) based on his review of literature and integration of concepts that relate to existing theories on love, intimacy, and attachment as well as out of his clinical work with couples and experience teaching advanced marriage and family theory courses. The RAM is a visual model used to understand the relational bond in close relationships; however underlying the RAM are theoretical principles, assumptions, and propositions. Throughout the following sections, for the sake of consistency and clarity, both the visual model and the theoretical underpinnings will be referenced in the same way, RAM.

The RAM (see figure 3) is a pictorial depiction of the five dynamic bonds that contribute to the relational bond in close relationships. The five dynamic bonds that comprise the RAM are: know, trust, rely, commit, and touch. It should be noted that each of the dynamic bonds has been assumed components in past theories of love and intimacy and there is no known research tracing the development of these components.

Every section on each of the bonding dynamics includes two subsections. The first subsection will review major psychological theories that underlie each dynamic bond and how these theories explain individual differences in one's capacity to develop healthy relationships. The second subsection for each bonding dynamic will review relevant research on how that particular dynamic contributes to feelings of closeness in relationships. The notion that each dynamic bond contributes to a feeling of closeness is important because the RAM asserts that each dynamic bond individually and collectively contributes to a feeling of closeness in relationships. Following a review of each

dynamic bond, the principles of the RAM and application of the RAM will be reviewed. Finally, the current study will be described.

Figure 2.3 The Relationship Attachment Model (RAM)



Know

To know another and to be known is bonding and produces feelings of closeness. The concept of knowing has been implicit in many of the theories of love and intimacy. For example, many researchers have considered intimacy to be synonymous with self-disclosure (Berscheid, et a., 1989; Derlega & Chaikin, 1975; McAdams, 1988). Additionally, rapport building was central to Reiss's (1960) theory on love relationships and Sternberg's (1986) intimacy component was defined as the way couples to get to know each other. However, these theories have not clearly defined the process of knowing nor explained how knowing produces feelings of closeness in relationships. According to Van Epp (1997), being known and the capacity to know others is made possible because of a particular system of self which will be referred to as the *sensory self*. Van Epp purports that this aspect of self contributes to an individual's capacity to know others and to be known, which ultimately affects the formation and health of close

relationships (Jobe & White, 2006). Additionally, Van Epp defined knowing and the components necessary to get to know another. Specifically, knowing is characterized as having three dimensions all of which produce feelings of closeness: talking or mutual self-disclosure, togetherness and sharing diverse activities, and time, meaning time is essential for truly knowing another. The next two sections will explore the sensory self and then the bonding aspects of know. First, the sensory self will be explained in order to provide a baseline understanding of how the RAM incorporates psychological theory to explain individual differences in the capacity to know and be known. Second, research will be outlined that describes how knowing another and being known is bonding. This research will address the three dimensions that characterize knowing.

The Sensory Self

Getting to know another is critical to the formation of close relationships. As an individual, getting to know anything or anyone is guided by our sensory system (Martin, 2007). The integration of our sense of smell, touch, taste, hearing, and sight form our experiences and our understanding of the world around us (Suied, Bonneel, & Viaud-Delmon, 2009). The sensory system does not operate independently from our cognitive system; rather these two systems work together to shape our experiences. However, the sensory system provides the initial mechanism through which we get to know the world around us and, thus will be the focus of this section.

Sensory integration theory is the “neurological processes that organize sensations from one’s body and from one’s environment and makes it possible to use the body effectively within the environment” (Ayers, 1972, p. 5). Ayers explains three postulates of her sensory integration theory. First, she asserts that learning is dependent on the

ability to take in and process sensation in the environment and use it to plan and organize behavior. Second, individuals who have a decreased ability, based on cognitive limitations, to organize sensations may have difficulty producing appropriate actions which may negatively impact their learning, and people with enhanced sensations and the ability to process these sensations have enhanced learning and behavior (Bundy, Lane, & Murray, 2002). Third, sensory integration is thought to relate to adaptive interactions with the environment. In other words, adaptive interaction with the environment promotes sensory integration, because adaptive interaction requires meeting some challenge or learning something new in one's environment successfully, which then enhances sensory integration leading to one being better equipped to have subsequent adaptive interactions (Bundy, et al.). This theory is important for understanding how people form close relationships because in order to develop a close relationship, one must have the capacity to get to know the world around them, integrate this knowledge, and act accordingly. If this capacity were deficient in some way, one's ability to form close connections would be impaired. In an extreme example, this is seen in people with developmental disorders such as Autism.

Autism is a spectrum disorder of neural development often characterized by impaired communication and social interaction abilities (Johnson, 2007). Autism affects the way information is organized in the brain. Some characteristics of Autism are: less social understanding, more nonverbal communication, less eye contact, difficulty interpreting facial expressions and emotion, delayed or stunted speech, resistance to change, difficulty expressing needs, and over or under-active senses. Often sensory integration is difficult for individuals with autism which may lead to experiencing a soft

touch as painful or ordinary noises as extremely loud. Impairment in sensory integration results in difficulties in getting to know the world and experiencing it in a way that is relatable to others. Sensory integration theory (Ayers, 1972) states that some individuals may have enhanced sensory integration abilities while others may be deficient and that the ability to integrate senses is critical to adaptive interactions in the world. Therefore each person has a particular capacity to integrate the world around him/her that he/she brings into a close relationship with another. This ability to integrate senses ultimately impacts how this person will get to know another and become known in a relationship (Van Epp, 1997). This application of sensory integration theory to the understanding of knowing in close relationships is novel and is exclusive to the underpinnings of the RAM. Because of this no known research exists on the application of sensory integration theory to close relationships.

Feeling known and knowing your partner is bonding

Being known and getting to know another enhances the relational bond (Van Epp, 1997). This was also argued by past theorists reviewed who described the very feeling of intimacy and love as self-revelation, mutual self-disclosure, and sharing what is most private with another (Berscheid, et al, 1989; McAdams, 1988; Reiss, 1960). However, Van Epp (1997) argues that getting to know another and becoming known extends beyond just mutual self-disclosure. Knowing is a process that requires spending time with one another, sharing diverse experiences, talking with one another and engaging in this process over time (Van Epp). Ultimately, knowing another and being known contributes to an increase in the relational bond and likewise a feeling of

intimacy; however Van Epp does not define knowing as intimacy in and of itself as many past theorists did (Berscheid, et al., Birtchnell, 1993).

In romantic relationships it is not uncommon for individuals to spend vast amounts of time staying up all night talking to one another, sharing and getting to know each other. This mutual self-disclosure is an interaction that occurs in romantic relationships that produces a feeling of knowing and being known by another. John Harvey and Julia Omarzu (1997) argued that, “a never-ending reciprocal knowing process involving a complex package of interrelated thoughts, feelings and behaviors represents an essential condition for creating and sustaining closeness in mutually satisfying relationships” (p. 224). Reis and Shaver (1988) believe that intimacy is developed out of the process of continuing reciprocity of self-disclosure in that each person feels his or her innermost self validated, understood and cared for by the other. The relationship between intimacy and self disclosure has been argued to be mutually inclusive, meaning that in order to establish a sense of intimacy self disclosure is essential (Chelune, 1984).

Knowing and feeling known enhances the relational bond not solely through mutual self-disclosure but also through various shared activities and situations. Harvey and Omarzu (1997) stated, “each and every person represents an intricate set of experiences, personal qualities, dispositions, hopes, plans and potential reactions to environmental stimuli” (p. 234). Because getting to know someone is multidimensional, it is crucial to get to know them in many settings. People change in different situations; thus, the more experiences individuals share and the more diverse their interactions, the

more opportunities they will have to get to know each other and the closer they will become.

While getting to know someone and feeling known is an interaction that produces closeness through mutual disclosure and diverse shared activities, time is another crucial impetus to the development of the relational bond. Time is an essential ingredient to both mutual self-disclosure and various shared activities. Time ensures a testing method of the knowledge obtained through the getting to know process with an individual.

Sophisticated forms of human behavior are only learned and understood over a significant period of shared experience. In order to become fully aware of an individual's repertoire, the knowing process requires time. Both Whyte (1984) and Grover, et al. (1985) found that longer premarital courtships were correlated with greater stability in marriage. They argued that the underlying principle was that the greater the opportunities for couples to know each other prior to deciding to marry, the greater their chance to experience some of the ordinary problems, irritations and frustrations; thus, the more informed they were when choosing a marital partner. Similarly, in marriage the passage of time brings with it changes in life circumstances and more opportunity to get to know different sides of one's partner.

Staying in the know with a partner is incredibly important to maintaining a close, bonded relationship. In a study based on data collected from a 17-year longitudinal study of marital instability (Booth, Amato, & Johnson, 1988), 2,033 married individuals were asked an open-ended question, "what do you think caused your divorce?" (Amato & Previti, 2003). Eighteen categories were created from the analysis of responses and four of the eighteen were directly related to the know dynamic in a relationship with several

others being indirectly related. For example, the fourth most common reason was that the couple was “incompatible” in that they had little in common anymore. The fifth most common reason was that the couple “grew apart” and that their interests and priorities changed. The seventh most common reason was stated as a “communication problem” and described as the couple not talking anymore. Finally, the ninth most common reason for divorce was “personal growth” in that one partner had a life changing event and re-evaluated their life. All of these reasons for divorce directly relate to the bonding dynamic of getting to know another and being known. Those who felt “incompatible” did not engage in consistent talking and time together to preserve and or develop the compatibilities they had when they entered into their marriage. Those who “grew apart” did not stay in the know with their partner.

The idea of growing apart is a common reason for divorce throughout the research (Amato & Previti; Gigy & W3, 1992; Kitson, 1992; Levinger, 1966). Knowing another and being known enhances the relational bond and contributes to the feeling of love in a romantic relationship. Therefore, if the bonding dynamic, know, is disrupted and chronically ill-maintained the other bonding dynamics (i.e. trust, reliance, commitment, and touch) will be adversely affected ultimately diminishing the feeling of love in a romantic relationship. For example, the study above found that feeling that one has “grown apart” or doesn’t “communicate”, which are both deficiencies of knowing, ultimately lead to complete dissolution of relational commitment (Amato & Previti).

Mutual self-disclosure, shared activities, and time are three aspects of the getting to know and be known process that enhance the relational bond. The process of knowing

and feeling known develops into a sense of predictability and trust, which is the second dynamic bond.

Trust

Trusting another and being trusted increases the relational bond (Van Epp, 1997). The construct of trust has long been considered to be an important aspect in close relationships; however trust's explicit mention in relationship theories is virtually nonexistent (Couch & Jones, 1997; Fehr, 1988, 2006, Harvey & Omarzu, 1997). Trust is typically an underlying theme or an implicit prerequisite for feeling comfortable self-disclosing, relying on another, or entering into and maintaining a commitment (Larzelere & Huston, 1980; Maxwell, 1985). The RAM overtly presents trust as an integral dynamic bond, central to the formation and maintenance of close relationships.

According to Van Epp, trust is defined as the confidence one has in another based on the mental picture or opinion they hold of that person. This mental picture or opinion stems from what Van Epp refers to as the *mental self*. This system of the self impacts an individual's capacity to trust others which ultimately affects the formation of close relationships. The next two sections will explore specific aspects of trust. First, the mental self will be explained in order to provide an understanding of how the RAM incorporates psychological theory to explain individual differences in the capacity to trust others. Second, research will be summarized that describes how trusting and being trusted enhances the relational bond.

The Mental Self

Trusting another and being trusted is the next dynamic bond critical to the development of close relationships (Van Epp, 1997). The capacity for an individual to

trust arises from a second major system of self: the mental system. The theory that best describes an individual's capacity to trust is object relations theory. Ronald Fairbairn originally developed object relations theory in 1952, but a similar way of thinking was used in psychoanalytic psychology from the early 1900s. Object relations theory describes the process of the mind developing in relation to interactions with others in the environment. Typically, the influential interactions are with early caregivers who serve as object relationships. Objects are defined as people in the environment and as development takes place objects are often defined by their function, which is referred to as part objects. Over time, patterns emerge based on care giving experiences that then form internal objects. The internal objects may or may not be accurate representations of others, but with good enough parenting the part objects will become whole objects. This allows for the tolerance of ambiguity and to see that objects may have good parts and bad parts but they are from the same object. Object relations theory asserts that individuals use this mental representation of an object to guide how they interact with him/her in the environment. The understanding and empirical support of object relations theory has been enhanced through attachment theory research.

Attachment theory is founded on the idea that infants form mental representations or working models of their care giver, based primarily on their experiences with care givers. These experiences then shape their expectations of how their care giver will respond to their needs; in essence it forms the basis for trust in their care giver. Out of these experiences, individuals develop attachment styles which are thought to remain relatively stable throughout the life course (Crowell, Treboux, & Waters, 2002; Femlee & Sprecher, 2000). This is important to the study of close adult relationships because these

early attachments are the basis for attachment styles which persist into adulthood and therefore subsequently affect adult relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). Specifically, it was found that securely attached adults felt more trust toward their partners and utilized more constructive coping strategies when trust was violated (Mikulincer, 1998). Mikulincer concluded that theoretically the findings imply, “that working models are closely related to the way people construe and process trust-related memories, experiences goals, and coping strategies” (Mikulincer, 1998, p. 1219). Another study revealed that securely attached partners reported fewer maladaptive attributions than insecure people (Sumer & Cozzarelli, 2004). The results of this study suggested that securely attached individuals may have a less negative or a more forgiving mental representation of their partners than do insecurely attached individuals. The authors summarized the findings by saying,

a positive model of self that may have been attained via early attachment experiences with responsive caregivers appears to promote a tendency to perceive relationship events in an adaptive fashion. In contrast, a negative model of self appears to predispose individuals to make maladaptive attributions by creating a tendency for a negative interpretive bias. (Sumer & Cozzarelli, 2004, p. 366)

Overall, this study suggested that our internal objects, mental representations, or working models provide a major source of information when we interact with and react to our partners. Finally, Kobak and Hazan (1991) demonstrated that not just attachment security was related to higher reports of marital adjustment but also the accuracy of a spouse’s working model of their partner was related to better communication, conflict resolution, and marital adjustment.

Object relations theory describes how internal representations of close others are formed and how much of our reactions to and interactions with close others is guided by

these internal objects. This concept is much like mental representations or working models found in attachment theory. These concepts are critical to understanding close relationships because they have been demonstrated to impact our relationships through the life course and because they form the lenses through which we view and interpret our close others in adult romantic relationships. In essence, we interact almost as much with the close other in our mind as we do with the close other in the environment. Thus, if our internal reality has been skewed or distorted as a result of inconsistent early care giving our capacity to form healthy bonded relationships is diminished.

Feeling trusted and trusting your partner is bonding

Feeling trusted and trusting a partner increases the relational bond (Van Epp, 1997). Trust is defined as the degree of positive cognitive and affective attributions persons hold in their mental representations of another (Couch & Jones, 1997; Rempel, et al., 1985; Van Epp). Trust has long been viewed as an integral aspect to romantic relationships and has been related to feelings of love and the intimacy of self-disclosures between married partners (Larzelere & Huston, 1980). As a person gets to know another, he/she constructs a mental profile of that person. Initially, stereotypes, associations and ideals are used to “fill in the gaps” of what is assumed to be true about the person (Van Epp). As time allows for more interactions and experiences, the mental profile is adjusted to reflect the deeper knowledge gained about the other person. This interaction of investing trust in one another perpetuates the relational bond in close relationships.

Little research has been done on the bonding aspects of trust, but the importance of trust in close relationships has been echoed in numerous research articles (Fehr, 1988, 2006; Harvey & Omarzu, 1997; Maxwell, 1985; Feeney, 2005; Larzelere & Huston,

1988). One example is demonstrated through the research on marital infidelities. Zitzman and Butler (2009) found that when wives perceived a breach in trust, because their husbands viewed pornography, they experienced a global mistrust toward their husbands and a breakdown in overall attachment to their husbands. This study demonstrated how trust contributes to an overall feeling of attachment and love for a partner, and subsequently when trust is broken the overall relationship suffers. Additionally, Fehr and Sprecher (2009) conducted a prototype analysis of compassionate love over six studies in both the United States and Canada and concluded that some features of compassionate love were mentioned consistently across all six studies, one being trust.

As a person knows another they develop mental representations of how this person is in specific situations, resulting in a sense of trust in that individual. This developed sense of trust allows individuals to rely on others to meet certain degrees of needs and to be relied upon.

Rely

Relying on another and being relied upon increases the relational bond (Van Epp, 1997). Reliance can also be referred to as mutual need fulfillment and is a common theme throughout theories of close relationships. For example, Reiss (1960) described mutual need fulfillment as a necessary ingredient in the maintenance of close relationships and need fulfillment is at the heart of attachment theory. The RAM presents rely as the third dynamic bond that contributes to the relational bond in close relationships. Reliance is defined as meeting another's needs, being dependable, and being able to depend upon others. Examples of needs in relationships include: mental

stimulation, affection and nurturing, sex, recreational and entertainment, emotional, social activities, support, spiritual, and companionship (Van Epp). According to Van Epp, relying and the capacity to rely on others comes from a particular system of self referred to as the *emotional self*. The next section will outline the two psychological theories that best capture the emotional self and how it relates to the formation of close relationships. Finally, the second section will outline how relying on others and being relied upon produces feelings of closeness in relationships.

The Emotional Self

Feeling relied upon and relying upon another is the third dynamic bond that is important in close relationships (Van Epp, 1997). Reliance is defined as meeting another's needs and being dependable and being able to depend upon others (Van Epp). The capacity for an individual to rely upon others and be relied upon comes from a third system of self: the emotional self. Two theories best capture reliance. The first theory is attachment theory. Mental representations, which flow from attachment theory, were discussed in terms of trust and the mental system of self; however the emotional and mental systems are not separate. Attachment styles develop from the mental representations individuals form based on how well their needs were met by their early care givers. Thus, mental representations are the cognitive schema individuals develop about close relationships and attachment styles are the emotional patterns of exchanges of reliance individuals practice in their relationships (Van Epp). For example, an anxiously attached individual has different emotional needs than a securely attached person as well as has a different capacity to meet other's needs. Specifically, an anxiously attached person *feels* more anxious about being abandoned or unloved but is somewhat

comfortable with closeness and trusting other's dependability, an avoidant attachment style *feels* uncomfortable with closeness and is untrusting of other's dependability, while a secure individual *feels* comfortable with closeness and being able to depend on others (Chongruska, 1994; Collins & Read, 1990; Garbarino, 1998; Hazan and Shaver, 1987). These feelings stem from the mental representations of others and guide emotional exchanges in close relationships.

A second theory that depicts exchanges in relationships is Social Exchange Theory (Thaibaut & W3, 1959). Social exchange theory takes a more economical and logical approach to explaining relational exchanges or mutual need fulfillment. Social exchange theory incorporates the constructs of rewards and costs. The more rewards one feels in their relationship the more attractive the relationship appears. The more costs one experiences, the less attractive the relationship becomes. Rewards in a marital relationship were organized by Levinger (1976) into three categories: material, symbolic, and affectional. Material rewards may include things such as: financial security, home ownership, or a particular lifestyle. Symbolic rewards may include educational attainment or occupational status (Knoester & Booth, 2000). Finally, affectional rewards include things such as: sexual fulfillment, friendship, and companionship. The costs in a relationship may include more extreme costs such as abuse or physical harm to costs associated with more responsibility (Levinger).

Social exchange theory describes the maintenance and decay of relationships in terms of the balance between the rewards that partners obtain and the costs they incur by entering into their marital relationship (Nakonezny & Denton, 2008). This mutual need fulfillment and maintenance, or lack thereof, in the relationship has the capacity to impact

the overall relational bond. Nakonezny and Denton (2008) argue that “this axiom of social exchange theory suggests that when profits (rewards minus costs) from marital exchange are perceived as equitable, there tends to be a development of solidarity within the marital relationship” (p. 404). When this marital solidarity is not maintained, individuals feel a sense of detachment and the marital commitment unravels (Altman & Taylor, 1973). Nakonezny and Denton (2008) describe how the breakdown of mutual exchanges between partners impacts marital relationships:

interpersonal exchange within the marriage becomes less interdependent; there is less mutual involvement; there is less mutual identification; there is less liking; there is less shared level of compatibility; there is less solidarity; and there is progressive withdrawal of love and affection, and the centering of affect on the self and an expanded egocentrism. (p. 406)

Social exchange theory provides a second theory for understanding the bonding dynamic; reliance. Social exchange theory explains how the maintenance of mutual exchanges or meeting another’s needs has the potential to either enhance or diminish the relational bond in close relationships.

Feeling relied upon and relying upon your partner is bonding

The third dynamic bond: the ability to rely and be relied upon by another contributes to the relational bond. This dynamic is most clearly explained as mutual need fulfillment and is consistent with Reiss’s (1960) personality need fulfillment component and Moss and Schwebel’s (2003) notion of mutuality which are both characterized as elements that precipitate intimacy between partners. Le and Agnew (2001) argued that within the context of close interpersonal relationships, some of the most important

outcomes are those related to need fulfillment and that need fulfillment is closely linked to emotional experiences within the relationship.

The relational bond grows as specific needs are met. The reciprocity of need fulfillment results in a deeper experience of intimacy than unidirectional need fulfillment. A study by Utne, Hatfield, Traupmann and Greenbeger (1984) on equity within relationships and marital satisfaction, found that when individuals participated in inequitable relationships, they became distressed. The more inequitable the relationship, the more distress they felt.

Reliance is defined as mutual need fulfillment. As a person knows another they develop mental representations of how this person is in specific situations, resulting in a sense of trust in that individual. This developed sense of trust allows individuals to rely on others to meet certain degrees of needs and to be relied upon. By mutually meeting each others' needs, the relational bond is nurtured. This bond is developed out of the interactions between knowing an individual, trusting them, and relying on them to meet specific needs.

Commitment

Committing to another and having that commitment reciprocated enhances the relational bond (Van Epp, 1997). The construct of commitment is commonly associated with theories and conceptualizations of love (Fehr, 1988, 2006; Sternberg, 1997); however the explicit mention of commitment is virtually absent from theories of intimacy and attachment. The power of commitment is critical to understanding close relationships and remaining in a relationship even when it proves difficult (Adams & Jones, 1997; Johnson, 1973). Therefore commitment is the fourth dynamic bond in the

RAM. According to Van Epp, commitment is defined as the degree of belonging to each other in a relationship and practicing the presence of another even in his/her absence.

The capacity to practice commitment in relationships is argued to come from the *volitional self* (Van Epp). This system of self describes an individual's capacity to enact commitment and restraint. The next two sections will explore commitment more deeply. First, the volitional self will be explained to provide an understanding of how the RAM incorporates psychological theory to explain individual differences in the capacity to practice commitment. Second, research will be summarized that describes how being committed and committing to another enhances the relational bond.

The Volitional Self.

Feeling committed to and committing is the fourth dynamic bond that is important to the development and maintenance of close relationships (Van Epp, 1997). The capacity for one to form and maintain commitments is best described as the volitional system of self. One of the first writers on volition was Alexander Bain who authored *The Emotions and the Will* (1859). He argued that the antecedent to every volition is a feeling and that our conduct is ruled primarily by the operation of our will (Bain, 1859). Bain's work paved the way for Wilhelm Wundt's writings on volition and will. Wundt described individuals as being comprised of feelings, thoughts, and will, where the will is stated as the active power that sustains the other elements (Wundt, 1892). Wundt (1892) argued that humans possess a freedom of the will and that we are able to make a reflective choice between different actions. Will and volition are called many things throughout the literature such as motivation and self-control (Baumeister, Vohs, & Tice, 2007; Vohs & Baumeister, 2009). Numerous research studies have been conducted on

topics related to volition, motivation, and will, and include reaction time experiments, which Wundt developed. The research on these topics suggests that there are individual differences in people's capacity for enforcing self-control (Hofmann, Gschwendner, Friese, Wiers, & Schmitt, 2008; Kuhl, 2008). This is because exerting self-control requires mental energy and results in some degree of short-term ego depletion and some individuals may not have as much working memory capacity as others, thus they are more depleted when required to exercise self-control (Baumeister, Vohs, & Tice; Hoffman, et al.). This research is significant to close relationships because if there are individual differences in the execution of self-control, this would suggest that people have different capacities to form and maintain commitments because commitments inherently require exercising self-control; the most obvious example is sexual impulses, which have been shown to deplete self-regulatory resources (Baumeister, Vohs, & Tice, 2007).

Research has also found that self-control is associated with psychological adjustment, better grades, less drug and alcohol use, better emotional responses, less binge eating, better interpersonal relationships, better social skills, and secure attachment styles (Tangney, Baumeister, & Boone, 2004). However exercising self-control is not the only act that results in energy-depletion; effortful decision making and active responding have also been shown to deplete mental resources (Vohs & Baumeister, 2007).

Baumeister, Vohs, and Tice (2007) argued that these examples "correspond to what laypersons understand as "free will," namely the ability to override impulses, behave morally, show initiative, and behave according to rational choices" (p. 354).

Feeling Your Partner is Committed and Feeling Committed to Your Partner is Bonding

The fourth dynamic bond is commitment and is consistent with Sternberg's commitment /decision making component (Van Epp, 2007). Relationship researchers agree that commitment is a central component of romantic relationships (Duemmler & Kobak, 2001). It has been argued that three types of commitment exist: personal commitment or the sense of wanting to stay in a relationship, moral commitment or feeling morally obligated to stay and structural commitment or feeling constrained to stay regardless of personal or moral commitment (Johnson, Caughlin, & Huston, 1999). These three types of commitment or motivations to stay committed were supported by the findings of Fennell (1987) who asked couples married over 20 years to describe their reasons as to why they are still married. Regardless of which type, commitment creates a feeling of connectedness with another by arousing feelings of "my partner belongs to me" and "I belong to my partner."

The concept of commitment was examined in numerous studies. Beverly Fehr (1999) examined laypeople's conceptions of commitment using a prototype analysis and generated 419 different types of commitment of which 182 were idiosyncratic. She also found that participants who held a relational conception of commitment had more positive relationship outcomes. Also, in relationship-driven commitments, commitment evolved smoothly and with few reversals (Surra & Hughes, 1997). In addition, shifting into more committed relationships has been shown to be followed by improvements in subjective well-being (Kamp Dush & Amato, 2005). According to Harvey and Omarzu (1997) bonding is defined by public commitment or acts serves as an indication that individuals have formed a close relationship. In a study on the level of commitment in

relationships and the tendency to express complaints, Roloff and Solomon (2002) found that relational commitment is positively related to willingness to confront a partner, which is indicative of the desire to work through minor or major issues within the relationship. Some researchers even define love and commitment as one and the same (Money, 1980; Forgas & Dobosz, 1980).

Commitment contributes to the relational bond. Beach and Tesser (1988) found that the more commitment a person feels toward another, the more he/she will focus cognitive and affective attention toward that individual. Additionally, it has been shown that a person feels and thinks more positively toward another once a decision to commit is made (Brehm & Cohen, 1962).

Commitment is defined as a sense of belonging to another and having another belong to you and is characterized by behavior consistent with this commitment. Knowing another and being known increases the relational bond and develops into an expectation of and confidence in another, resulting in some level of trust. This developed trust allows an individual to rely on another to meet his/her needs and to be reliable to another. This dependence creates intimacy within a relationship. This sense of intimacy leads to a feeling of belonging to another and another belonging to you. This feeling is often expressed in commitments to another with this feeling of commitment fueling the motivation to make sacrifices and to exercise self-control. This commitment to another and his/her commitment in return increases the relational bond. This relational bond is developed out of the interactions between knowing, trusting, relying, and committing to another and having these dynamics returned.

Touch/Sex

Physical touch and expression increases the relational bond. Physical expression is a common theme in the theories reviewed throughout this chapter. For example, passion was a major component in Sternberg's (1986) theory of love, physical intimacy was a subscale in the PAIR (Schaefer & Olson, 1981), and a criticism of attachment theory was its lack of integration of sexual behavior (Fraley & Shaver, 2000). The RAM includes physical touch as its fifth dynamic bond (Van Epp, 1997). All ranges of physical expression are considered aspects of the dynamic touch. Even in casual friendships, touch may be present in the form of a handshake or a hug and in serious relationships touch may be indicative of more intimate behaviors such as kissing or intercourse. Touch also plays a major role in the development and experience of safety early in life and is argued to contribute to the understanding of the *sexual self* (Van Epp). The next two sections will explore two aspects of touch. First, the sexual self will be explored and psychological concepts and theory that explain the importance of physical touch early in life will be reviewed. Finally, research on how physical touch increases the relational bond will be explored.

The Sexual Self

Sexual involvement, labeled as *touch*, in the RAM (Van Epp, 1997) is the fifth dynamic bond that is important in close relationships. This dynamic originates from the notion that humans are sexual beings. Being a sexual being encompasses more than just the physical act of intercourse but extends further back to early experiences and the importance of touch in development. Harry Harlow was one of the first to examine the importance of touch and development in his series of experiments between 1957 and

1963. Harlow (1962) examined how rhesus monkeys reacted when raised with either a terry cloth or wire mother, some providing food to the monkeys and some not. Harlow found that the young monkeys clung to the terry cloth mother whether or not she provided food, but only chose the wire monkey if she provided food. Whenever something frightening was brought into the cage, the baby monkey would cling to the cloth mother. In another experiment the monkeys were separated from their cloth mothers for several days and when reunited, the baby monkeys clung to the cloth mother as opposed to exploring their environment. In contrast, the monkeys that were raised by wire mothers had difficulty digesting food and suffered from frequent digestive issues. Harlow concluded that contact comfort, or touch, is critical to the formation of a parent-child bond and that a lack of this contact is psychologically stressful. He also found that monkeys who were raised in complete social deprivation were severely psychologically disturbed. Harlow attempted to rehabilitate these isolated monkeys with very limited success and found that they had severe deficits in all social behaviors.

This early research is critical to the understanding of touch in close relationships. Touch, early in life, provides a sense of safety, security, and love. Touch, later in life, also represents safety, security, and love and plays a critical part in close romantic relationships. As the Harlow (1962) experiments demonstrated, early experiences with touch, or contact comfort, shape us socially and psychologically which has implications for an individual's capacity to form and maintain healthy close relationships.

Sex is Bonding

Engaging in touch or a sexual relationship with a partner, is the fifth dynamic bond of the RAM (Van Epp, 1997). Sexual interactions are an attachment provoking

dynamic that intensifies the feeling of intimacy between individuals. “Physical contact is the most direct form of closeness. Lovers usually enjoy physical contact and it, in turn, intensifies their experience of closeness” (Birtchnell, 1993). According to Freud (1951), the desire for sexual union is at the core of emotion. Intimacy is often equated with sexual involvement in the literature—the greater the sexual involvement, the more intimacy. In an attempt to define intimacy, Moss and Schwebel (1993) proposed five components, one being physical intimacy. Physical intimacy refers to the extent of shared physical encounters as well as to the physiological arousal state experience toward the partner at each level of the physical encounter. This dynamic involves everything from extended gazing to uninhibited sexual intercourse.

“Sexuality is woven into the fabric of close relationships” (Christopher & Sprecher, 2001, pg. 218). For instance Baxter and Bullis (1986) reported that first intercourse with a partner was perceived as an experience that increased commitment to a partner. No matter to what degree or intensity, sexual intimacy is an interaction that produces feelings of closeness and will have a powerful effect on the relationship.

Sex in romantic relationships is critical to overall satisfaction. Research has consistently found that the frequency of sex in romantic relationships is positively correlated to sexual satisfaction and overall relationships quality (Sprecher & Cate, 2004). However, the sexual relationship does not exist in isolation. Nonsexual aspects of a relationship also influence sexual satisfaction and the frequency of sex in relationships. For example, the quality of communication, the amount of self-disclosure, perceived empathy provided by a partner, feeling loved, feeling emotionally close, and being overall satisfied with the relationship are all related to higher levels of sexual satisfaction

(Davidson & Darling, 1988; MacNeil & Byers, 1997; Sprecher & McKinney, 1993; Young, Denny, Young, & Luquis, 2000). Additionally, lower sexual frequency and satisfaction are associated with higher rates of divorce (Yabiju & Gager, 2009).

Sex contributes to the relational bond and feelings of love, security, and intimacy in relationships. Sex also has the capacity to create distance and relationship dissatisfaction. Sex in marital relationships is closely intertwined with other nonsexual aspects of the relationship such as feelings of love for a partner, communication within the relationship, and emotional closeness.

The five dynamic bonds of the RAM: know, trust, rely, commit, and touch were reviewed in this section. The way that each dynamic bond relates to major psychological theories and concepts was explored. Finally, the research on how each dynamic bond contributes to the relational bond was delineated. The next section will provide an overview of the RAM and how the dynamic bonds work together to create a picture of closeness in relationships. Specifically, four propositions of the RAM will be described and the utility of the RAM with couples will be explored. Finally, this section will provide an outline of the current research study.

An overview of the Relationship Attachment Model (RAM)

The Relationship Attachment Model (RAM; Van Epp, 1997) is currently used as a framework for two relationship education programs: PICK (Premarital Interpersonal Choices and Knowledge) and LINKS (Lasting Intimacy Nurturing Knowledge and Skills). The programs are for single individuals and couples, respectively, and are designed to develop and maintain healthy and close relationships. These two programs, based on the RAM, have been used in prisons, with the United States Army, Navy, and

Air Force, in churches, social service agencies, universities, and school systems. While this model has served as the organizational framework for these two programs, its utility extends beyond these programmatic applications. The RAM has research and clinical utility which will be explored further throughout this dissertation.

A primary strength of the RAM is its outward simplicity. Although the RAM is a conceptual model that integrates major psychological theories and extensive social and psychological research, to a layperson the model can be understood with little to no explanation beyond the presentation of a picture. Thus, the RAM has intuitive meaning “as is” without much explanation or exploration and can be personalized to reflect the strengths and weaknesses of a specific relationship because the five dynamic bonds can be moved into constellations that represent different relationship connections.

First, this section will provide an overview of the underlying propositions of the RAM. Next, this section will discuss the utility of the RAM specifically for couples. Finally, this section will outline the current study.

Propositions of the RAM

As stated in my previous literature review, defining nebulous concepts such as love, closeness, intimacy, and attachment can be difficult at best; yet the first proposition of the RAM is that relationships in general, and romantic relationships specifically (as this is the topic of this dissertation) are comprised of five major dynamic bonds (Van Epp, 1997). These five dynamic bonds are the extent to which you and another person know each other, trust each other, depend on each other, have a commitment to each other, and have attractions and expressions of touch.

These five independent dynamic bonds are visualized in the RAM as five sliders similar to the face of a stereo or graphic equalizer. These bonds have ranges of strength—higher levels of the dynamic bonds indicate higher degrees of development or strength of that specific bond. For instance, if someone rated his or her trust close to the top then it would indicate that he/she has a strong trust in the other person which would also naturally contribute a more intense degree of closeness or bond. On the other hand, if trust was rated to be low then this would represent less amounts of trust with a correspondingly lower level of closeness from that specific dynamic bond. This is true for all five dynamic bonds of the RAM: getting to know someone, trusting someone, relying on someone, becoming committed to someone, and having chemistry, attraction and/or engaging in touch—all five dynamic bonds have a range of connection and closeness in a relationship.

In addition, each of these five dynamic bonds is an independent contribution to the overall experience of intimacy in a relationship: referred to as the relational bond. Although it is impossible to completely isolate just one of the dynamic bonds, there are some experiences which come close. For instance, it is common for a person to feel a “bond” with someone who rescues them during a life-threatening crisis. Even though they did not know each other, trust each other, or have any previous relationship, the experience of a heightened dependency or reliance (the third dynamic bond of the RAM) on the rescuer creates a feeling of connection within the survivor. This is evident in documentaries of reunions between rescuers and survivors as in the case of the 9/11 attack (*Inside 9/11* The National Geographic Channel, 2010). Even though the survivors

did not have any previous relationship with the rescuers, there are often strong emotions and expressions of intimacy.

Another example of how an increased level of just one of the five dynamic bonds can result in greater feelings of intimacy occurs with an increase in the amount of self-disclosure (e.g. an increase in the level of the first dynamic bond, know). The correlation between an increase in self-disclosure and the increase in feelings of closeness has been clearly supported in the literature (Berscheid, et al., 1989; McAdams, 1988; Reiss, 1960). For instance, one may encounter a stranger where their initial relationship is characterized by all of the five bonds of the RAM at the lowest level resulting in minimal feelings of intimacy. And yet if this person strikes up a conversation and confides that she is on her way to a funeral, this disclosure increases the level of knowing this person with a corresponding increase in the sense of intimacy. Therefore, this first proposition purports that the RAM represents the ranges of five dynamic bonds, each of which provides a contribution to the overall relationship bond in a romantic relationship.

The second proposition of the RAM asserts that these five dynamic bonds exist in all relationships because they represent the relational aspects of five universal systems of an individual: the sensory system, the mental system, the emotional system, the volitional system, and the sexual system. Each system is a neuro-psychological cluster of related functions of the self. These five systems are identified throughout psychological and social science theory and research, as well as within the terminology of most common vernacular (e.g. awareness, mental, emotional, willful, and sexual). These five systems of the self are similar to the way that the biology of the human body is described. There are various independent yet interacting systems in the body: the pulmonary system, the

cardio-vascular system, the nervous system, the skeletal system, etc. Although the body is a single organism, each of these systems is a cluster of related functions that provides unique contributions to the overall health and functioning of the body.

In the same way, the self is a single entity that has various neuro-psychological systems which are independent yet interacting and provide unique contributions to the overall health and functioning of an individual. In addition, each of these systems contributes a unique aspect of relational connection in human interactions. The sensory system provides the ability to be aware of others, resulting in some level or degree of knowing another. The mental system organizes into cognitive schemas and representations that which has been experienced from the sensory system, resulting in beliefs about others that form levels of trust (or mistrust). The emotional system provides a dynamic array of feelings and needs which result in human exchanges that form various dependencies. The volitional system provides motivation, desires, and willfulness that result in relationship investments and commitments. And finally, the sexual system provides the self with affectionate, sexual, and tactile needs, drives and desires that result in attractions, and affectionate and sexual interactions. Thus, the second proposition of the RAM asserts that each of the five dynamic bonds which create the overall intimacy in relationships emanate from five major systems of the self.

The third proposition asserts that each dynamic bond of the RAM has a reciprocal nature within relationships: there is an extent to which you know someone and also are known by that person; there is an extent that you trust someone and are trusted; rely on someone and are relied upon; commit yourself to another and have that person commit him/herself to you; be attracted to another and have that person attracted to you. The

RAM, therefore represents each person's contributions of the five dynamic bonds to the overall relationship bond within a relationship. The composite measure of the relationship bond must factor in the reciprocal nature of all five bonds.

However, individuals are likely to perceive their relationship somewhat differently and consequently portray their relationship with the RAM accordingly. Relationships are a sum of the complex contributions and interactions of each individual within that particular relationship, creating actual and perceived differences. In other words, differences in both the actual contributions of the five bonds and the perception of these five bonds will most likely result in differences between how each person within a relationship characterizes their relationship with the RAM.

For instance, a wife may want her husband to help more with household tasks and rate the reliance in their relationship in the midrange. On the other hand, her husband may rate reliance high because he is satisfied with the ways that he can depend on his wife and what he believes he does for her. Even though there would be two RAM profiles of the relationship (his and hers), these differences would correlate with individual measures of closeness and relationship satisfaction. In other words, you would expect the wife to rate her satisfaction and relational bond in the marriage a bit lower as a result of her perceived lower level of reliance. And all things being equal, you would also expect the husband to rate the reliance within the marriage higher as well as his overall satisfaction and relational bond.

The fourth proposition of the RAM asserts that the five dynamic bonds interact in ways to create different relationship profiles. Even though each bond is distinct and independent from the others, any change or fluctuation in one bond will naturally impact

the functioning of the others. As described in the second proposition, the five bonds are the relational characteristics of five major systems of the self. Therefore, just as one system of the self will naturally affect the other systems of the self, so one relationship bond will affect the others.

The specific effect one bond has on the others is not automatic, but rather subjective. However, there are common patterns which frequently occur when one of the dynamic bonds increases or decreases in intensity. For example, a broken trust often leads to lowered levels of reliance, commitment, and sexual attraction. On the other hand, an increase in trust (or belief in another) tends to lead to an increase in reliance, commitment and sexual interest. In a similar way, an increase in reliance could occur when a partner “comes through for you” or “surprisingly meets your needs.” In this case, it would be common for the trust or belief in that partner to increase along with the other bonds.

However, some “unhealthy” relationships are not so intuitive. The classic co-dependent relationship might have high levels of reliance with low levels of trust, while the “rose-colored glasses” relationship may have high levels of trust with low levels of reliance. It is the imbalances of these relationships which often increase the experience of risk or vulnerability. But in all of these various “relationship profiles” it remains true that an alteration in one dynamic bond will have some effect on the others.

Vulnerabilities in relationships can be identified by different combinations of high and low dynamics. One example of this is evident among military couples who experience the separation of deployment. The RAM forms the skeletal framework for the LINKS relationship course for couples. This course is widely taught in military settings

and has applications specific for couples dealing with the effects of deployment. When asked to move the sliders on the RAM to represent the experience of being separated during a deployment, couples readily show that the know, rely and touch sliders automatically go down (although the rely goes up for the deployed partner and down for the stay-at-home partner). The trust and commitment bonds are not necessarily lowered; however, they are always tested by the lowered levels of the other three. In other words, the lowered knowing, relying, and sexual relationship interacts with the trust in one's partner and increases vulnerability to doubt, and interacts with one's commitment by increasing one's vulnerability to unfaithful thoughts and behavior. Military couples talk frequently about their struggles with real or imagined mistrust, and the importance of "guarding" their commitment during deployments.

The example of deployments is similar to the many life experiences which can impact one of the bonds of the RAM and consequently interact with the other bonds to reconfigure the profile of a relationship. This is not always an indication of a wrong doing or even something deemed bad. In fact, the celebration of a new baby can also disrupt the levels of one or more of the bonds in the RAM, interacting with the remaining bonds and altering the overall closeness a couple feels in their relationship (e.g. the sexual relationship may lower interacting with the other areas to result in a feeling of being distanced or out of touch with each other). Over the course of years in marriage, one would expect numerous life events to impact the levels of the five dynamic bonds, and that the "successful" couple would have worked to strengthen the levels whenever they were lowered.

Four propositions of the Relationship Attachment Model have been delineated. The first proposition asserted that the RAM visually portrays the ranges of the five dynamic bonds in relationships. The second proposition stated that these five dynamic bonds exist in all relationships because they represent the relational aspects of five universal systems of an individual. The third proposition asserted that each dynamic bond of the RAM has a reciprocal nature within relationships. And the fourth proposition explained that the five dynamic bonds interact in ways to create different relationship profiles.

The next section of this chapter will explore the clinical and research utility of the RAM. Finally, an outline the current research study will be given.

The Utility of the RAM for Couples

The Relationship Attachment Model provides a picture of the relational bond in a relationship (Van Epp, 1997). The RAM is comprised of five dynamic bonds: know, trust, rely, commit, and touch. When the levels of these dynamic bonds are high, feelings of love and closeness are maximized.

Maximizing feelings of love and closeness is important for the health and longevity of close relationships. For example, the research on happy, long-term marriages shows that couples often report friendship, love, intimacy, and commitment as the reasons for their marriage's success (Bachand & Caron, 2001; Robinson & Blanton, 1993). Additionally, in a recollection of events preceding marriage, the most mentioned reason for marriage was love (Holmberg, Orbuch, & Veroff, 2004; Ponzetti, 2005). Love was also an important aspect in differentiating between distressed and non-distressed couples. In a comparison of couples in therapy and couples not in therapy, love was the

single most important variable related to the couples' overall well-being (Riehl-Emede, Thomas, & Willi, 2003). Furthermore, the couple's assessment of love was the first and foremost variable for predicting whether a couple belonged to the group with high or low well-being: greater love was associated with greater well-being. Among members of both samples, love was referenced as their pre-eminent reason for staying together (Riehl-Emede, et al.).

In relationships, feelings of love are critical to the decision to stay committed. However, fluctuations in the relational bond or feeling of love are normal in marital relationships. These fluctuations can occur due to life transitions, normal day to day stressors, marital infidelities, busy work schedules, children, job loss, and death of a loved one, and more, yet these fluctuations do not need to permanently stifle feelings of love in marital relationships (Ahlborg, Rudeblad, Linner, & Linton, 2008; Belsky, Lang, & Rovine, 1985; Doohan, Carrere, Siler, & Beardslee, 2009; Millner, 2008; Orbuch, House, Mero, & Webster, 1996; Van Epp, 1997). Contrary to popular belief, persevering through fluctuations in love feelings, marital conflicts, and normal stressors is related to more marital satisfaction over time (Bodenmann, Ledermann, & Bradbury, 2007; Finchman, 2003; Story & Bradbury, 2004). Additionally, protecting the relational bond has been argued to be the most important area of a marital relationship to preserve (Worthington, 2005).

The RAM is a picture of the relational bond. Research suggests the relational bond, or feeling of love and intimacy is important in helping couples survive the normal fluctuations of love and bondedness throughout marriage. The RAM provides a simple picture that can help to give couples a visual of their bond. Often times marital struggles

are difficult to describe in words, particularly because of the deep emotions involved in the struggles, thus a dynamic picture of the bond may prove useful in counseling couples.

In particular, the dynamic pictorial of the RAM allows couples and individuals within the dyad to operationalize their bond. This would provide the couple and/or individual with the language to discuss their marital difficulties and a visual representation of deficits in their relationship. The RAM would also prove useful in therapy because clinicians could ask clients to move the five dynamic bonds of the RAM to portray their overall relationship at the beginning of counseling and track progress throughout counseling by having the clients repeat this procedure periodically. Specifically, progress could be tracked each session, at the beginning of counseling, and then later at termination.

Culture and the RAM

The relationship education programs based on the Relationship Attachment Model have been translated into Spanish and Mandarin and have been used among Spanish and Chinese speaking individuals. Additionally, the relationship education programs have been adopted by the government in Singapore, a predominantly Chinese population. However it is unknown as to whether the Relationship Attachment Model applies to or resonates with individuals of other cultures because this issue has not been empirically examined and because the majority of research on marriage is conducted on Western marriages of choice (Madathil & Benshoff, 2008). This study does not explicitly seek to answer this unknown; however the importance of cultural differences in the understanding of the RAM and its dynamic bonds cannot go unmentioned. Because the cultural differences in understanding the RAM and the applicability of the RAM have

not been evaluated, only suggestions as to how different cultures may view these concepts can be expressed.

The way the RAM and the dynamic bonds that comprise the RAM are perceived among individuals of different cultures may vary. First, it is possible that the RAM may not resonate at all with someone of a different cultural background or worldview. While in the literature vernacular terms such as love, intimacy, trust, commitment, reliance, and commitment are assumed to be universally understood terms, it is quite likely that these concepts are not at all universal. This is especially possible considering there is very little research on the marriages of and on these concepts with ethnically diverse populations (Madathil & Benschhoff, 2008). Secondly, the five dynamic bonds of the RAM may be concepts someone of another culture acknowledges; however the importance or priority placed on these dynamic bonds may not be represented accurately by the RAM. Also, the conceptualization or role of the five dynamic bonds may be different in other cultures or different based on others' worldview. For example, the importance placed on "chemistry" or "intimacy" was discussed by unmarried 22-29 year olds in India who are set to have either arranged or self-selected marriages. These individuals placed importance on intimacy and chemistry but felt that in arranged marriages the progression and development of intimacy would occur after commitment (Netting, 2010). While this finding is not completely different from what the RAM asserts, the understanding of the dynamic bonds *touch* and *commitment* may be developed and valued differently. Another example is the role of sex among collectivist cultures. The literature has suggested that the role of sex among collectivist cultures is prioritized differently than among individualistic cultures. Specifically, collectivist

cultures view sex as an existential responsibility toward the preservation of the human species (Smith & Montilla, 2010). The second function is connected to pleasure and the third function of sex is relational (Smith & Montilla). This is another example of how the conceptualization of the dynamic bonds of the RAM may differ depending on differences in cultural and worldview.

The lack of research on love, marriage, and its related constructs among ethnically diverse populations is a concern and an area that warrants significant further study. Additionally, future research on the RAM should explore its applicability with ethnically diverse populations.

The Current Study

There are few practical tools for couples or therapists to use to understand, assess, and address love feelings. The theories of love, intimacy and closeness, and attachment have made progress toward defining and measuring the complex feelings of love and bondedness within relationships; however these theories have yet to be integrated and translated into usable tools to either help couples maintain the love feelings in a relationship or help therapists address the difficult issue of identifying and treating the loss of love feelings in marital and close relationships. A comprehensive model, the Relationship Attachment Model (RAM), may provide therapists and couples with a practical approach to understanding, assessing, and treating love feelings. However, the RAM has yet to be empirically studied. Therefore this research study seeks to provide the first empirical exploration of the RAM and its theoretical underpinnings through deductive qualitative analysis (DQA; Gilgun, 2010). The general research question that

will be examined in this study is as follows: do the five bonding dynamics of the RAM exist as contributions to feelings of love and closeness in marital relationships?

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study set out to explore the theoretical correctness of the Relationship Attachment Model (RAM). Specifically, the purpose of the study was to understand the relational processes of married individuals in order to better realize the bonding dynamics that occur in their marital relationships. The research design was qualitative, used deductive qualitative analysis (DQA; Gilgun, 2005) and a deductive and inductive analytic procedure.

Research Questions

The central question this dissertation aimed to answer was, “do the five bonding dynamics of the RAM exist as contributions to feelings of love and closeness in marital relationships?”. In other words, what bonding dynamics occur in marital relationships?

This study also addressed the following research sub-questions:

1. Does an experience of vulnerability/dissatisfaction in the marital relationship or changes/stressors in life events affect the overall relational bond?
2. How do married individuals define and experience love?

Quantitative Versus Qualitative Approaches to Research

Quantitative and qualitative research differ in several significant ways. Generally speaking, quantitative research assumes that there is an objective reality that is tangible and can be identified and measured from an outsider's perspective (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Additionally, quantitative research approaches scientific inquiry from an etic perspective, meaning that this perspective ascribes to the belief that there are universal laws and behaviors that transcend culture (Ponterotto, 2005). Quantitative research requires the researcher to be detached from the subject of research in addition to being value-free (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Quantitative research has the goal of prediction, generalizability, and providing causal explanations. Typically, this type of research requires manipulation and control of variables and experimentation (Lincoln & Guba).

Conversely, qualitative research ascribes to the belief that there are multiple realities and that these realities can be constructed. This construction of reality is accomplished through the relationship between the researcher and the subject of research. Qualitative research also takes an emic approach, which refers to the uniqueness of constructs or behaviors to an individual and sociocultural context (Ponterotto, 2005). Thus, qualitative research does not have the purpose of generalizability; rather this form of inquiry is idiographic and asserts that findings are both time and context-bound (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). One of the most distinctive differences between quantitative and qualitative research is the role of the researcher and his/her values. Qualitative research embraces the idea that the researcher is value-bound and is an instrument in the research process (Ponterotto).

The differences in quantitative and qualitative research are important to highlight in the context of the current study especially because theory testing approaches are typically approached quantitatively (Haverkamp & Young, 2007). These reasons for selecting a qualitative approach to this study will be outlined in the next section.

Appropriateness of Qualitative Research for this Study

Qualitative research is recommended for exploring complex human experiences and processes in depth (Morrow, 2007). The decision to utilize a qualitative method may occur for three reasons: the variable of interest in a study is process oriented and difficult to measure, the nature of the research question or purpose of the study deems it appropriate, or the area of focus in a study has little to no previous empirical research (Strauss & Corbin, 2008).

One of the primary reasons a qualitative approach was chosen for this study is because the variables in the Relationship Attachment Model (RAM) are complex, interwoven, and difficult to measure. Because of this it seemed most appropriate to initiate the study of the RAM in a way that will provide a rich and descriptive understanding of the dynamics of relationship bondedness from the subject's point of view or an emic perspective.

The purpose of the study, which was understanding the five dynamic bonds and how they operate in marital relationships, was aptly suited for qualitative inquiry. This approach was deemed more appropriate, considering the study seeks understanding, as opposed to selecting already established inventories of the five dynamic bonds, thus

limiting the understanding of these bonds and the relationships among them to how they have been measured by past researchers.

Finally, the RAM has a history of practical application and empirical investigation as a piece of a whole program; however the theoretical underpinnings of the RAM have yet to be empirically examined. Thus, the qualitative methodology was appropriate for this research study because there is no known empirical research on the theoretical constructs of the RAM.

Research Paradigm

Research paradigms are a set of beliefs that guide research methodology (Morrow, 2007). Different paradigms view the nature of reality, how reality is known, the relationship between the researcher and subject of research, and the role of values in research differently (Morrow). An interpretivist-constructivist research paradigm was utilized in this study.

The interpretivist-constructivist paradigm asserts that there are as many realities as there are participants (plus the investigator) and that reality and the meaning of reality are co-constructed by the participants and the researcher (Morrow). Additionally, this paradigm ascribes to a hermeneutical approach which suggests that meaning must be discovered through deep reflection (Schwandt, 2000). This meaning is reached through the dialogue between the researcher and the participant.

The epistemology, or the relationship between the subject of research and the researcher, is also guided by the selected research paradigm. Interpretivist-constructivists ascribe to a transactional and subjectivist stance. This paradigm asserts that the dynamic

interaction between the researcher and the subject of research is essential to understanding the “lived experience” of the research subject (Ponterotto, 2005).

Finally, the axiology or the role of researcher values, is also determined by the research paradigm. Interpretivist-constructivists maintain that researcher values cannot be separated from the process. Because reality is co-constructed through the dialogue between the researcher and subject of research it is nearly impossible to eliminate value bias in this type of research (Haverkamp & Young, 2007; Ponterotto, 2005). Qualitative researchers using an interpretivist-constructivist paradigm are advised to acknowledge, describe, and bracket their values, however, not to eliminate them (Ponterotto).

Research Design

Qualitative research typically has three categories of purpose: to construct a theory, a practice or evaluation purpose, and an action or change purpose (Haverkamp & Young, 2007). The grounded theory approach to qualitative inquiry is the most common and accepted qualitative method used to develop theories by counseling psychologists; however a grounded theory approach assumes that the theory develops from the data as opposed to guiding the scientific inquiry (Fassinger, 2005). Because this study is guided by a particular theory, the deductive qualitative analysis (DQA) approach was deemed most appropriate.

Deductive qualitative analysis emerged from the Chicago School of Sociology and was originally called analytic induction (Cressey, 1953; Gilgun, 1995) and was used in classic studies by Becker, Geer, Hughes, and Strauss (1961), Cressey (1953), and Lindesmith (1947). The term deductive in DQA is used in reference to Dewey’s (1910) conceptualization of “complete thinking” which involves both induction and deduction

(Gilgun). Deduction is the process of testing hypothesis with the aim of confirming, refuting, and modifying while induction is moving from data to concepts and attempts to reach understanding through open-minded observations, interviews, active listening, and document analysis (Gilgun). Thus analytic induction, now DQA, was intended to move between induction and deduction with the intent of testing and altering theory (Gilgun).

In a practical sense, deductive qualitative analysis is a strategy in which a researcher begins with a preliminary theoretical model and then uses qualitative methods to refine, understand, and/or alter the theoretical model (Gilgun, 2010). The DQA follows a scientific method in that it involves proposing a theory, testing it, and then revising it based on the results (Popper, 1969). Thus, deductive qualitative analysis was appropriate for this study because it allowed the theoretical underpinnings of the RAM to be examined, understood, and refined.

Participants and Sampling Procedures

Upon receiving approval from The University of Akron Institutional Review Board (IRB) in February 2011, I began finding participants for the study. In order to be considered for the study, participants had to be currently married. The choice to interview only participants who were married was made because the majority of the research on the constructs examined in this study was conducted on heterosexual, married individuals or couples. This issue is discussed further in the Future Recommendations section of this dissertation. A homogeneous and convenience sample of 8 individuals, comprised of 4 married couples was used for this study. The participants were homogeneous with regard to geographic location, marital status, religious preference, and sexual orientation. Additionally, the participants were all married over twenty years.

The sample was convenient in that the participants were all members of the same local community. Also, the sample was convenient in that it was achieved through my personal contacts. Three of the four couples knew one another from mutual interests in the community; however the only situation in which a couple was aware that another couple was participating was if the couple was recruited using snowball sampling. More specifically, H1 and W1 did not know anyone in the sample, H4 and W4 contacted H2 and W2 and Couple 2 contacted H3 and W3. No follow-up was reported to the participants regarding whether their attempts to refer participants were successful. If participants were aware of one another's participation it was due to discussions outside of this research study.

Finally, a snowball sampling was used to recruit participants. Snowball sampling is considered a legitimate strategy for finding participants who are good exemplars of the phenomenon under study (Morrow, 2005). After interviews, I asked the participants if they knew of any other individuals or couples who would be interested in participating in the study. This method was helpful in the recruitment of the sample and, as a result, 6 of the 8 participants knew one another through their children's participation in the same sport.

Procedures

Five data collection methods were used in this study: documentation, interviewing, participant summaries, participant checks, and field notes. First, participants in this study were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire at the beginning of the interview (Appendix B). This questionnaire documented information about participant's: age, race/ethnicity, gender, length of marriage, previous marriages,

living situation while growing up, highest level of education, and whether the participant had received marital counseling.

The greater part of the data was gathered through the interview, which was the recommended data collection method of deductive qualitative analysis research (Gilgun, 2010). The interviews were conducted one-on-one with each married individual and varied in length depending on how many follow-up questions were asked and how much each participant elaborated. The interviews were semi-structured to accommodate a flexible interviewing style (Fassinger, 2005). Also the questions were open-ended and response-guided to allow for follow up probes and prompts (Fassinger). The interviews were organized around a thematic question guide (Appendix C). Consistent with the response-guided approach, I began each interview with the same first question and then asked logical follow-up questions to clarify (Murray, 2003). Finally, each interview was tape recorded using a digital tape recording device.

The purpose of the interview was to explore the bonding dynamics that occur in the participants' marriages. The questions used in this interview were guided by the propositions of the RAM delineated in chapter 2 and were developed from an exhaustive review of the literature and my familiarity with the RAM. Very few studies have sought to understand the love process from the perspective of the participant (Fehr, 2006); therefore the first question asked about the participant's falling in love process with his or her spouse. This question was asked first with the intention of gaining an understanding of how the participant defines feelings of love and how love develops. The first question that was asked at each interview was:

I would like you to think back to when you first began dating your future husband/wife. I would like you to focus on how your relationship developed with

your partner. Specifically, how did your relationship develop and when did you know it was love? Please describe, in as much detail as you can remember the falling in love experience with your husband/wife.

Additionally, most studies on love have examined the construct in a way that is static and few studies on fluctuations of love in marriage exist (Riehl-Emede, Thomas, & Willi, 2003; Whisman, Dixon, & Johnson, 1997; Worthington, 2005); thus additional questions explored the participant's feeling of love in his or her marital relationship and how the feelings have fluctuated throughout the course of marriage. Participants were asked to reflect on times where they felt dissatisfied in the marriage and to speak to the events and feelings that led to the overall dissatisfaction. Equally important, participants were asked to discuss times they felt satisfied in their marriage and the events and feelings that led to the overall satisfaction. Participants were prompted talk about what keeps them from leaving their marriage, even in difficult times. These questions were consistent with the propositions of the RAM discussed in chapter 2. Specifically, the questions sought to gather an in depth understanding of the bonds within marriage and whether these bonds are dynamic and contribute to feelings of love and closeness.

Participant summaries (Appendix D) were used as the third form of data collection. The participant summaries were compiled after all of the interview data had been transcribed, coded, and analyzed. Each summary was five pages long and was comprised of several sections. First, the participant summaries outlined the purpose of the research project. Next, the summaries explained what the participants were supposed to look for when reading through their summary, highlighting the researcher's desire to receive feedback regarding how accurately the summary depicted their experiences as well as how misinterpretations or missing information should be corrected. The next

section defined each of the five bonding dynamics asserted by the RAM and provided direct quotes from the participant's interview that were thought to represent that dynamic. The final section provided two examples of times in the participant's marriage when they felt close or distant from their partner and captured these experiences on the RAM. A pictorial as well as written description was provided. These participant summaries were either emailed (after permission to send the information via email was obtained) to participants or were dropped off at the participants' homes by the researcher. Participants were then contacted via phone or email to schedule a time to discuss their reactions to the summaries.

The next form of data collection was the participant checks. To check the accuracy of the interview interpretations, participant checks were conducted through follow-up phone calls with each of the participants after they had read the participant summaries. The participant checks were unstructured. The researcher called each of the participants during a convenient time and prompted them for reactions, feedback, and corrections to the interpretations. If the participants didn't have much feedback the researcher asked more direct questions regarding their results, such as, "was there anything in the summary that seemed to misrepresent your experience in your marriage?" Other follow up questions included: "how did it feel to read the summary?" and "what were your reactions to seeing a particular dynamic in your marriage captured in a pictorial?" Throughout this follow-up phone call, I wrote down direct quotes from the participants regarding their reactions to their interview summaries.

The final method of data collection was the recording of my field notes during and after the interview. These notes served several functions. First, they provided

descriptions and reminders of the interview and logistics of the interview (i.e. location, time, etc). Second, they served as process notes throughout the interview, reminding me when to return to a topic or to clarify an issue. Finally, these notes served as a vehicle for analytic and personal reflection on the study.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began by first listening to the interview recordings following each of the interviews. Each recording was listened to multiple times so that I was able to become immersed in the data. Each interview was transcribed verbatim and read through several times to gain a general sense of the information. Throughout each reading of the transcription, I made notes in the margin and in my field notes regarding general themes or concepts captured by the quotes in the interviews.

Consistent with DQA, a deductive analysis was used in order to allow for the creation of an *a priori* code list that reflected the theoretical constructs that underlie the RAM (Gilgun, 2010). I used the notes made in the margins of the transcriptions to organize the quotations into the *a priori* codes. The deductive codes used in this study were the five dynamic bonds of the RAM: know, trust, rely, commit, and touch. These five dynamic bonds were the preliminary analytic framework that guides this qualitative investigation. The definitions of these five dynamic bonds can be found in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1: RAM Dynamic *a priori* Codes

RAM Dynamic	Definition of <i>a priori</i> code
Know	This indicates how “in the know” one feels with another. Knowing another can involve talking, spending time together, and experiencing diverse activities together. Knowing also includes how well one feels known and knows another and the processes that are required to get to know another, such as mutual self-disclosure, and communication skills
Trust	Indicates how much trust one experiences in a relationship with another and is defined as a positive belief in another, consistency, and overall trustworthiness. Contrary to having a positive belief in another, when trust is broken a bad attitude can develop. Breaches in trust may include major offenses such as infidelity to small resentments that build up overtime and negatively impact the overall belief or confidence in another
Rely	Is defined as mutual needs fulfillment, dependability, and the amount of reliance one experiences in a given relationship. Needs may include: support, financial, emotional, companionship, status, affection
Commitment	Indicates how much commitment one experiences in a relationship. Commitment is not just defined as a marital status, but as the feeling of investment, belonging, loyalty, obligation, and responsibility for another, and the feeling that another is with you even when you are apart
Touch	Touch can represent anything from shaking hands with a stranger to hugging to intercourse. This area is not just about what has occurred in a relationship, but overall how close and satisfied one feels in terms of touch and affection in a relationship

One Excel spreadsheet was created for each *a priori* code explained in the table above and the participant quotes from the transcripts were copied into the Excel sheet of the appropriate code. The spreadsheets contained four columns. The first was the participant’s initials, the second was the direct quote, the third was comment column which allowed me to enter my thinking around why the quote was coded in a particular way or to capture the inflection in a participant’s voice or tone of the quote, and the fourth column was used to describe when a quote depicted more than one RAM dynamic. In the cases where a quote represented multiple RAM dynamics, the quote was recorded

in each dynamic and then put into another Excel spreadsheet labeled “dynamics”. This spreadsheet contained all of the quotes from the participants that included descriptions of the interplay of the RAM dynamics. Three columns were included: one with the participant’s initials, a second for the quote and a third with my summary comments. Two additional spreadsheets were created. One spreadsheet was labeled “themes”. After reading through the transcriptions multiple times, I noticed there were some themes throughout the research that weren’t captured under any of the *a priori* codes. These quotations were copied into the “theme” spreadsheet and the themes were described in an adjacent column. The final spreadsheet was named “love”. This spreadsheet included quotes from the participants that captured their description, definition, and/or experience of love in their marriage. These spreadsheets were created so that I was able to easily organize all of the interview and refer back to it when integrating the findings and writing up the results. Throughout the data analysis, I was mindful to search for evidence that contradicted my findings and the *a priori* codes, which is referred to as negative case analysis (Gilgun, 2005). This involved consciously searching for data that added additional dimensions or even contradicted my emerging understanding of the data (Gilgun, 2010).

After the data were analyzed, a final and individualized description of the interview findings was shared with each participant before the participant check in order to allow them to think through the preliminary interpretation. Next, the participant check was conducted to provide an opportunity for the participants to respond to the interpretation and to explore any additional questions that arouse through the interpretation of the interview data.

Subjectivity

Qualitative research is biased by the researcher's theories, preconceptions, and values (Erwin, 2006). This subjectivity is necessary in qualitative research because it is interested in how the theories, preconceptions, and values influence the conduct of the researcher and the conclusions drawn from the data (Maxwell, 1996). While this subjectivity is necessary, it also may serve to skew, filter, or even misconstrue the data and the subsequent interpretations of the data (Peshkin, 1988). Researcher subjectivity in this research study was addressed in the following ways: first, I openly communicated my potential biases; second, verbatim transcripts of the interviews were collected and served to decrease the role of subjectivity in data collection; and third I monitored my biases during the data analysis stage of research. I monitored my biases by keeping field notes of my feelings and thoughts before, during, and after data collection. This allowed me to examine my biases throughout the interpretation of data.

Researcher Bias

As a researcher, I approached this research as a white, middle-class, newly married, female, who has a general belief system that supports marriage, who has studied relationships since being an undergraduate, and who has worked with relationship education curricula since age 11. I have worked directly with the RAM since age 11 and am the daughter of John Van Epp, Ph.D., who developed the model and accompanying relationship education programs. I have spent the last three years as an employee of my father's company and have created educational materials to supplement the already existing relationship education programs which are based on the RAM. Through my work with the RAM I have witnessed how people quickly understand the model and the

ease with which it is applied to both relationship development and relationship maintenance. With all that being said, I am also a firm believer in subjecting theories to scientific rigor and empirical investigation, which is why I chose to study this theory for my dissertation. However, my previous experience with the RAM makes it nearly impossible for me to enter this research without the hope that the model is supported. Because I have an intimate relationship with this study, I will discuss the concept of trustworthiness and how I maintained it below.

Trustworthiness

The criteria for establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research are closely tied to the paradigmatic underpinnings of the study (Morrow, 2005). Because this study falls under the interpretivist-constructivist paradigm there are certain criteria that have been suggested to provide trustworthiness in this research. While there are suggested criteria, there is no defined set of criteria that is agreed upon by qualitative researchers. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), “the issue of quality criteria in constructivism is...not well resolved and further critique is needed” (p. 114). Therefore, some of the most common criteria are discussed.

Patton (2002) suggested that a primary standard of quality and credibility is acknowledging and embracing *subjectivity*. Also, *dependability* and *triangulation* were two criteria suggested as denoting quality. Dependability is having a “systematic process and systematically following it” (Morrow, 2005, p. 253). Triangulation is achieved through capturing and respecting multiple perspectives (Patton, 2002). Morrow (2005) proposed two primary criteria for trustworthiness in interpretivist-constructivist research. First is the extent to which participant meanings are understood deeply (Morrow).

Second is the extent to which there is mutual construction of meaning among the researcher and participant of research (Morrow).

In addition to the paradigm specific criteria for trustworthiness, there are criteria for trustworthiness that extend across paradigmatic lines. The first is subjectivity and reflexivity, which is concerned with the self-awareness of the researcher and how representative the interpretation of researcher findings is to participants' experiences. To meet this criterion it is common for researchers to make their biases known and to engage in follow-up interviews and participant checks (Morrow, 2005). The second is the adequacy of data. This criterion is concerned with not just the amount of data but the quality, depth, and completeness of data that is collected. Sampling to redundancy or saturation and interviewing participants more than once are ways of achieving this criterion (Morrow). The final over-arching criterion is the adequacy of interpretation (Morrow). This criterion is about the completeness and thoroughness of the interpretation of the data. To achieve this criterion researchers must immerse themselves in the data and provide thick descriptions of their findings when writing the final interpretation of the results. Thick descriptions refer to a method of describing a phenomenon in sufficient detail so that the reader can evaluate the extent to which the conclusions drawn are transferable to other times, settings, situations, and people (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Several precautions were taken to ensure the trustworthiness of this study. Procedures adopted in this study to achieve the trustworthiness criteria are explained below.

Subjectivity and Reflexivity

As described above subjectivity and reflexivity is an overarching criterion for trustworthiness in qualitative research. To meet this criterion, I engaged in the recommended procedures. First, I made my assumptions and biases overt to self and others. This was done in the preceding pages and aided in the bracketing of my biases (Morrow, 2005). Additionally, I kept self-reflective field notes throughout the investigation to facilitate my self-awareness and practice reflexivity.

The crisis of representation is a growing concern with reflexivity (Morrow, 2005). This crisis is concerned with whose reality is represented in the research. In order to ensure that my interpretation of the results is representative of participants' experiences, I engaged in multiple discussions with participants and provided a summary of the findings. I conducted the initial interview, participant summaries, and a participant check that allowed participants several opportunities to correct or revise my interpretation. This allowed me several opportunities to present emerging data and solicit feedback from participants.

A potential threat to this trustworthiness criterion may occur when the researcher does not acknowledge data that is discrepant from his or her theory and does not consider alternative explanations (Maxwell, 1996). To minimize this threat to trustworthiness I kept a record of the uncertainties, dilemmas, contradictions, and strains I experienced around the findings and data interpretation in my field notes. Additionally, I actively sought negative case analyses which required me to embark on a conscious search for evidence that disconfirms the RAM (Gilgun, 2005, 2007, 2010).

Adequacy of Data

Adequacy of data is the second criterion for trustworthiness. One of the primary concerns regarding this criterion is whether enough data is collected to provide insight into a particular phenomenon. A strategy for meeting this criterion is sampling to the point of saturation or redundancy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I satisfied this criterion by sampling until thematic saturation occurred.

Additionally, engaging in multiple interviews is a strategy often recommended for meeting this criterion (Polkinghorne, 2005). I had three interactions with each participant: the initial interview, the participant summaries, and the participant check. The participant summaries and participant checks allowed each participant to review a summary of the interpretation of the results after the data has been analyzed. Therefore if the participant's responses were inaccurately interpreted they had the opportunity to correct the misinterpretation (Polkinghorne, 2005). These points of contact, in addition to the demographic questionnaire, participant observations, and field notes, allowed me to obtain adequate variety of evidence and to achieve triangulation. These multiple points of contact and multiple sources of data satisfied the adequacy of data criterion.

Adequacy of Interpretation

The final trustworthiness criterion is the adequacy of interpretation. To satisfy this criterion researchers must immerse themselves in the data (Morrow, 2005). This involves repeated readings of the transcripts, listening to tapes, and review of field notes and other data (Morrow). Next, an analytic framework for interpreting the data should be stated and followed and thick descriptions should be provided in the write-up of the findings. I satisfied this criterion by immersing myself in the data and by following the

analytic framework outlined in this chapter and through the use of thick descriptions in my results section.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to describe the qualitative methodology and analytic approach that was used to study the RAM in the current research. This chapter included a description of qualitative research and the specific approach, DQA, that was used in this study. The appropriateness for qualitative research and the DQA approach was delineated. Participant and sampling procedures, the analytic procedure, data collection procedures, the role of subjectivity, and the threats to trustworthiness were addressed.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

This chapter provides the results of this study as interpreted by this researcher. A deductive qualitative analysis approach was used to create five *a priori* categories (i.e. know, trust, rely, commit, and touch) based on the Relationship Attachment Model. Data were coded into these categories, while intentionally seeking out negative case analyses. The following chapter will provide a summary of the participants in the study and detailed descriptions of the interview and participant check findings in light of the Relationship Attachment Model codes and research questions outlined in Chapter 3.

Introduction to the Participants

Four married couples were interviewed for this study, yielding a total of 8 married individuals. Each participant was interviewed separately and interviews lasted anywhere from twenty to ninety minutes depending on how quickly the participant answered the interview questions. The participants were provided with an option to be interviewed in their home or to be interviewed at the researcher's home. Five of the interviews were conducted in Medina, Ohio at the researcher's family home and three were conducted in participants' homes. The participants in this study were an average age of 52.4 (SD = 6.72) years old and ranged in age from 46-62. Overall, the participants were homogeneous on several variables. All participants were Caucasian, heterosexual, in

their first marriage, and Roman Catholic. All of the couples had been married for a significant length of time; specifically the average length of the participants' marriages was 28 years ($SD = 6.72$), with the shortest length of marriage being 20 years and the longest 37 years. The demographic information for each participant is presented in Table 4.1. The participants will be described first as a couple and then as individuals.

Table 4.1: Demographics

	H1	W1	H2	W2	H3	W3	H4	W4
Age	62	60	57	54	46	46	48	46
Ethnicity	White	White	White	White	White	White	White	White
Sexual orientation	Hetero	Hetero	Hetero	Hetero	Hetero	Hetero	Hetero	Hetero
Religious preference	Roman Catholic	Roman Catholic	Roman Catholic	Roman Catholic	Roman Catholic	Roman Catholic	Roman Catholic	Roman Catholic
How religious	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Slightly	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Very
Highest grade completed	Graduate school	Trade school	High school	High school	Graduate school	Some college	Trade school	Some college
Marital status of parents	Married	Married	Married	Divorced	Married	Married	Divorced	Divorced
First marriage	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Marital satisfaction	Extremely satisfied	Extremely satisfied	Extremely satisfied	Extremely satisfied	Extremely satisfied	Very satisfied	Extremely dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
	H1 & W1		H2 & W2		H3 & W3		H4 & W4	
Years married	37		30		20		25	
Premarital education	No		No		Yes		Yes	
Marital counseling	No		No		No		No	

Married Couple 1: H1 and W1

At the time of the interview, H1 and W1 had been married thirty-seven years and nine months. Both H1 and W1 reported that are both in their first marriage and that they are extremely satisfied in their marriage. H1 and W1 never attended premarital or marital counseling and have three children together.

H1 and W1 were set up on a blind date by W1's sister when H1 was home on leave as a Marine. Their first date was to a party on New Year's Eve. H1 and W1's courtship occurred primarily over the phone and through letters. W1 was an RN at the time and worked every other weekend so H1 would drive to visit her twice a month on the weekends she didn't work. Approximately one year into their relationship, H1 got orders to go overseas and he and W1 decided to get married.

H1 and W1 talked about their relationship similarly. They both said that they have experienced their relationship as relatively easy and emphasized the importance of spending time together and having fun with one another. For example H1 said,

with our kids, we're very devoted to them and our grandchildren and we like to be with them when we can. We both enjoy doing that. We bicycle. We do a lot of things together. I like to garden and she's right out there pulling weeds and doing things with me and helping me water and so I just like doing the kind of things we like to do together, and you know, we're very, very happy, we can talk, we get engaged – you know, it's just fun.

Both H1 and W1 said that they try to be easy on one another by letting the little things go. Specifically, W1 talked about learning to not pick on H1 over the little things. W1 said, “And you know, I suppose there's all sorts of little things that you can resent like pick up your shirt or don't throw it on the floor but I learned not to even bother with it—if he wants his shirt on the floor, let him leave the shirt on the floor, I don't care.”

H1 and W1 both emphasized their support of one another. For example, H1 spoke of W1's support during his career transitions. He said,

She's always supported me. I mean, I got out of the service and went to work in a steel company, Republic Steel. Worked there six or seven years. Didn't particularly like it. Went to another steel company, got laid off a couple of times. Decided to become a nurse and my brother's a nurse, my sister's a nurse, or was, she's passed now, my wife, my mom, my sister in law, I mean, there are tons of us. So my getting into it was no shock. Being a guy was, but she was real supportive of me through that, but that's a poor deal.

W1 echoed the sentiment when she was discussing how she helps H1 to feel happy in their marriage. W1 said, "I watch his back. I got his back. And I'll tell him that, I got your back, don't worry about it, I got your back, and I think he's got mine too."

Participant 1: H1

H1 is a 62 year-old white, heterosexual male. H1 indicated that he is Roman Catholic and that he considers himself moderately religious. H1 spent the majority of his life working as a psychiatric nurse at a Veteran's Administration hospital and acquired two master's degrees. H1 grew up in a home where his parents were married.

H1's interview was conducted in his home at his dining room table. H1's interview lasted approximately thirty minutes and ran smoothly. H1's wife, W1, was home during the interview. In order to allow for privacy, W1 went to the basement and watched television during H1's interview.

Participant 2: W1

W1 is a 60 year-old, white, heterosexual female. W1 graduated from nursing school and spent the majority of her life working as a Registered Nurse. W1 grew up in a home where her parents were married.

W1's interview was conducted in her home at her dining room table. Her husband, H1, also went to the basement during her interview to allow for privacy. W1's interview lasted approximately fifty-two minutes. W1 had some difficulty at first describing her relationship with H1; however after the first two initial questions her interview went smoothly.

Married Couple 2: H2 and W2

At the time of the interview, H2 and W2 had been married thirty years. Both H2 and W2 reported that they are in their first marriage and that they are extremely satisfied in their marriage. H2 and W2 never attended premarital or marital counseling and have children together.

H2 and W2 first met at a bar; however W2 was dating someone else. After her relationship ended, H2 and W2 were friends for a few months before they began dating and they both described their relationship as developing gradually. W2 and H2 went on their first date to a rodeo in Cleveland with his extended family and neighbors. They dated for approximately 12 months before H2 moved in with W2. They cohabited for five years before they were married. Both H2 and W2 agreed that they got married because they were buying a house together and they both preferred to buy the home using a joint name.

Both H2 and W2 indicated that they are extremely satisfied in their marriage; however the tone of H2's interview was somewhat negative. His difficulty expressing his experience in his marriage during the interview was similar to the frustrations he described in his marriage. In other words, H2 talked about feeling like he didn't have a voice in his marriage and that he often doesn't get his way. H2 said that he struggles

because he isn't as good at expressing himself as his wife so he tends to "lose" the disagreements. H2 said,

And I get a little frustrated because sometimes – and I've admitted, I've said this out loud to her and it's like a lot of times what I say doesn't mean anything as far as certain things, mostly the kids, and what I feel we should do or we shouldn't do. And I for the most part, bite my tongue when I think I was right because I feel it doesn't do anyone a service, I've already been pouting pretty much because I was upset that we didn't do what I wanted to do – but yeah, that was probably the biggest peeve that I have at this point in the relationship is that I almost feel like what I think doesn't count. I won't say count because it's not like she blows me off but it's almost like her mind's already made up and most of the time, she has good reason and that irritates me even more. I've never been really good at – I'm not someone who can argue my point very well. I may believe in my heart that it's right, but somebody will give me some reason or fact that I kind of agree with but I still don't like the answer, and so I just – for the most part, I just – growl and go on my way.

W2 seemed to be aware of H2's frustrations but was, overall, very appreciative of how her husband takes care of her and their family. W2 said that "he is a good person and always puts our needs, I think, before his own." W2 and H2 both talked about the comfort they experience in their relationship together. When asked how he knows that he is loved in his marriage H2 said,

Maybe it's just a comfort now, but I wouldn't know how to explain or even – once again, it goes almost back to that Hollywood thing where there's nothing that jumps out. It's just part of the marriage, I guess, or our marriage process that, like I said, nothing that beats me over the head with a stick that says yeah, you're – you feel – I just feel comfortable with it and maybe that's part of getting older, that you're just comfortable with each other than the actual ohh ahhh type of thing.

When asked about the love in her marriage W2 answered similarly and said, "Yeah and your love grows stronger and your comfort. Love isn't just all exciting. It's comfort. We've been together forever, it seems like—28 years and add the 5 to that of living together, that's forever."

Participant 3: H2

H2 is a 57 year-old, white, heterosexual male. He indicated that he is Roman Catholic and that he is moderately religious. H2 reported that he graduated high school and that he works at an auto manufacturer in Cleveland, Ohio. Most recently, H2 has been working the night shift. H2 also reported that he grew up in a home where his parents were married.

H2 was given the opportunity to choose where to have the interview. His interview was conducted at the researcher's family home in the finished basement to allow for privacy. His interview lasted approximately eighty-one minutes. H2 had significant difficulty answering the questions in the interview. He stated many times throughout the interview that he was a man of few words and that he felt his answers were vague. His difficulty with expression resulted in the need for more follow-up and clarification questions from the researcher. Despite H2's perceptions of his answers, his responses were very helpful and contributed significantly to the findings of this study.

Participant 4: W2

W2 is a 54 year-old, white, heterosexual female. She reported that she is Roman Catholic and that she is slightly religious. W2 said that she graduated high school and that she has been, and still is, a stay-at-home-mom to her and H2's children. W2 also indicated that her biological parents were divorced.

W2 also chose to be interviewed at the researcher's family home. Her interview was conducted in the basement to allow for privacy. Her interview lasted approximately forty-four minutes. W2 was open and spoke easily about her marriage relationship.

Married Couple 3: H3 and W3

At the time of the interview, H3 and W3 had been married twenty years. This is both H3 and W3's first marriage. H3 said that he is extremely satisfied in his marriage, while W3 said that she is very satisfied. H3 and W3 attended premarital counseling before getting married; however they have not attended marital counseling while married.

H3 and W3 dated for approximately four years before getting married; however they were not exclusively committed during the entire four years. H3 and W3 met in college. They both described their relationship as one that grew slowly and that it took a break-up to realize that they were supposed to be together. For example, H3 said

She was still in school and I started working and I broke up with her and then saw her at a concert. I was with my brothers and I saw her and her girlfriend there and I think that at that point, you always think that there's someone else out there and, at that point, I realized that I really should be with her. I called her and told her that I missed her and I wanted to get back together and we did.

W3 made a similar statement when she was asked, "Do you remember when you started having stronger feelings for H3, when you started feeling in love with him?"

No, because it was something that slowly grew. There was a point when we broke up and it was more of a mourning stage, like I felt like I had really lost a good friend and I was very sad and I think that's when I realized that I had been very much in love with him.

H3 and W3 became pregnant when they began dating again, which contributed to their decision to marry. H3 said,

She got she got pregnant and at that point we decided to get married and we talked about it and we decided to wait until after she had the baby so she could enjoy her wedding and have fun but we moved in together pretty much immediately at that point. Our daughter was born in December and we got married the following June.

H3 and W3 seemed in agreement regarding the aspects of their relationship that help it to be successful. Both, H3 and W3 noted that they have similar temperaments,

were both the sixth-born in large families, and are not needy which helps them to be easy to please. When describing her relationship satisfaction, W3 said

Neither one of us are needy people, so we're pretty easy to please. We still have fun together. We still go out. We have friends, we go out, we do stuff together. He doesn't make demands on me and I don't make demands on him. We just respect each other and enjoy the time we have.

H3 made a similar statement, "we were pretty compatible, I mean, she's very independent – she was never a cling-y person, wasn't needy, and she didn't try to change me. She knew who I was and I enjoyed being with her."

Participant 5: H3

H3 is a 46 year-old, white, heterosexual male. He said that he is a moderately religious Roman Catholic. H3 reported that he completed graduate school; however his exact career was not discussed in the interview.

H3 chose to have his interview at the researcher's family home in the basement. W3 came with him to the interview and waiting upstairs during the interview to allow for privacy. H3's interview lasted approximately thirty-six minutes. H3 appeared comfortable during the interview and had no difficulty discussing his premarital and marital relationship with W3.

Participant 6: W3

W3 is a 46-year white, heterosexual female. She reported that she is a moderately religious Roman Catholic. She said that she attended college, but did not graduate. W3 is a stay-at-home mother to her and H3's four children. W3 stated that she grew up in a home where her biological parents were married.

W3's interview was conducted in the researcher's family home in the basement. W3 was interviewed after H3 and her interview was the shortest and lasted approximately

sixteen minutes. W3 spoke very directly and succinctly and did not provide many extraneous details which resulted in a briefer interview. W3 appeared to have no difficulty discussing her relationship with H3 and her interview went smoothly.

Married Couple 4: H4 and W4

At the time of the interview, H4 and W4 had been married twenty-five years. They both indicated that this is their first marriage. H4 reported that he is extremely dissatisfied in his marriage and W4 said that she is very dissatisfied. H4 and W4 have not attended marital counseling but did attend premarital counseling.

H4 was 19 and W4 was 17 when they met. Their meeting was described as “serendipitous” by W4 and “by coincidence” by H4. H4 and W4 met at a graduation party neither one of them wanted to attend. H4 said that he noticed W4 right away and felt immediate chemistry. H4 and W4 dated six months before they got engaged, but didn’t get married until four years later.

W4 spoke openly throughout the interview about the difficulties she has experienced in her marriage. Specifically, dealing with having to return to work earlier than she hoped after having kids, struggling with H4’s issues from his family relationships, and the complications involved in raising a child with severe ADHD. W4 repeatedly mentioned throughout the interview the importance of her and H4 “being on the same page.” She said she is most satisfied in the marriage when the home is calm and when they are in agreement. When asked what contributes to her satisfaction she said, “Calm. I have three teenagers. Peace in the house. More of a relaxed atmosphere. The ability to just talk calmly without debating, you know, and arguing.” When asked when she feels closest to H4 she responded,

When we're in agreement. When we can discuss something that may be challenging in a calm way and that it's just like—like something that could really potentially be an argument or, you know, oh, well I disagree, and you know—when we can discuss it in a calm manner and we both agree on it and it's like okay, we're going to handle this.

H4 spoke more romantically about his marriage than W4. He talked about how he works to take care of her needs and how he admires W4 for the person she is and how she helped to make him a better man. When asked what helps to make his marriage work H4 said,

I guess it's basically nice to come home to somebody like that, that's kind of your refuge, that's – you know, another word pops into mind, for lack of a better one, she's kind of like a savior to me because I really was this self-destructing man and there was a lot about her, still is, maturity and a calmness and a peace within her that I always wanted to emulate. Now I'm starting to –I've been trying to become a better person, a more calmer person, what have you. I'm a very high-end person. I don't sleep. I don't like to sit. I don't – you know – she's not. That's that yin and yang thing again. But really, probably without her, I probably wouldn't have seen 30. And I had said that when I was younger I really wasn't joking about that, I really meant that, so I made it past 30.

Participant 7: H4

H4 is a 48 year-old, white, heterosexual male. He reported that he is a moderately religious Roman Catholic. H4 said that he completed a trade school, but his exact profession was not discussed in the interview. H4 said that his biological parents were divorced.

H4 was interviewed at his home in his living room. His interview lasted approximately thirty-five minutes. During H4's interview we had one interruption when his son came down the stairs. H4 quickly yelled for his son to go away. H4 spoke easily about his relationship with W4 and appeared comfortable in the interview.

Participant 8: W4

W4 is a 46 year-old, white, heterosexual female. She reported that she is a very religious Roman Catholic. W4 said that she attended some college but did not graduate. W4 spent years as a stay-at-home mother, and returned back to work sooner than she had hoped when her children were young. Her exact profession was not discussed during the interview. W4's biological parents were divorced.

W4 was interviewed in the researcher's family home in the basement. Her interview lasted approximately sixty-eight minutes. She seemed comfortable during the interview and welcomed the chance to talk about her marriage. She said that she had been thinking about the interview and what was going to be asked several days prior.

Summary

Eight married individuals, four married couples, were interviewed for this study. Three of the participants were interviewed in their own homes and five of the participants were interviewed at the researcher's family home. The individuals in this study were homogenous in many ways. Specifically, all of the participants were white, married only once, and were Roman Catholic. Additionally, all of the couples had been married twenty years or longer and reported being either very or extremely satisfied in their marriage. The participants in this study are a unique sample due to the length of their marriages, their religious beliefs, and the level of satisfaction in their marriages. Many of the couples had difficulty talking about arguments or "issues" they have with their spouse, which is surprising given the length of their marriages. Considering the frequency of divorce in this country, it is likely that these couples were unique in that

they are so satisfied in their marriages. Therefore the results of this study are based on marital relationships that are long lasting and tend to be, overall, very healthy and happy.

Interview Findings

This next section will review the findings of the eight interviews in terms of the research questions posed in this study. Three research questions will be addressed:

1. Do the five bonding dynamics of the RAM (know, trust, rely, commit, and touch) exist as contributions to feelings of love and closeness in marital relationships?
2. Does an experience of vulnerability/dissatisfaction in the marital relationship or changes/stressors in life affect the overall relational bond?
3. How do married individuals define and experience love?

The first section will review the *a priori* deductive codes used to organize the findings and how well the interview data fit these codes. The second section will review how the dynamic bonds interact in marital relationships and how these interactions affect the overall feeling of closeness in the marital relationship. Finally, this section will review the participants' definitions and experiences of love in their marriages.

Research Question One

The first research question examined whether or not each of the five bonding dynamics of the RAM existed as contributions to feelings of love and closeness in marital relationships. This section will review each of the deductive codes used to chunk the data and the interview findings in support of these codes. The five codes used were based on the five bonding dynamics of the RAM: know, trust, rely, commit and touch.

Know

Know was defined as an area that indicates how “in the know” one feels with another. Knowing someone involves talking, spending time together, and experiencing diverse activities together. In a relationship it is important to get to know about a person’s values, belief systems, and areas of compatibility and complementarity. Knowing also includes how well one feels known and knows another and the processes that are required to get to know another, such as mutual self-disclosure and communication. Ultimately the processes involved in getting to know a partner as well as what is known about a partner contributes to feelings of closeness and connection in relationships. The frequency participants mentioned the defining features of know as well as how the knowing processes contributed to feelings of closeness or distance are summarized in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: The Frequency the RAM Dynamic Know was Mentioned by Participants

Participant	H1	W1	H2	W2	H3	W3	H4	W4	Total
<i>Definition:</i> Time together, talking, activities together. Aspects participants got to know through mutual self-disclosure and communication (i.e. compatibility, values, personality, etc.).	8	8	5	5	7	14	11	8	66
<i>Process:</i> Report of feeling known or knowing contributing to closeness/distance.	4	2	4	5	5	3	5	8	36
Total frequency	12	10	9	10	12	17	16	16	102

From the interviews, two themes emerged in regards to the know dynamic of the RAM: (1) getting to know each other in the premarital relationship, and (2) staying in the know after marriage. The first theme had to do with getting to know each other during the premarital process. Specifically this theme related to how the couples got to know each other when developing their relationship and the areas or things they got to know when they were determining if this person was the person they wanted to spend their life with. The second theme was related to staying in the know after marriage and how losing touch with one another can create vulnerability or distance in the marriage and how staying in the know can heighten closeness in the marriage. When talking about how he knew that W3 was the person for him, H3 said

We were pretty compatible, I mean, she's very independent – she was never a cling-y person, wasn't needy, and she didn't try to change me. She knew who I was and I enjoyed being with her. She's kind of a quiet person. It took a long time to get to know her. She never called me. To this day, she doesn't call. If there's a purpose to call, to tell me something, she'll call, but she never calls just to talk. She's never been that way. Yeah but we both kind of – we have the same temperament, I mean, we don't get riled up about things and don't get upset about little things. And we both make accommodations for each other. And it was just a good fit.

In this quote H3 talked about how he got to know W3 and determined that she and he were compatible. H3 made the assessment as he got to know her that they had similar temperaments and that she was independent, which was important to him. H3 also discussed how he had difficulty getting to know W3 because she was quiet and never called him. This quote highlighted the premarital process of getting to know another and evaluating whether this person was a good fit or not. This quote also highlighted one mode of getting to know another, talking, and how lack of communication can make the getting to know process more difficult. The next quote shows how the same dynamic

which was present premaritally operates in H3 and W3's marriage. This quote provides an example of the second theme in regard to know, which is related to the importance of staying in the know during marriage and how not staying in the know can create distance and vulnerability in the marriage.

Sometimes she's not real communicative and she'd probably say the same thing about me but it's harder for a guy to be communicative and most of the time you expect your wife to kind of be that person but she's a quiet person so – and like I said, she never calls, and sometimes it'd be nice to have somebody reach out to ask you what's going on or how you're doing. So what happens is sometimes I'll start to withdraw because it's the easier thing to do instead of continually reaching out but you can't always do that – and then, you know, and then she'll, sometimes she'll let me know that I'm not engaging and I need to talk more and things like that.

W3 expressed a similar frustration with H3. She described feeling more distant from H3 when the two of them are not communicating effectively. W3 said,

When we're not communicating well. It's like putting bricks in a wall, it just kind of builds, and eventually– I'm the one that usually has to come forward, we need to have a talk or I need to express my frustration and then usually it gets better. I think, as a woman, I kind of want him to be a mind reader and I think – talking to other people, that's typical of many women.

W3's quote further demonstrates how neglecting to manage *staying in the know* in marriage may lead to feeling more distant and potentially more vulnerable in the marriage.

H1 and W1's interviews also demonstrated these two themes. H1 and W1 explicitly discussed three modes of getting to know one another they used when dating long distance: talking, writing letters, and spending time together. H1 said, “so we were every other weekend kind of courtship with letters between and phone calls in between. And it just – absent makes the heart grow fonder sometimes, you know what I mean? So I

think we were really happy to see each other when we were able to see each other.”

When H1 was asked how he knew W1 was the one for him he said, “I thought she was very pretty. Very attractive. Just her demeanor. We always laughed. Had a good time. We shared a lot of the same ideals. When we talked, it was fun, and we enjoyed just being around each other.” H1’s response to how he knew W1 was the one for him was really about areas he got to know about W1 and how she fit with what he was looking for in a spouse. Also, he talked about how they had a good time when together and talking.

Today in H1 and W1’s relationship, staying in the know and their initial compatibility are two of the primary ways they keep close. Both H1 and W1 spoke at length about how they are still compatible and enjoy spending time together. H1 said,

I guess we are still compatible politically. I think we have the same thoughts. Religiously, she's a little bit more churchgoing than I am but I still believe in Jesus the savior. We're very devoted to our kids and our grandchildren and we like to see them when we can. We both enjoying do that. And we bicycle.

W1 also spoke about her and H1 being in sync with one another after all of their years of marriage and staying close by spending time together. She said,

A lot of times I'll be thinking something and he'll speak it, or I will be the same way, and it's like, get out of my head— It's a lot of years. It's a lot of years. And we do a lot together. We do a lot together and we have similar likes and we kind of fit into each other's things that we like to do like riding bikes and walking and we've just kind of learned to incorporate those into our routine so that we can do these things together. And some people, they're different, but we're not like them, we kind of always kind of like to do things together.

Spending time together, which is an aspect of *know*, can serve to heal conflicts in a relationship. H2 spoke about how he often becomes upset in his marriage when he feels that he is not being heard or that his needs are not being met. When asked to

describe what would make it more difficult to get past his upset feelings and what would help him recover more quickly he said,

That'll depend too on – a lot of things. I would say the biggest thing is if I'm working a lot, then we're not doing much together or we're not around and it can linger more because you just don't have a chance to get it over, per se, get over it or get through it versus when you have more time together, some – sometimes – but most times when we're together, doing more things, like with the kids and stuff, it's easier to get through it because you get – not so much that we talk it out, but you're around other people and kind of change it and you're not thinking about it.

For some couples talking through an issue is the primary method of recovering from hurts, but for H2 just being together seemed to help him heal.

This section provided examples of the first bonding dynamic of the Relationship Attachment Model: know. Participants referred to the importance of knowing one another in their relationship and knowing one another took on many forms. Knowing one another in terms of the decision to marry was a common theme among participants. Many emphasized how they had fun together, spent time talking, and were compatible and that these considerations helped them decide that this person was the one they wanted to marry. Knowing one another was also described in terms of relationship maintenance after marriage. Losing touch in marriage due to lack of communication or lack of time together was related to feeling more distant and being in touch with one another was described as a facilitator of closeness and healing hurts in the relationship.

Trust

Trust, the second RAM dynamic, indicates how much trust a person experiences in a relationship with another and is defined as a positive belief or confidence in another based on their consistency and overall trustworthiness. Contrary to having a positive belief in another, when trust is broken a bad attitude can develop. Breaches in trust may

range from major offenses such as infidelity to small resentments that build up over time and negatively impact the overall belief or confidence in another. The processes involved in the development and maintenance of trust contributes to feelings of closeness and connection in relationships. The frequency participants mentioned the defining features of trust as well as how the trust processes contributed to feelings of closeness or distance is summarized in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: The Frequency the RAM Dynamic Trust was Mentioned by Participants

Participant	H1	W1	H2	W2	H3	W3	H4	W4	Total
<i>Definition:</i> Positive belief, consistency, dependability, security. Examples of broken or strengthened trust.	5	9	3	3	6	5	6	3	40
<i>Process:</i> Report of trust contributing to closeness/distance.	2	3	1	2	2	2	2	2	16
Total frequency	7	12	4	5	8	7	8	5	56

Three major themes were identified in the participant’s responses in regard to trust. First, the majority of the participants in this study described their trust in their partner as something that was implicitly given at the beginning of the relationship as long as it was not broken. The second theme was that participants justified their trust in their partner based on what they got to know throughout the premarital relationship. This theme demonstrated the interplay of the RAM dynamics and how one dynamic helps to facilitate the development of another. Finally, the third theme was that broken trust was related to feelings of distance and an overall bad opinion of their partner and maintained trust facilitated closeness and marital satisfaction. Typically, more than one theme was

present in a participant's statement. Therefore these themes will be explained as they existed in each quote and not necessarily in any particular order.

The first theme, trust was implicitly given until broken, was apparent in almost every participant's interview. The first theme and the second theme often were explained in the same breath. Most participants described having total trust in their partner from the beginning of the relationship and then when asked how they knew their partner was trustworthy their responses were related to the second theme that they *got to know* certain things about their partner that supported the investment of their trust. For example when W3 was asked if her trust in H3 has ever been broken or challenged she responded,

No. I have total trust. I think it was character thing that I spotted early on. I don't know, I don't think he ever had to lie to me about anything. I don't know. Just his character. I see him with his friends and how loyal he is with them and with his family, his mother, and brothers and sisters, and I knew that he's a man of integrity and character and for him to – it'd be cheating himself, I think he's that type of person.

In this quote, W3 described her investment of trust in H3 and how this trust was given based on aspects of his person she got to know early on in their relationship. Also present in this quote is the consistency aspect of the definition of trust. W3 described H3's behavior as consistent between his friends, his mother, and his brothers and sisters. This consistency helped her to know that he was worthy of her trust.

Similarly, H3 described his trust in W3 based on things he got to know about her early on and her trust in him. He also refers to observing her trusting behavior consistently throughout their marriage. He said,

she couldn't lie if her life depended on it and I mean she is morally as strong as anybody I've met. And her trust in me just makes me that much more confident in her...It's right up there because she can – like I said, we each, we do some of our own things together – me going away with my friends for a weekend or her going out with her girlfriends. I have friends, that's always like this big issue where they

can't do it at all. And then the resentment that they have for their spouse because of this control issue and we've never had to deal with that and it's just – I couldn't understand, I couldn't be with somebody that didn't trust me.

H3's quote shows how his trust in her was reinforced through her trust in him. He described his trust as having confidence in her and his statement also highlights how he saw characteristics in W3 that facilitated his trust in her. H3 also spoke about his friends who have spouses that don't trust and how this lack of trust adds up to resentments in the relationship.

When H1 was asked about his trust being broken in marriage and how trust was developed he also responded in a way that highlighted the steadiness and consistency of trust in his marriage. He also described how he always just *felt* like he could trust her.

H1 said,

Dating her and everything, I just always felt I could. And she has – you know, she's very religious person and we share that same belief and it's a sin to not be faithful, you know. It's a sin not to take care of your spouse, and I think we both believe that....It's huge but right now I'm at the point where I just take it for granted. I have to stop doing that. But just you know, so, yeah, I just – it's never, ever failed. It's always been there.Trust. I know I used to have a lot, but I think the steadiness. There's no competition in a marriage – there is none.

This statement echoed the theme that trust was implicitly given in relationships unless it was broken and that trust was something that was considered early on in the dating relationship. This statement by H1 also highlighted the consistency or steadiness of trust in his marriage. Consistency was a defining aspect of trust and was mentioned by several of the participants.

H4 also talked about the importance of trust in his relationship with W4. He highlighted how the trust he had in her helped him feel secure and to know that she was loyal. H4 said,

There's a trust about her. I always knew, back then and I know now, especially now, that she would never betray you if she's your friend or whatever, and that's really important to me because I had a lot of family that were more interested in their own things. My parents' problems were more important than their children's or whatever, and the same thing, very same thing true with W4, and I just knew that I could always trust her and that she would never betray me.

Later in the interview, H4 was asked what helps him to feel happy and satisfied in his marriage. H4 responded,

Like I said, the biggest thing probably is trust. She understands me to a T. Probably maybe sometimes more than I do of my own self. As a mother, there's no better, that I've ever seen...she's a good friend to people...she's a special soul and that's very hard to break down.

In this statement, H4 subtly described one of the defining characteristics of trust:

consistency. He mentioned that he saw his wife as a consistently good friend, someone with a special soul, and a good mother. Seeing his wife as a consistently good person let H4 know that she is worthy of his trust and that she would not surprise him with some unexpected behavior. H4's response also fit with the third theme that a healthy intact trust in marriage leads to satisfaction in the relationship. H4's response was to the question, "*What helps you feel satisfied in your marriage?*" His first answer was "trust".

H4's wife, W4, provided an example of trust being broken. Just like consistency facilitates trust, inconsistency can break it. Her response to the question, "*tell me about a time trust was broken in your marriage*" was related to a mismatch between what she expected and what she experienced. W4 said,

as far as trust, I trust H4 implicitly – if I were to say where I felt kind of like what he said in the beginning of our relationship isn't exactly what transpired, I would say it's religious-based, because I – I wanted to marry someone who's Catholic, and it just so happened I didn't know he was when we started dating, but he was Catholic, and I told him it was really important that my kids get raised Catholic and this and that. And he was like, oh yeah, and I agree – because he was baptized Catholic but he was never like taken to church and all that, like very little his grandmother would take him, but he never made his sacraments until he met me.

And he wanted to do all this, and so he did. Before we got married, he made his communion and confirmed and everything. But as the kids came and as they got older, the responsibility of raising them Catholic, 90% fell onto me. So it wasn't exactly what I wanted and it wasn't exactly what he said in the beginning.

In this quote, W4 described that she trusted H4 implicitly but that she felt like in one area of her marriage H4 wasn't who he said he was. This issue has the potential to build into a larger issue and negatively affect the other areas of the relationship. To explore how this area impacted other aspects of their relationship, W4 was asked, "*So what does it feel like for you within your marriage to have thought you were getting one thing and then you got something different?*" W4 responded, "Just kind of like that, well, I am handling all this. It's up to me. And I think that's more times than not, I will say, women handle 80% of everything." Here W4 highlighted how this breach in trust resulted in her feeling that she must handle everything but that her taking most things on in the marriage seemed to be a common experience for her. Some other discussion occurred and then W4 relayed a conversation she had with a girlfriend where she gave her advice about what to expect from her husband in terms of sharing childcare and housework. W4 said,

You are going to do 80% of everything, and you need to come to terms with that. Whatever he helps you with, bonus. I said, you can ask, okay, but just be ready for it—because if you don't accept (having to do more), the marriage can be over. If you don't accept certain inevitable things.

This quote provided insight into how W4 has dealt with her broken trust and the repercussions of that broken trust. W4 had hoped that she would share the religious upbringing of the children with her husband; however after they were married his commitment to religion wasn't as strong as she felt he said it to be in the premarital relationship. This resulted in W4 taking on more responsibility which was a common issue or area of frustration for her in the marriage; however as W4 said to her friend, "you

need to come to terms with that,” which is what she has done to deal with these breaches of trust resulting in major resentments. W4 described her process of coming to expect certain “inevitable things” in her marriage and this has undoubtedly helped her to avoid becoming bitter and pulling away or ultimately leaving the marriage.

W1 also described a time in her marriage she felt the trust was broken and how this broken trust affected feelings about remaining in the marriage. She said,

Yeah, I do remember one point. When he was working at the VA, there was a nurse that was going to massage school. He just thought a lot of her opinions I think, and I don't know, one thing led to another, and that was a rough time, but, and I'm not sure now why, but I think when I thought about okay – I don't know if this is right or if this is the right man for me or whatever, but then you think about leaving and disturbing all of this, and the thought scared me, the thought scared me. So I think it goes in your head, but I think it goes out –Yeah, because you thought about it and you think – no, I don't think that's a good idea.

Here W1 described a time where H1 crossed some boundaries, whatever they may have been, with another woman. This behavior by H1 resulted in W1 wondering whether H1 was right for her and if she should leave the relationship. W1 was asked how this event affected her attitude toward H1 and she responded, “yeah, well, I didn't like him very much. I started to think that he couldn't do anything right.” These two quotes exemplify the second theme that a breach in trust will negatively impact the overall feeling of closeness and safety in the relationship as well as one’s attitude toward their partner.

This section provided examples of the second bonding dynamic of the Relationship Attachment Model: trust. The participants in this study discussed trust in their marriages in three primary ways. First, the participants discussed how trust was something that was given fully upfront at the beginning of a relationship unless it was broken. Second, the participants described getting to know certain things about their partner in the dating relationship that helped them to know that they were trustworthy

partners. Finally, trust was talked about in terms of an area that could lead to either greater satisfaction in the relationship or decreased satisfaction if trust was broken. Aspects of the definition of trust were also mentioned in the quotes. Specifically, trust as a belief in another was mentioned by several participants and trust as something that was demonstrated through consistency was also described.

Rely

Rely, the third RAM dynamic, is defined as mutual needs fulfillment, dependability, and the amount of reliance one experiences in a given relationship. Needs may include: support, financial, emotional, companionship, status, affection, etc. Having needs met in a relationship leads to feeling closer, more appreciated, secure, and more valued in a marriage. Conversely, not having one’s needs met can lead to feelings of distance, dissatisfaction, feeling taken for granted, and insecurity. The frequency participants mentioned the defining features of rely as well as how the rely processes contributed to feelings of closeness or distance is summarized in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: The Frequency the RAM Dynamic Rely was Mentioned by Participants

Participant	H1	W1	H2	W2	H3	W3	H4	W4	Total
<i>Definition:</i> Mutual need fulfillment, dependability. Mention of specific types of needs (i.e. emotional support, financial, affection, companionship, household support, etc.).	7	4	4	8	6	12	2	12	55
<i>Process:</i> Report of reliance contributing to closeness/distance.	5	3	5	7	4	5	2	6	37
Total frequency	12	7	9	15	10	17	4	18	92

Reliance or, more specifically, dependence, dependability, and the concept of meeting one another's needs was the most talked about dynamic among the participants interviewed. When reliance was talked about by the participants it was often discussed in conjunction with one or more of the other dynamics. Two themes were present in the participants' accounts of reliance. The first theme was that greater reliance and reliability was related to greater marital satisfaction and closeness. The second theme was the opposite of the first. Less reliability and reliance was related to distance within the relationship and dissatisfaction in the marriage. This theme demonstrated how the RAM dynamics work together. Specifically when a participant wasn't getting their needs met often times their opinion of or confidence in their partner would suffer. This interaction demonstrated how reliance can affect the amount of trust that is felt toward a partner and how a decrease in one can negatively impact the other. Ultimately these decreases impact the overall experience of love and closeness in the marriage.

W2 demonstrated the first theme of rely when she was asked how satisfied she is in her marriage. She responded, "I'm very satisfied. I think he's an amazing man. He's a good person and he always puts our needs, I think, before his own." This quote provides information about how W2 feels loved, supported, and happy in her marriage to H2 and this is by being taken care of and by putting her needs first. When asked what contributes to her satisfaction she said,

He takes care of me. Just anything I need. I mean he just –I'm a klutz and I break things and I'm just awful, and it's like he's always putting out my fires, he comes home and he has to put out my fires because so many things go wrong. He fixes my car, he does – I mean, I can bring home animals. Like these cats. He doesn't blink an eye. It's just like it's part of what we do, who we are. Anything I need – he never says no.

In this quote W2 shows how important it is to her that she feels taken care of and that H2 has her back and supports her.

H3 was asked how he shows his love to his wife, W3. His response was also reliance and need fulfillment based. H3 said,

I try to do little things. I try to get her flowers. When she has errands to run, during the day, the kids will just throw all their dishes in the sink and she always comes home with a messy sink or whatever. So I'll clean the kitchen for her and just – you know, it's a short thing, but she likes being able to walk in and not have more to do.

The importance of providing support as a spouse was mentioned by most of the participants. Throughout W4's interview she spoke about feeling like she takes on too much of the household responsibility; however she highlighted how her husband, H4, supports her and how important that is to her. W4 said,

H4 is like the knight in shining armor, comes to my rescue, takes care of me, and handles the insurance. I'm very dependent on him all the time and then we work through that together. H4's there, he's a sounding board, he's there to talk to me, and vice versa.

W4 also spoke about how her husband meets her needs for affection and how she is able to be assertive and ask for her needs when they aren't being met. She said,

Well, yeah, as far as like maintaining the house – he does the guy work. He'll do the lawn and anything that needs to be fixed. But I'm fortunate in the way that H4 is very affectionate, and so am I – so he gives affection, he gives it – I don't have to ask for it because he gives it. If I don't have a need met, I go get it from him.

H1 spoke of his wife, W1, meeting his needs by being supportive of him. In his interview, H1 spoke about a time in their marriage when he was unemployed and made the decision to go back to school to get his nursing degree. He talked about how this was a time for him when he felt like he wasn't being a good husband and that his ability to be

a provider for his family was challenged, which was difficult for him. When H1 talked about this difficult time in his life and in his marriage he highlighted how his wife, W1 took care of him. H1 said,

She's always supported me. Being a guy was difficult, but she was real supportive of me through that, because that's a poor deal. I never gave her any cause not to (trust him), but that kind of support, it's always there. Like I had a bad day, I came home, and she would calm me down. I'd start throwing things around. She'd say, stop, you're being stupid now. You'll just have to clean that up anyway. Before you break something important. She would talk me down.

H1's wife, W1, had a somewhat different perspective of that same time in their marriage. W1's recollection of the difficult time when H1 was attending school again demonstrated the second theme. W1 said,

I think when he was gone to nursing school, I kind of had the brunt of everything because I had to go back to work and then I got pregnant with our daughter, that was rough, that was rough, because I felt like I had to hold the ball and I don't think he enjoyed it because I don't think any man likes being out of work. He'd say, well, I'm going to go out to lunch with the girls and it's like, wait a minute, I didn't get any sleep, I work nights. I didn't like him very much.

In this example, W1 spoke about her perspective of the difficult time in her marriage to H1. She felt that she took on the majority of the extra work due to her husband going back to school. She also suggested that H1 may have not helped as much as she would have liked when he had the opportunity. Not having her need for support and help around the house met, W1's attitude toward H1 was negatively affected and she "didn't like him very much" at that time in their marriage. This demonstrated how not having needs met in a relationship ultimately may lead to a decrease in closeness and a negative opinion of one's partner.

The second theme, that not having needs met in the relationship led to feeling more vulnerable, less close, and not taken care of was mentioned by several of the other

participants. In particular, W2 spoke about when her and H2's first child was born. W2 discussed how she felt like she had more things to do, now having a child, and H2 kept his same routine. W2 had some difficulty expressing the complaint about her husband because she had concern that her desire to have him around more and to want help was selfish or denying her husband of time he deserved. She said,

I was home and it's wonderful to have that little time all to yourself, and he was tiny. But my husband was still going to work each morning and somehow I didn't feel as close for a couple months. So I think I just got over that. Because if the baby would be crying or something and then I wasn't in bed with my husband where I wanted to be at night. But I just got over that, I think you do, unless it's really bad, unless you get really depressed, but it was just one of those little insecurity things that he was out and about. When I was in the hospital I had problems with the pregnancy and, I don't know, he was still like shooting on the weekends, on Sunday. But we used to go to his parents every Sunday. It was a routine and we would pack up the kids and go to their house. And then we would be hurrying home on Sunday and then I'd get home, we'd get home, and then he'd have to leave right away to go shooting. And I felt like I still had things to do, you know, I had lawn chores to do, and I used to drag the kids out there with me. They'd have a playpen out there and they'd love to go in the pumpkin seat, but I got over it, when the kids get older, it gets easier, but at that time I felt like – I felt I needed him there with me at that time, but then, me being home, I felt I didn't have the right to do that because he had the right to have a little time to himself, so I never wanted to deny him that because at that time I wasn't working. I felt it though, not that it was right, but I did feel that way.

This quote provided an example of the second theme. W2 described how she took on more responsibility for the children and around the home so that her husband could have some time to himself. While W2 was aware that she wanted H2 to be around more, she felt like she wasn't entitled to ask for his time. Even during the interview, over 10 years after the situation she described she still felt as if it wasn't her right to ask more of her husband. However, W2 did feel not as close to her husband during that time.

W3 spoke about her occasional experience of not having her need for attention met by H3 and how it impacts their relationship. W3 said,

I think sometimes he will get very wrapped up in his stuff. His friends are very important to him, his work, and I'll sort of feel left behind. Like sometimes I feel like he gives them more attention. And loves being with them and his time with them – and I get a little jealous of that. I'll start to get distant and then I will kind of shut down, go into sort of a mushroom mode, and then I'll get frustrated and then reconnected ... Sometimes just through the little things – like doing the dishes or he'll call me during the day and see how I'm doing. Or we'll just go out and spend the afternoon together, it's really nice. It's nice. Like I said, we're not real complicated, we're pretty simple. But that's one thing that's compatible about us, I think, we're not real emotionally needy people.

W3's quote demonstrated the interaction between several of the RAM dynamics. W3 said that when she is not getting her need for attention met she distances herself and shuts down. She said that this leads to her feeling frustrated and then she and H3 ultimately reconnect through spending time together or H3 meeting one of her needs by doing something thoughtful for her. This quote involved the RAM dynamics: rely, trust, and know. First W3 wasn't getting her needs met by H3 which is a reduction in her rely and this ultimately affected how close she felt to H3 and then her attitude toward H3, which is her trust picture of him. The lowered trust and rely dynamics created a sense of disconnection in the relationship which propelled W3 to seek out H3 to reconnect. W3 provided several examples of how she and H3 reconnect. Sometimes he would do something nice for her and meet one of her needs, rely, or sometimes they spend time together, which is indicative of the know dynamic. This quote provided an example of how deficiencies in one dynamic bond of the RAM negatively impacted other dynamic bonds of the RAM and how intentionally enhancing these areas, when deficiencies have occurred, helped to reestablish the closeness in a relationship.

This section provided examples of how the participants in this study discussed the third dynamic bond of the RAM: rely. The participants talked about the bonding dynamic in two primary ways. First, all of the participants made mention of the

importance of having their needs met in their marriage and feeling supported by their spouse. This need fulfillment led to feelings of closeness and connection in their marital relationship. Conversely, the second way rely was discussed was in terms of a deficiency of need fulfillment and how that negatively impacted the relationship and one's attitude toward their spouse. These two themes lend support for the presence and importance of the bonding dynamic, rely, as well as how it has the ability to either create closeness or disconnection in marital relationships. In addition to these two primary themes, several of the needs included in the definition of rely were mentioned. Specifically, the participants made mention of having needs for: affection, financial support, emotional support, help or support, and companionship in their marital relationship.

Commitment

Commitment, the fourth RAM dynamic, indicates how much commitment one experiences in a relationship. Commitment is not just defined as a marital status, but as the feeling of belonging, loyalty, obligation, and responsibility for another, and the feeling that another is with you even when you are apart. Commitment is also defined as an investment into another and into the relationship. Commitment is also a decision and a choice that is made at the outset of a marriage as well as continuously through the marriage. This is consistent with the discussion of the volitional self in Chapter 2. Throughout marriage self-control is enacted, or not, to keep commitments, avoid temptations, and maintain boundaries. An intact and strong sense of commitment in marriage will foster a sense of security and comfort in the relationship.

The dynamic bond, commitment, was mentioned explicitly by all the participants when they were asked, "*what keeps you in your marriage when times are tough.*"

Commitment and what it meant to each participant was slightly different. Some participants emphasized the promise that was made to their partner, while others emphasized the investments or obligation to work hard on their marriage. The frequency participants mentioned the defining features of commitment as well as how the commitment processes contributed to feelings of closeness or distance is summarized in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: The Frequency the RAM Dynamic Commit was Mentioned by Participants

Participant	H1	W1	H2	W2	H3	W3	H4	W4	Total
<i>Definition:</i> Investment, belonging, loyalty, obligation, sense of responsibility, constraining forces.	3	5	7	4	3	4	6	9	41
<i>Process:</i> Report of commitment contributing to closeness/distance.	2	4	3	3	2	3	4	4	26
Total frequency	5	9	10	7	5	7	10	13	67

W1 emphasized the importance of the promise she made on her wedding day and the investment she and H1 have in their children. She said, “well, we had children. And I think the commitment that we made on our wedding day held a lot for both of us. You just don't give that up because you made a promise. You just don't go up on your promises that easy.”

In the interview, W1 talked about a difficult time in her marriage to H1 when he was attending nursing school. I asked W1 “*what helped you to move past this time, and what kept you from leaving the marriage?*” W1’s response highlighted how her commitment was steady even when the other areas of the relationship were not and how

by maintaining a high level of commitment, despite their struggles, helped their relationship grow stronger. W1 said,

Well, time passed, and he finished, and it was just a matter of this is a rough time and you've got to work it out and then I got pregnant and it's just one of those things you have to work out because the commitment is there. Now would it be the same? I don't know. It'd be so easy to get out and say gee, I'm a nurse, I can do whatever I want to do, I don't need this. But I think it made us stronger. It made us stronger.

W4 talked about commitment in her marriage in terms of a sense of loyalty and a religious vow that was made. W4 said,

Yeah, what has kept me? I ask myself that same question. And really what's kept H4 in it too. And I think, if I were to answer that, it's commitment. You have two people that are committed in a relationship, in this relationship – I think what maybe can cause a lot of problems is when you only have one person in a committed relationship. But I think we're fortunate that we have two people. I think, for me, part of it is a vow because I am Catholic. But I don't think that's the number one thing – I think for me that stubbornness works into that. A sense of loyalty and just that commitment.

Like so many of the participants interviewed, W4 talked about commitment as a force within her marriage that helped to keep her in it. She also talked about commitment as a promise or a vow and a sense of loyalty to her husband.

W4 was the only participant who talked about being on the brink of divorce. W4 discussed a time in her marriage when she and H4 agreed to divorce but ultimately stayed together. When I asked her “*what helped you to come back from the brink?*” W4 said,

Well, one thing was – we just – he just made a very conscious effort to work whatever program he was working with his counselor at the time. So at that point in time, it becomes that level of commitment that, okay, I've got three little babies here. I've got to work at this as hard as I can, and to work through this. Because, really, once your kids are grown and gone, there's only one thing keeping you together, it's each other, you know, not only that, but I think that combination is why we're still here because we are stubborn, we both have a strong sense of loyalty, both strong sense of commitment. Where I think if one of those things were missing in either him or me, I don't think we'd be here today.

In this quote, W4 discussed the importance of commitment in keeping her in the relationship during a very difficult time with H4. She described the hard work that was necessary to make it through the difficult time, her loyalty, stubbornness, and children as factors related to commitment that helped her relationship weather the storm. This quote also highlights commitment as a decision and choice. During this difficult time, W4 had to make the decision to remain in the marriage despite all of the challenges.

W3's response to the question of what keep her in her marriage was direct. She stated, "Commitment. You make a commitment, you follow through, we're a family. It means you make a promise and you keep it." W3's husband's answer was somewhat different. H3 said, "I couldn't imagine not being with her and just – I would feel the loneliness of not having her there. And I can't imagine that there would be anybody else more suitable for me. So it's never anything I really even thought about." H3's response was somewhat more romantic than W3's and highlighted different aspects of commitment. H3's response stressed the aspects of commitment related to holding a partner in one's heart and feeling a sense of belonging. H3 could not imagine being without W3 and couldn't entertain the idea that someone else would be better suited for him.

This section reviewed the fourth RAM dynamic bond: commitment. Participants in this study all mentioned commitment as a force in their marriage that keeps them in it even during difficult times. An example of commitment as a decision and how that kept a marriage intact was provided. The participants also described commitment as an investment, sense of belonging, a feeling of loyalty, and a sense of responsibility in their marriages.

Touch/Sex

Touch, the fifth RAM dynamic bond, indicates how much touch one experiences in a relationship. Touch can represent anything from shaking hands with a stranger to hugging to intercourse. Touch also includes showing affection, flirting, and the overall chemistry that is experienced in a relationship. This area is not just about what has occurred in a relationship, but overall how close and satisfied one feels in terms of touch and affection in a relationship. The frequency participants mentioned the defining features of touch as well as how the touch processes contributed to feelings of closeness or distance is summarized in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6: The Frequency the RAM Dynamic Touch was Mentioned by Participants

Participant	H1	W1	H2	W2	H3	W3	H4	W4	Total
<i>Definition:</i> Aspects of touch such as flirtation, chemistry, attraction, kissing, intercourse, etc.	3	6	3	14	2	3	10	14	55
<i>Process:</i> Report of touch contributing to closeness/distance.	4	5	2	11	6	10	6	10	54
Total frequency	7	11	5	25	8	13	16	24	109

The participants in this study talked about touch in primarily one way. In particular, participants talked about their physical relationship fostering a sense of closeness, intimacy, and a way to repair other areas of the relationship. All but one couple talked about having a healthy sex life. Considering the personal nature of this question, it is possible that some of the participants may have felt uncomfortable talking about difficulties or disagreements regarding their sex life. While all of the interview content was personal in nature, the interviews took on a different dynamic when the topic

of sex was introduced. The participants tended to not be as descriptive throughout the conversations on sex as they were when discussing the other subjects. Additionally, the participants tended to talk about their sex life generically versus incorporating stories and past experiences like they did when discussing the other interview topics. It is possible that the findings reported in this section were affected by the aforementioned reasons and therefore the results reported on touch are more geared toward the positive aspects of touch, sex, and affection in marriage.

W2 was the only participant to talk about sometimes not wanting to have sex with H2 and how she felt that affected their relationship. When asked “*what role does sex and affection play in your marriage?*” W2 said,

Sex is, to me, not important. Not now, anyway, after all these years, I don't even care about it anymore, which is sad, sometimes, I think. I think that really bothers him. I think it does (play a role). I think – and again, I think it's more for him. Because I could do without it. As good as he is – he's always cared about me and my needs first. I think he needs it and I should probably do it more, but I've gone through menopause and I have no desire. And sometimes I try and I just – oh, I've got to do it just to make him feel better – so I guess I think it is a little important. I don't know. It's just a man thing, I guess. Men and sex. Your virility or whatever. He's getting older, we're getting older, we're in our 50s, and you hear all about the prostate cancer and stuff and then you can't do it maybe after awhile. I really don't know – I just think men seem to feel they need sex. The actual physical intimacy of it, not just the ejaculation, whatever you want to call it – because there's times I'll tell him just go take a soapy shower, but it's not the same, that's not what they want. I think it affects it (their closeness) in a way. I feel it. You can't – you can't tell the way we act around each other, I don't think. But I feel we would have more of a closeness if I would instigate it more.

In this quote W2 talked about the role she felt sex plays in her marriage. She said that she feels little desire but she acknowledged the role it plays for her husband and how he needs more than the physical release but he needs the intimacy that sex provides. W2 also acknowledged how the lack of sex in their marriage may lessen the amount of closeness they experience in their relationship. Later W2 talked about her husband, H2,

and his tendency to be upset for an extended time. W2 described how during the times H2 is upset for more than a few weeks she would initiate sex to help get things back to normal. She said,

No, there's nothing you can do because you can't talk to him or anything, he won't talk, he'll just say nothing's wrong – what's wrong? Nothing. And – yeah, actually, sometimes if we would have sex– because when it goes on for more than a couple of weeks then I'm feeling really bad when we're apart like that, and I would initiate, and then that sometimes would break the ice and we'd get back to normal.

Using sex as a way to get things back on track in a marriage and to get through difficulties was a common theme among the participants. W3 made a similar statement,

I think it's important because I think it helps people reconnect. It's always been a strong point in our marriage and sometimes that will get us through other parts. It doesn't solve problems but it opens doors, makes you more comfortable, and closer, so that you can deal with stuff.

W3's husband, H3, discussed their sexual relationship as important because of how sex creates a feeling of bondedness and closeness. He said,

It's important. It's a very important bonding factor. It clears away a lot of the noise of everything else that you're dealing with and it just kind of makes you remember that it's you two and why you're together and it's a big part of the glue that holds a marriage together. And we were always very compatible that way and that's one of the things I tried explaining to my daughter – that you've got to have a good partner from that aspect too. I mean, everything else is important too, but if you don't have a good partner that way, the chances are it's not going to get better.

W1 also mentioned the different aspects of touch and how it impacts the closeness in her marriage to H1. When asked, *“how do you show affection to one another?”* W1 responded, “verbal and physical.” W1's responses were somewhat short and avoidant, therefore several follow-up questions were asked to explore the role of sex in her marriage to H1. The follow-up question, *“so if there was no sex in your marriage, how would that affect your marriage?”* was asked and W1 responded,

Well, probably pretty bad. I don't think we would have survived as a couple. That's probably one of the most intimate things you can do with somebody, that's how you really know somebody. Those are the moments that you think about – the kisses and the touches. Those are the things that you always kind of go back to. It takes your mind off of everything else and you do feel closer, you do feel closer.

W1's husband, H1 echoed W1's response when he said,

Well, it's fun, for one. Intimacy is just a lot of fun. I think it's an important aspect of marriage. Just as important as eating and it helps with – your – I'm trying to think of the word but – just your togetherness and your mutual respect and love for each other.

W4 talked about her husband, H4, and how he shows her affection. She said,

He's very affectionate. He really is. I think our kids are very fortunate in the fact that he's always grabbing me – that's what he calls it – but just – and we have a joke with our daughter because he might go, your mommy's so woofable, and she'll be like, I don't want to hear it, and he just goes on and on and on – and she's like, no, I don't want to hear it! So we do – he's very affectionate, I'm very affectionate too – you know – so we're always hugging and kissing and all that kind of stuff.

When W4 was asked, “*what role does sex play in your marriage.*” She said,

It's a big part of it. I can honestly say that is one area that we have never had a problem in, ever. H4's very intuitive with that. If I didn't want to, he's intuitive enough that I'm just not in the mood. But on the other side, though, I also realize in my marriage that sex is important – so even though there are times when I might not be totally in the mood, you know, I want to feel close. I may not want sex, but it's kind of ironic. Once I start – because I just might want to be cuddled or held, but once that starts, it's like, okay, you know, that's not such a bad idea. So – I try and tell my friends sometimes when they complain, it's like, maybe if you just try, you'll find that you're more in the mood than you think you are.

In this quote W4 highlighted how she realizes sex is important in her marriage and that it helps her to feel close. She continued,

It serves the marriage because for me, it makes me feel attractive. H4 makes me feel pretty. He makes me feel sexy. He makes me feel wanted. He makes me feel loved. So it makes – it's one of the things that really makes me feel close to him. I have like total and complete trust and I can't even think of even a better word than that in that aspect. If I were to say who would be the last man on earth that would cheat on me, it would be my husband.

Here W4 summed up the importance of sex in her marriage in terms of helping her feel loved, attractive, and close to her husband. When H4 was asked about affection in his marriage to W4 he responded,

Well, affection, obviously – every day to show affection or whatever. That's an indicator that person's still interested with you or there's still that spark or whatever. And with the busy lifestyles or whatever, we try to be intimate as much as possible. I think it's an integral part of your marriage. It has to be. It's the physical form of showing – not a relief like some people that I know. It's a very integral part of our marriage. Like I said, it's the physical side but it also shows her to me and me to her how much a different way of expressing that love to each other.

This section presented examples of the fifth dynamic bond, touch. The participants in this study mostly talked about touch in positive terms. Specifically, they discussed how sex in their marriage serves to help them through difficult times or to stay close when life is busy and hectic. This theme suggested that enhancing the touch dynamic on the RAM can help to facilitate a sense of overall closeness in the marriage. In addition, touch also served as a way to repair deficiencies in other areas of the RAM. For example, W2 talked about using sex as a way to reinstate closeness in her marriage when H2's attitude toward her is mostly negative. This example demonstrated the interaction between trust and touch in that increasing the touch in the marriage helped to repair the damaged trust. Touch was also described as a way of expressing love to another.

Summary

This section presented the findings on the first research question which was: Do the five bonding dynamics of the RAM exist as contributions to feelings of love and

closeness in marital relationships? Based on these eight interviews, support was found for the existence of know, trust, rely, commit, and touch as bonding dynamics in marital relationships. Each of these bonding dynamics was mentioned and articulated by the participants of the interviews and defined in a way that was consistent with the *a priori* deductive codes. Additionally, the bonding dynamics were described by the participants in terms of how each one related to the overall feeling of closeness in their marital relationships. This phenomenon will be described in more depth in the next session, which examined the second research question.

Research Question Two

The second research question examined whether or not an experience of vulnerability/dissatisfaction in the marital relationship or stressors in life affected the overall relational bond. This research question was intended to focus on the dynamic nature of the RAM, in that different combinations of RAM dynamics may occur due to stressors within or outside the marriage which ultimately may result in a different overall experience of closeness and satisfaction in the relationship. Additionally, a decrease in one dynamic due to stressors within or outside the marriage may impact the overall experience of satisfaction and closeness. Conversely, the repair of a dynamic may help to facilitate healing and increase closeness.

The interview findings revealed that the participants described times in their marital relationship where outside forces or changes in life events (i.e. having children) affected a particular or several RAM dynamics and, in the end had an impact on their overall feeling of closeness and bondedness in the relationship. In addition, participants also described occurrences in their relationship where dissatisfaction occurred in one

particular RAM dynamic; however over time the overall experience of closeness was affected as well as other RAM dynamics. Conversely, most participants described dissatisfaction in one RAM dynamic which could be mended by focusing on the development of a different RAM dynamic. For example, an increase in the dynamic touch could help to heal frustrations or dissatisfactions in reliance. This section will provide thick descriptions of each of these phenomena as described by the participants in the eight interviews.

H1 and W1

At the time of the interview H1 and W1 had been married thirty-seven years and were the longest-married couple interviewed. H1 and W1 were the only couple interviewed whose children were all out of the home. Their responses reflected this in that they had been empty nesters for over a decade and had settled into their routine together. For the most part, H1 and W1 had survived the majority of outside stressors and were enjoying their retirement and living a rather relaxed lifestyle. When discussing the most difficult times in their marriage, both H1 and W1 reflected on the time H1 was back in nursing school. Through their comments, the dynamics of the RAM and how they interacted and were affected by outside stressors was apparent. Specifically, W1 reflected on a time when H1 was in nursing school where her needs were not being met and her frustrations with H1 were exacerbated by him being and school and her pregnancy. During this time, W1 described her commitment as the main reason she stayed in her marriage. W1 said,

When he was gone to nursing school I kind of had the brunt of everything because I had to go back to work and then I got pregnant with our daughter, that was rough, that was rough, because I felt like I had to hold the ball and I don't think he enjoyed it because I don't think any man likes being out of work. He'd say, well,

I'm going to go out to lunch with the girls and it's like, wait a minute, I didn't get any sleep and I work nights....during that time, I didn't like him very much. Well, time passed, and he finished, and it was just a matter of this is a rough time and you've got to work it out and then I got pregnant and it's just one of those things you have to work out because the commitment is there. Now would it be the same? I don't know. It'd be so easy to get out and say gee, I'm a nurse, I can do whatever I want to do, I don't need this. I think it made it stronger. I think it made stronger. It would have to.

In this quote, W1 described a decrease in her reliance on H1 specifically that her needs weren't getting met by him and she was carrying the "brunt of everything". H1 also was not meeting her needs because he was using his free time to "go out to lunch" and not help W1 with all of the family responsibilities. W1 described her overall attitude toward H1, at this time, as negative and that she really didn't "like him very much". This quote showed how a decrease in reliance resulted in a negative attitude or trust in H1 which ended up creating dissatisfaction in the overall relationship. Subsequently, W1's commitment to the marriage kept her working on resolving these issues, which demonstrated how one RAM dynamic may help to foster healing or promote repair in the relationship and of other RAM dynamics.

W1 also described a time where her trust was tested in her marriage, which eventually caused her to question her commitment to the relationship. She said,

When he was working at the VA, there was a nurse that was going to massage school. And it just seemed to be everything was, he just thought a lot of her opinions I think, and I don't know, one thing led to another, and that was a rough time. And I'm not sure now why, but I thought – I don't know if this is right or if this is the right man for me or whatever, but then I thought about leaving and disturbing all of this, and the thought scared me, the thought scared me. So I think it goes in your head, but I think it goes—no, I don't think that's a good idea. *How did you recover?* I just think the passage of time. I just – you know, I just, I think when you have a rough spot like that and you think about it and you consider it and then you think well, that's not going to work, so then you go back to where you are, I mean, it's a rough spot – you have to have that, that's going to happen in

any marriage, anything, and then you just work it out and you just go back to where you were before.

In this quote, W1 talked about a time H1 showed an interest in another woman. It wasn't clear what happened between H1 and this other woman, but W1 experienced this time in their marriage as a breach in her trust and as a "rough time". H1's breach of W1's trust led to W1 experiencing dissatisfaction and vulnerability in her marriage as well as reconsidering her commitment to H1. This quote provides an example of how a deficit in a RAM dynamic (i.e. trust) can lead to drops in other dynamics (i.e. commitment) and an overall decrease in the experience of safety, closeness, and satisfaction in the relationship.

H1 also reflected on how difficult it was for him and W1 during the time he was focusing on his career. When asked about a challenging time in his marriage H1 said,

Yeah, I think, I don't know, I'm probably a macho shit head or something, but I've been raised in that generation where I was supposed to be the one that would be the breadwinner and have the job and bring the money in and stuff and when I was out of work and going through nursing school we squabbled a lot and I thought it wasn't right that W1 would have to go to work. I was sad about that and I think vulnerable would be a good way of saying it, I think. I think it made me feel a little bit like I wasn't being a good husband because I wasn't doing the things I wanted.

H1's quote provided an example of a time where an outside stressor impacted the way he felt in his marriage and as a husband. From H1's perspective, he felt that he was not being the husband to W1 that she deserved which created a sense of vulnerability in H1 which led to difficulties in their marriage. In this example, H1 felt he wasn't able to meet W1's needs (i.e. rely) which resulted in "squabbles" in their marriage.

This set of quotes is revealing because both marriage partners described the same event from their unique perspective. W1 revealed that she did feel H1 wasn't meeting

her needs which resulted in her questioning her commitment to the relationship, whereas H1 also felt he wasn't meeting W1's needs which left H1 feeling vulnerable and inadequate. Regardless of the perspective, this time in their life was so memorable for H1 and W1 because it was challenging for their marriage. This external challenge ultimately affected their overall marital happiness and closeness.

External stressors may impact a marriage negatively, but challenging times may also force a couple to be more intentional about taking care of their marital relationship. H1 and W1 both discussed how challenging their life and marriage were when H1 was going back to school. H1 also reflected on this time and remembered that this was also the time that he and his family began camping together. H1 said,

That was an especially hard time and that's actually when we started to camp – because it was something that we could do. It was cheaper. We could get a camper, which they weren't that expensive. You know, you get a pop-up. And we could take the kids places that – it was kind of – they always thought we'd go to different places and we kind of had to scrimp a little bit more, and in doing that, sometimes you find out things that are fun that aren't expensive. So, you know, we were hustling during that time so getting together took more work and then we started camping and doing things like that that were a little bit more cost efficient but still for the kids to tell their friends that during summer vacation where they went. Yeah, I think this busyness brought us closer because then you really want to plan time together.

In this quote H1 reflected on how he and his family had to intentionally plan time together because they were “hustling” and busy. This quote provided an example of how busy times in a family and in a marriage can be managed in a way that ultimately facilitates closeness and intimacy. When considering the RAM dynamics, H1 and W1 intentionally focused on the “know” dynamic. Specifically, they were intentional about staying in the know with one another and their children and also were deliberate about spending time together and staying close. By focusing on strengthening this dynamic

they didn't grow apart during this hectic time in their lives, but instead deepened their relationship and fostered closeness.

H4 and W4

At the time of the interview, H4 and W4 had been married twenty-five years. They were in the midst of raising teenagers and this is reflected in the responses to many of the interview questions. Specifically both H4 and W4 referred to having a difficult time with two of their teenagers which caused conflict in their marriage. For example W4 said,

If there's a lot of arguing. I guess I could say – these high school years, I hate teenage years. I love my kids but so far, out of three kids, two of them, it's like, oh my gosh, and our son was incredible – I'm surprised we've survived it. Yeah, it's those things. It's those times like – like I said, the arguments where nothing seems to be resolved, where there seems to be constant turmoil in the house. Whether it's an external factor or an internal factor – those are the times where it's like, you know what? I have these fantasies of like just getting in the car and leaving.

In this statement, W4 described how stressors with her children resulted in difficulties in her marriage. W4 didn't identify how it specifically affected her attitude toward H4 or the marriage but it was clear that she fantasized about leaving the marriage during these difficult times. This quote provided an example of how stressors outside the marriage may negatively impact the overall bond within the marriage.

When W4 was asked how she and H4 reconnect following the times she fantasized about leaving she said,

I tend to just be quiet and kind of let things go on, believe it or not. But H4 will be the one, if he's feeling a disconnect, he will be the one that will sit down and go, you know, I haven't been feeling close to you, I think we're drifting apart – I think H4's been really good and it's really been since the kids have become teenagers. I think we've matured, I think we've mellowed a little bit. I think H4's kind of come to the realization I'm going to do what I want to do. And he generally, 99% of the time he doesn't have an issue. If he does, like sometimes he'll be like, I have not

seen you in a week and a half. And it'll be like, Okay, I've got to try and make some time here.

W4 and H4 reconnected following the difficult times by intentionally spending time together. W4 described H4 as the one who was intentional about requesting time together. By intentionally making time for one another, H4 and W4 focused on the know dynamic of the RAM which helped to put them back in touch with one another and ultimately feel more satisfied with their relationship and overall closer as a couple.

Based on the interview it seemed that many of the frustrations W4 felt toward H4 had to do with W4 feeling that she was responsible for too much in the home and that H4 wasn't sensitive to that. W4 provided an example of this and how her frustrations affected her opinion of or trust in H4 which ultimately led to feelings of resentment. W4 said,

Even though I'm very independent and that works to help in our marriage but at the same time it can be a pain in the ass, because he's more than willing to have me take on so much, and there are times where I can be resentful...– sarcastic comments start coming out, and I will just call it out, and I'll finally – unfortunately, it's not good, but H4 calls it – I collect brownie points or brownie stamps where I take so much, I take so much, and then all of a sudden it's like – erf – you know, and so that's kind of what I do and eventually I'll just like –let loose.....just – yeah, well, I don't feel as close to him. I don't feel the warm fuzzies. I don't hate him, but it's kind of like – at those moments, sometimes I feel like you're just another chore on my list.

W4 described how she developed occasional resentments toward H4 during times in their marriage where she felt he allowed her to take on too much. Her resentments ultimately affected her belief in H4, in other words, her trust in him. When W4's trust in H4 was reduced her overall feeling of closeness or bondedness toward him was negatively affected.

For W4's husband, H4, staying in the know with one another and trust seemed to be the most important factor to him and his satisfaction in their marriage. During the interview H4 was asked what makes his marriage work and what contributed to his marital satisfaction. He said,

Communication makes it work. Obviously the trust that's been built over the years. We're almost at the thirty-year mark now, together, so that has a lot to do with it. The knowledge of each other. I know a lot about her, she knows a lot about me. There's a lot of things that I don't have to say. The same thing with her. They're just givens now. You don't have to talk about stuff like that...I guess it's basically nice to come home to somebody like that, that's kind of your refuge.

In this statement, H4 indicated that a high trust in W4 and a high feeling of *knowing* her contributed to his overall satisfaction and happiness in the marriage. This quote provided an example of how high levels of two of the RAM dynamics (i.e. trust and know) contributed to H4's experience of closeness and bondedness in his marriage.

H2 and W2

Throughout H2 and W2's interviews a consistent theme emerged. This theme was related to H2 feeling unheard or invalidated in his marriage which led him to pull away from W2 and give her the cold shoulder or silent treatment. H2's tendency was discussed by W2. She described him as being inconsolable during those times and that she and the kids knew to leave H2 alone until he got over his frustration. H2 spoke about this pattern when he was asked to describe when he doesn't feel as close to W2. He said,

Sometimes I feel like a spoiled brat sometimes because I'm not getting my way and other times it's like well what did I do to deserve this? Once again, it's just – I kind of just accept it as part of life, and I don't even really think about it other than I might get a little upset or a little unhappy or whatever but other than that—And I get a little frustrated because sometimes – and I've admitted, I've said this out loud to her and it's like a lot of times what I say doesn't mean anything as far as certain things, mostly the kids, and what I feel we should do or we shouldn't do... and I do, for the most part, bite my tongue when I think was right because I feel it doesn't do anyone a service, I've already been pouting pretty much because I was

upset that we didn't do what I wanted to do – that was probably the biggest peeve that I have at this point in the relationship is that I almost feel like what I think doesn't count. I won't say count because it's not like she blows me off but it's almost like the mind's already made up and I'm going to be – and most of the time, she has good reason and that irritates me even more. I've never been really well at – I'm not someone who can argue my point very well. I may believe in my heart that it's right, but somebody will give me some reason or fact that I kind of agree with but I still don't like the answer, and so I just – for the most part, I just – growl and go on my way. It gets frustrating, it gets to the point at times where you think, why am I even here? I just kind of climb up and go into a little bit of a shell.

What helps you to come out of your shell?

That'll depend too on – a lot of things. I would say the biggest thing is if I'm working a lot, then we're not doing much together or we're not around and it can linger more because you just don't have a chance to get it over, per se, get over it or get through it versus when you have more time together, – sometimes – but most times when we're together, doing more things, like with the kids and stuff, it's easier to get through it.

H2 spoke in the interview about his frustration around not feeling validated or heard in his marriage. He said that he ultimately felt irritated when he felt invalidated and would withdrawal from his marriage and family. His irritations even left H2 questioning “why am I even here”. H2’s experience in his marriage is reflected on the RAM as a lowered level of reliance. Specifically, H2’s need to be heard and need to have his thoughts confirmed was not met by his wife and family which led to H2 experiencing an overall decrease in his felt closeness toward his family and bondedness with his wife.

W2 observed H2’s tendency to withdrawal in the marriage. When asked about times she felt distant from H2, W2 spoke about times she experienced her husband as “moody” or “worrying himself to death.” Her statements reflected W2’s impression that her husband was unhappy or upset with either the relationship or outside circumstances;

however she seemed to lack insight into the specific reasons H2 appeared upset or even the reasons H2 spoke about in his interview. Specifically, W2 said,

I know there's times when he's kind of moody and the kids and I will sense it and then we know we have to just leave him alone until he gets over. I think he's got so much on his mind with work and possibly losing his job and everything, and we just kind of walk on egg shells around him, just leave him be until he starts to talk again. Even now sometimes I'll bug him until he laughs or something, but it doesn't change things. And once again, I think it goes back to the children. That's what normally any stress we have relates to the kids. I just realized that eventually he gets over it. Sometimes it would take a couple weeks for him to just get back to normal and I think that's just his way of processing things, he just worries himself to death sometimes.

Is there anything that you can do to help H2 to get over his moodiness?

No, there's nothing you can do because you can't talk to him or anything, he won't talk, he'll just say nothing's wrong – what's wrong? Nothing. And – yeah, actually, sometimes if we would have sex, because when we're distant like that, you don't want it – so if I would kind of – when it goes on for more than a couple of weeks then I'm feeling really bad when we're apart like that, and I would initiate, and then that sometimes would break the ice and we'd get back to normal.

The above statements reflected W2's perspective of H2's moods. She stated that she lacked a clear understanding of what he would get upset about; however she knew to give him space or to initiate sex. She described feeling distant from H2 during these times and how that decreased her desire to have sex with him; yet she acknowledged that her initiation would often lessen the distance between them and help them get back to normal. This interaction is reflected on the RAM as a lowered level of the "know" dynamic. During these times when H2 pulls away and does not talk about what is upsetting him, W2 feels out of touch with her husband and that she doesn't know him as well as either she thought she did or as well as she typically does. This decrease in the know dynamic, most likely, impacted the other relationship dynamics. Her trust in him to be there for her and to respond to her and talk with her about his upset feelings was

challenged and during the weeks of his silent treatment, most likely, many of W2's needs went unmet which resulted in a decrease in the rely dynamic. These lowered levels of the RAM dynamics led to a decrease in overall closeness and bondedness in the relationship. W2 attested to this decrease in closeness when she said "because when we're distant like that" or "I'm feeling really bad when we're apart like that". Alternatively, when W2 intentionally worked to increase the relationship dynamic, touch, her and H2's closeness improved. By deliberately repairing the gap on the touch dynamic, W2 and H2 were able to reconnect and feel again in the know with one another which ultimately restored their closeness. Regardless of any continuing unresolved issues, for H2 and W2 increasing the bond in one area positively increased the bonds of other areas.

Summary

This section presented the findings on the second research question which was: Does an experience of vulnerability/dissatisfaction in the marital relationship or changes/stressors in life affect the overall relational bond? This research question was intended to focus on the dynamic nature of the RAM, in that different combinations of RAM dynamics may occur due to stressors within or outside the marriage which ultimately may result in a different overall experience of closeness and satisfaction in the relationship. Additionally, a decrease in one dynamic due to stressors within or outside the marriage may impact the overall experience of satisfaction and closeness. Conversely, the repair of a dynamic may help to facilitate healing and increased closeness. Based on these interviews, support was found for the experience of stressors and/or vulnerabilities inside or outside the marriage affecting the RAM dynamics and the

overall relationship bond. Conversely, the repair of any given RAM dynamic bond was demonstrated to foster closeness and bondedness in the marital relationship.

Research Question Three

The third research question examined how married individuals define and experience love. This question was asked to participants in several ways. Most often, participants were asked “how do you define love in your marriage?” Often participants had a difficult time answering this question so follow up questions were used to help them think through this topic. Examples of follow up questions are: how do you know you are loved, how do you show your spouse love, and how would you describe you and your wife’s (husband’s) love for each other? Three themes were noted among the participant’s responses. First, many participants commented on the difficulty in defining love or finding words for love. Second, was the tendency for participants to list several descriptors of what contributed to love and the development of love in their marriage. Finally, love was described as a dynamic entity that grows and evolves over time and is based on comfort, friendship, and commitment. The themes, as conveyed by the participants, will be outlined and described below.

Love is difficult to define

The first theme observed related to the difficulty participants had defining love. Many participants referred to having a hard time finding the words or describing something that they considered a feeling. Many of the difficulties were captured in short statements similar to when W1 said, “words to describe our love. Oh, let's see. Oh man. I'm just not very good with words.” When prompted with further questions, many were able to elaborate which resulted in their answer being placed in another theme.

W2 had a particularly difficult time describing her love and how she knew she was loved. When asked how she knows she is loved, W2 said, “I just feel it. I don't know – sometimes I think if he puts up with me, he must (love me). Sometimes I feel I'm not the perfect person or I don't think I'm best wife for him. I don't know. I just know he does, I never doubt that.”

Similarly, H2 talked about love in marriage as a blind faith or something that one just *knows* is there. H2 said,

I don't know how to – how to answer that really. I don't know how to put it in words or even how I think about it. It's maybe best – the only thing I can say is it's just – it's just there. Maybe the best analogy I can give you is it's like believing in God, I mean, there's no proof or nothing I can point to but you believe in love – there's not one thing I can say, wow, that's love. The only thing I can think of is it's there.

Love as a list of qualities or behaviors

Many of the participants described love as a list of qualities in their partner or their relationship. Additionally, behaviors or acts of love were also common responses given by participants when describing their love for one another.

When H3 spoke about the love in his marriage he described ways in which he and his wife accommodate one another and do nice things for each other. H3 said,

She's always very loving to me. And we're very compatible that way and so that's always – I think we fit very well together that way. And she, like I said, she always looks out for me. If there's something that I want to do that maybe isn't something that she would want to do – if she knows it would make me happy, she'll accommodate that and go along with it. And she always – as far as taking care of, not just me but our whole family, she's a very giving person and she always puts our family first. I try to do little things. I try to get her flowers. I know that she likes – she has errands to run, she likes – during the day, the kids will just throw all their dishes in the sink and she always comes home with a messy sink or whatever. So I'll clean the kitchen for her and just – you know, it's a short thing, but she likes being able to walk in and not have more to do.

In this quote, H3 described how he and W3 meet one another's needs or rely on one another and how that is synonymous with love for him. H3 continued talking about love in his marriage when he said,

For some reason, the word purposeful comes to mind because we always take care of each other. And we know what we need to do to take care of each other and our family and we just do it. And there's not a whole lot of discussion about it or what we should do – we both just know we need to take care of each other and our family and that's what we do. And the trust that we have in each other and the belief in each other that no matter what the other one dream or goal that they have, that the other one is going to help them get that. So not having – from my job, with the stresses and things that I have to deal with and not having – knowing that everything's taken care – that I have a solid base at home, it's just a great thing.

H3 also spoke about qualities in their relationship that contributed to the love in his marriage. H3 stated,

Number one is the trust that we have in each other. I think sexually we're very compatible with each other. And we have a common set of values in that we believe in our family and that family unit. And we kind of had a shared vision of what we wanted. The character wanted our kids to have. And that's what we've focused on and we goals for ourselves, things that we want to do around the house or – and we kind of look – you put those things out there and we talk about them and can we do it, can we save for it. We're both conservative fiscally.

Above H3 elaborated on the compatibility he shares with W3 as something that contributes to how he defines love in his marriage. The above quote suggested that H3 feels like he and W3 really know one another and operate with a shared vision, which is indicative of a high level of the know dynamic on the RAM. H3 also mentioned his sexual relationship with W3 which also contributed to the love in his marriage. This heightened sense of know and sexual closeness fostered a feeling of love for H3.

Love as a dynamic force

The last theme was related to how love evolves and grows throughout a marriage. Many of the participants spoke about love changing and taking on new forms throughout

their life together. Participants also talked about love in a way that was synonymous with commitment, comfort, and friendship.

W2 exemplified this theme when she said, “your love grows stronger and your comfort. Love isn't just all exciting. It's comfort. We've been together forever, it seems like – 28 years, add the 5 to that of living together, that's forever.” She elaborated on this sentiment when she said,

I just, I know he's there for me for anything. We're there for each other. It's just – you're a unit, you just – I don't think I would be complete without him. And like I said, I don't know what I would do if something happened. I can't see my life without him and I think maybe that's it. Something would greatly be missing....It's gotten stronger. I think partly with the confidence I feel in him over the years. It took years, but I did – I just I know can count on him for anything. He's dependable. He's one in a million.

In this statement, W2 made reference to H2's dependability or how she is able to rely on him and how this contributed to her feeling of love in the marriage. She also stated that she knew love existed in her marriage because she can't envision life without H2 and she spoke about how their love has grown stronger over the years of their marriage.

H2 also made reference to the comfort in his marriage and how that is what came to his mind when he thought of how to define love. H2 said,

Maybe it's just a comfort now, but I wouldn't know how to explain or even – once again, it goes almost back to that Hollywood thing where there's nothing that jumps out. It's just part of the marriage, I guess, or our marriage process that, like I said, nothing that beats me over the head with a stick that says yeah, you're – you feel – I just feel comfortable with it and maybe that's part of getting older, that you're just comfortable with each other than the actual oh ahh type of thing.

W3 talked about the love in her marriage with H3 as something that was initially based on their chemistry and attraction for one another. She also made reference to how the passage of time has solidified her experience of love in the marriage. W3 said,

I think initially it was based on attraction, having fun, but as you get older, I think that the loyalty and the commitment and knowing somebody for twenty years, it's the most significant relationship I've ever had with anyone. I've been with him longer than my parents. So he knows me more than anybody and I know him more than anybody.

W3 also made reference to her experience of feeling known and knowing her husband and how that is part of love in her marriage. Her quote suggested that the experience of knowing someone over twenty years of marriage created a deep and significant experience of love and intimacy.

W1 also made reference to the passage of time in her definition of love in her marriage to H1. She stated,

I guess I'd have to say – it's the seasons of the year, you know, seasons. You've got the spring and the summer and the fall and the winter and you go through all that stuff and rebirth and kind of like a dormant time and then the cold winters. And then you've got the rebirth again, I guess, it's seasonal, like that. Yeah, it evolves. Yeah. It keeps spinning... Well, would've thought when we got older that we wouldn't be as busy but we're busier now, we just don't move as fast. It's like, I guess you think that you're going to sit on a bench and do that kind of stuff. But there's always something to do, somewhere to go, somebody to see, and it's kind of fun, we're having fun, we're having fun.

W1 defined love in her marriage as seasonal. Her statement implied that there were times in marriage where the love was stronger and times it felt more “dormant”. Her description exemplified the dynamic nature of love and how at times it can be experienced intensely and at other times it may just act as a subtle presence in a marriage. Additionally, W1 talked about how she and H1 continue to evolve and have fun together and how this is part of their love. Throughout the interviews both W1 and H1 discussed how adventures as a couple and as a family kept their marriage strong and their love fresh; W1 reinforced that in the above statement. Spending time together and “having

fun” together is part of the RAM dynamic: know. High levels of knowing one another were a big part of the feelings of love and intimacy for H1 and W1.

H1 spoke about his love with W1 as a friendship. He stated,

Yeah, I mean, to come up with something that you could put in a lyric. I think it's really neat to have somebody that you have as not only your spouse but as your best friend. And W1's my best friend. And to share some of the physical pleasures of sex is something that's important and we were able to – we still do that – and that's fun. And just the respect and the trust that we have for each other. Love is that.

H1 highlighted the presence of friendship in love. He also spoke about the importance of sex, trust, and respect in a loving relationship.

W4 described love as the accumulation of time spent together. She stated,

Love is, is the encompassing – like now in our time – is the encompassing of 25 years. Of doing all that. It's not the butterflies, it's not the – it's the fact that it's like wow, 25 years. Damn. You know? It's a long time....Right, it's history, it's tradition, it's what you've done, so, yeah.

W4's husband, H4, reflected a similar sentiment when he said, “love is all about sharing your life with another person, so sharing. Trusting. I guess taking on life together rather than alone.” Both W4 and H4's responses were related to love being something that is part of sharing life with another and investing time in one another and in the life that is co-created together.

Summary

The third research question examined how married individuals define and experience love. Three themes were observed in the participant's responses. First, participant's described love as something that is difficult to define. Second, participants defined love as behaviors, qualities, and ways of treating one another. Third, participants

talked about love as the accumulation of experiences over the life of their marriage, a co-created life together that led to feelings of deep friendship, comfort, and intimacy.

It is also worth mentioning that many of the descriptions of love by the participants included dynamics that exist on the RAM. For example, many participants spoke about knowing one another deeply or over time, others discussed the importance of trust, many talked about meeting one another's needs and relying on each other, commitment was mentioned by several participants and physical intimacy and chemistry was also deemed a part of love by some participants interviewed. There are potential implications of these findings in that the RAM may be capturing five ingredients for love. Additionally, these findings suggest that some of the dynamics may be valued more than others by individuals. For some trust may be paramount for love to exist while for others having their needs met may be more important. To understand the meanings and implications of these findings further investigation would be required.

Participant Check Findings

In order to check the researcher's interpretation of the data, participants were emailed summaries of their interviews. Each summary included a description of the study, the purpose of the participant follow-up, and the RAM. Additionally, the summaries included examples of the participants' comments from the interviews that supported the RAM dynamics. Pictures of the RAM and how their comments were depicted on the RAM were also presented in the summaries. Participants were asked for permission to email the summaries. Once permission was obtained the summary was emailed to the participant and a follow-up phone call was scheduled. The participant summaries are found in Appendix D.

Follow-up phone calls were made to each participant to review their thoughts and comments on the summaries. Overall, very few changes were suggested. One change was suggested by W4 because she found that one of her comments was misrepresented, in that her husband H4 "made his sacraments before he met me not after." W4 also suggested that the researcher convey that the RAM was capturing a snapshot of a couple's marital relationship at any given point in time, as opposed to the relationship as a whole. Additionally, W4 commented that the depiction of her relationship on the RAM "was so accurate, it was really interesting to read the summary and get this perspective on our relationship, it actually explained a lot."

Both W2 and H2 had little to say about the interpretation. They responded that it was accurate and that they had no changes.

During a follow-up phone call with W3, she said that she felt the summaries were accurate and that the perspective presented in the interpretation captured how she felt at those moments. W3 also stated that she and H3 attended premarital counseling and that some of the aspects of the RAM reminded her of things she had learned in the premarital process and that the refresher provided by the summary was a "nice reminder." W3 also stated that reading through her summary inspired her to volunteer to become a relationship mentor to younger couples in the community. She reflected,

The issues in the interpretation summary were the same ones identified in the premarital counseling but we now rely on other aspects of our relationship to carry us through. Back then we were young and infatuated so we were caught up but now we focus on other areas during tough times to help us through. I remember the mentor couple we had when we were young and how they reflected how refreshing it was to be around the young in-love couples, this has got me thinking about how I would like to volunteer to be a mentor to younger couples.

Finally, W3 commented on the accuracy of the interpretation and how she could easily see the RAM translated into a book or relationship education program.

H3 also conveyed that he experienced the statements in his summary as “right on”. He said that he found the RAM interesting and that it was logical and made sense in how it was “laid out.” H3 stated that the model was nice because of its simplicity and seemed like it covered the “major things necessary to have a healthy relationship.” H3 said that he felt the definitions of the specific RAM dynamics were captured in his interview comments. Overall, H3 said that the interpretation was “accurate and captured exactly what I experienced in my relationship.”

During H1’s follow-up phone call he commented that “it’s been so long since the topics summarized were issues in our marriage, so it was really interesting to look back and see it more clearly because of the distance and because of how it was depicted on the model. Overall, it makes so much sense.” He also said that he thought “it was an accurate depiction of what was happening in our marriage at the time. I wish we would have had the clarity on it then, maybe it would have helped us through that difficult time.” H1 was prompted for changes but reported that he felt the model was an accurate depiction of his experience in marriage. Similarly, W1 commented that “I am not that great with words, but the summaries were right on in capturing my experience. I don’t really have anything to add.”

Overall, the participant summaries and follow-up phone calls did not result in major changes to the interpretation of the data. The general consensus among participants was that it was an interesting perspective on their marital relationship and that the RAM captured the dynamics of their marriage well.

Contradictory Findings and Themes

This section will review contradictory findings of the study. In addition, two themes were observed through the interviews that were not captured by the research questions. The first theme was the importance of not "sweating the small stuff" and the importance of letting things go in marriage. The second theme was that the couple's relationship grew stronger with the passage of time, stronger through adversity, and that time heals all wounds. These themes will be reviewed in greater depth below.

Contradictory Findings

Based on the interviews with these 8 individuals, very few contradictory findings were encountered. It is likely that few contradictory findings emerged because of the dynamic nature of the RAM. Had the RAM just consisted of static categories, it is likely that many of the comments made in the interview would not have been captured on the model; however because the RAM is dynamic all of the situations described by the participants were able to be translated to the RAM.

Themes

Two themes emerged in this study through the data analysis process. These themes are worth presenting because they provide insight into the attitudes of the participants toward marriage and their roles as spouse.

The first theme highlighted by participants was the importance of not sweating the small stuff. Several of the participants highlighted the need to "let things go" in marriage and to choose battles wisely. For example, H1 said, "When we do (get upset with one another), we either try to work them out or we just don't mention that anymore, we'll just avoid the subject. And that's okay. Because on all the important things we do get along."

W1 also spoke about the importance of not getting resentful in her marriage over the small issues. She said,

And you know, I suppose there's all kinds of little things that you can resent like pick up your shirt or don't throw it on the floor but I learned to not even bother with it – if he wants his shirt on the floor, let him leave the shirt on the floor, I don't care. Was I always like that? No, no. I just learned – what's the worst thing – there's worse things than this. Worse husbands than this that are going to do worse things than leave their shirt or leave the paper – papers like this on the tables. So I go on with my life. *What stops you from bringing those things up?* Because then you're insulting your husband and you're making him feel bad and you don't want to do that because it's like it just doesn't matter. But you learn that over a period of time.

Similarly, W3 spoke about her and her husband, H3, not making demands on one another and not being needy. She said,

Neither one of us are needy people, so we're pretty easy to please. We still have fun together. We still go out. We have friends, we go out, we do stuff together. He doesn't make demands on me and I don't make demands on him. We just respect each other and enjoy the time we have.

In this statement, W3 highlighted the nature of her relationship with H3. Neither W3 nor H3 place great demands on one another and hold the perspective that they should enjoy one another and the time they have together.

H4 also commented on the importance of letting some things go. He said,

If you keep sweating over the little things, I mean, when the big thing drops, everything comes apart. The little things is what everybody breaks up about anyway. Just hammer it out. Just work it out. Once in awhile, things can really blow up. And they're real rare now. They used to be very common when we were young, but they're very rare now, an out and out screaming match. And anybody who says, well, I'll never have that, even you, it's going to happen. That's the big things. The little things – you know, you go off into separate corners or whatever, say I don't want to talk about it right now, she may say that. Later on, you come and talk about it. The next day you come and talk about it, depending on the degree of it. But those little things, they just – there's too many things going on around you in order for things like that to get caught up. There's just too much. There really is too much.

The attitude among participants that the minor issues should be ignored undoubtedly led to less conflict in the marriage over minor irritations and annoyances. Letting minor issues go in their marriages also served to prevent participants from accumulating minor offenses that could ultimately lead to major resentments. Many of the participants learned to "let the small things go" over time in their marriage. Many of them commented that this was something that they learned. Had the participants of this study been younger or married less time, perhaps this theme would not have been observed.

The second theme centered around the importance of time. Specifically, participants talked about their relationship growing stronger with the passage of time, stronger through adversity, and that time heals most wounds. When talking about times he becomes upset in his marriage, H2 said, "Yeah, your mind is just avoiding, or not avoiding, but just puts it on a back burner, and before long, especially with my mind, it just kind of goes away." In this statement, H2 highlighted how over time he would just get over his upset feelings. Similarly, W1 talked about a time she was upset with H1. When asked how she got over her upset feelings she said,

Well, time passed, and he finished (school), and it was just a matter of this is a rough time and you've got to work it out and then I got pregnant and it's just one of those things you have to work out because the commitment is there. Now would it be the same? I don't know. It'd be so easy to get out and say gee, I'm a nurse, I can do whatever I want to do, I don't need this. But I think it made it stronger. It would have to. And I just think the passage of time. I just – you know, I just, I think when you have a rough spot like that and you think about it and you consider it and then you think well, that's not going to work, so then you go back to where you are, I mean, it's a rough spot – you have to have that, that's going to happen in any marriage, anything, and then you just work it out and you just go back to where you were before.

Other examples of this theme were observed when participants spoke about the love in their marriage. Many of the participants stated that their love grew stronger over time. For example, W2 said " Yeah, and your love grows stronger and your comfort. Love isn't just all exciting. It's comfort. We've been together forever, it seems like – 28 years, add the 5 to that of living together, that's forever." Similarly, W4 said "Love is, is the encompassing – like now in our time – is the encompassing of 25 years. Of doing all that. It's not the butterflies, it's not the – it's the fact that it's like wow, 25 years. Damn. You know? It's a long time....Right, it's history, it's tradition, it's what you've done, so, yeah." H4 also described his love for W4 in terms of sharing time together, " love is all about sharing your life with another person, so sharing. Trusting. I guess taking on life together rather than alone." All of these quotes highlighted the notion of time leading to greater closeness and security in marriage.

Summary

This chapter provided the results of the research in regard to the three primary research questions in this study. The first research question, "do the five bonding dynamics of the RAM exist as contributions to feelings of love and closeness in marital relationships" was examined and the results were presented. The results from the 8 interviews suggested that the bonding dynamics of the RAM were found to contribute to feelings of love and closeness in the participants' marital relationships.

The second research question, "does an experience of vulnerability/dissatisfaction in the marital relationship or stressors in live events affect the overall relationship bond," was assessed. Results suggested that life events as well as discontent in particular dynamics of the RAM affected the overall experience of closeness and bondedness in the

participants' marital relationships. Additionally, results from the interviews suggested that the closeness could be restored by increasing a dynamic on the RAM. For example, increasing the touch in a marriage could heal a breach in trust.

Finally, the third research question, "how do married individuals define and experience love," was examined in the 8 interviews. Three themes emerged from the interviews. The first theme was "love is difficult to define." This theme captured the difficulty participants had in defining love and coming up with the words to describe something they considered a feeling. The second theme "love as a list of qualities or behaviors" was also observed. This theme consisted of participants describing their love as a list of qualities in their partner or their relationship as well as behaviors or acts of expressing their love. The last theme was "love as a dynamic force" was described. This theme was related to how the participant's love evolved over time and changed throughout the marriage.

This chapter also reviewed the results of the participant summaries and follow-up phone calls. These follow-ups resulted in few changes to the interpretation of the findings. Finally, this chapter provided additive findings in the form of two additional themes, don't sweat the small stuff and the importance of time, observed through the analysis.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

This chapter presents a summary of the research project. This chapter will be divided into the following sections: an overview of the study, summary of the results, discussion, limitations of the research, and recommendations for future research.

Overview of the Study

Understanding what contributes to feelings of closeness, attachment, and love in relationships is essential to the study of close relationships and to the treatment of couples in marital and relationship counseling. Currently, few practical tools or models exist for couples, therapists, and researchers to use to understand, assess, and address feelings of love and closeness in relationships (Riehl-Emede, Thomas, & Willi, 2003; Whisman, Dixon, & Johnson, 1997). The purpose of this study was to explore a potentially more comprehensive model of relationships with married individuals called the RAM. This model contributes to the gap in the literature of tools and models to assess and treat marital difficulties and loss of love feelings. In particular, this study provided the first empirical exploration of the theoretical underpinnings of the RAM using deductive qualitative analysis. The general research question examined in this study was "do the five bonding dynamics of the RAM exist as contributions to feelings of love and closeness in marital relationships?" Two secondary research questions were also examined through open-ended interviews which were: does an experience of

vulnerability/dissatisfaction in the marital relationship or changes/stressors in life events affect the overall relational bond and how do married individuals define and experience love? Exploring these questions using an open-ended interview allowed the researcher to gain insight into whether the dynamics of the RAM existed in the participants' marital relationships and how they defined their experience of love and closeness.

Design, Procedures, and Analysis

This section will provide a brief overview of the rationale for the qualitative method. The participant demographics and data collection procedures will be summarized. Finally, it will review the data analysis used in this study.

Method and Design

A qualitative method was chosen for this study for three primary reasons. First, the variables in the RAM are complex, interrelated, and difficult to measure. Because this is the first examination of the RAM, it seemed most appropriate to study the RAM in a way that provided the richest and most descriptive understanding of the dynamics in relationships from the subject's point of view, or an emic perspective. This reason for qualitative inquiry was supported by Morrow (2007) who suggested qualitative research is recommended for exploring complex human experiences and processes. Second, the purpose of this study was to understand how the five bonding dynamics operated in marital relationships. Understanding complicated phenomena is a research topic more aptly studied qualitatively (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). The third reason for the selection of qualitative design was that the RAM has a history of practical applications; however the theoretical underpinnings had yet to be examined. Because this is the first study on the RAM and its theoretical constructs, qualitative research is an appropriate starting point.

More specifically, deductive qualitative analysis (Gilgun, 1995) was the research design. This design incorporated both deduction, the process of testing a hypothesis with the aim of confirming, refuting, and modifying, and induction which is moving from data to concepts in an attempt to reach understanding (Gilgun). DQA follows the scientific method and involves proposing a theory, testing it, and then revising it based on the results (Popper, 1969). Because this study sought to test and refine the theoretical underpinnings of the RAM, it was most appropriate to use the DQA method.

Participants

Four married couples comprised of 8 individuals were interviewed for this study. The participants were homogeneous on several factors. They were homogenous in regards to their racial background, sexual orientation, religious identification, geographical location, and marital status. Specifically, all of the participants identified as Caucasian, heterosexual, and Catholic. The 8 participants resided in Medina, Ohio. All of the participants had children with their spouse and were all only married one time. None of the participants attended marital counseling while married. The participants also had been married a substantial amount of time. The couple married the shortest amount of time had been married for 20 years (range 20-37).

Procedures

Several data collection methods were used in this study including: interviews, demographic surveys, participant summaries, follow-up phone calls, and notes. The initial interviews were conducted face-to-face with all the participants. Three of the interviews were conducted at the participants' homes and five were conducted at the researcher's family home in Medina, Ohio. The interviews lasted from twenty to ninety

minutes depending on how concise the participant was when answer the interview questions and how many follow-up questions were necessary to gain a clear understanding of the participant's responses. Each interview was digitally recorded and transcribed. In addition to the interviews, the participants completed demographic questionnaires. Following the initial stage of data gathering and analysis, participant summaries were prepared for each participant in the study. These summaries (Appendix D) provided descriptions of the findings in regards to the participant's specific interview in order to allow the participant to provide the researcher feedback on the accuracy and completeness of the interpretation. These summaries were emailed to the participants, after receiving permission, and then follow-up phone calls were completed to discuss the participant's reactions. Finally, data were gathered through the process via analytical and descriptive field notes.

Data Analysis

Consistent with DQA, a deductive analysis was utilized. An *a priori* code list that reflected the theoretical constructs of the RAM was developed. The code list was based on the definitions provided in Chapter II of the constructs of the RAM.

First, the interview recordings were transcribed. Each interview was read several times by the researcher, while notes regarding the general themes of each of the statements were made in the margins. Next, an Excel spreadsheet was created for each participant. All of their comments were placed in the spreadsheet and then coded using the *a priori* code list. Each statement could include several codes, for example, a statement that discussed the idea of trust and having needs met in a relationship would be coded as both "trust" and "reliance." The statements that included multiple RAM

dynamics were also placed in a separate Excel spreadsheet that contained comments from all the participants that depicted the inter-relationship between the various RAM dynamics. Additionally, the interviews were read again for general themes observed in the interviews. Another spreadsheet was created and the general themes and comments that captured these themes were entered. Finally, all of the comments that described love were read and placed in a final spreadsheet. These comments were read several times and were deduced into concise themes.

Following the analysis of the data and the composition of the results, the participant's individual interviews were summarized. These summaries were sent to each participant and follow-up phone calls were used to verify the accuracy of the researcher's interpretation.

Summary of the Results

The results of this study were examined in light of the three research questions:

1. Do the five bonding dynamics of the RAM (know, trust, rely, commit, and touch) exist as contributions to feelings of love and closeness in marital relationships?
2. Does an experience of vulnerability/dissatisfaction in the marital relationship or changes/stressors in life affect the overall relational bond?
3. How do married individuals define and experience love?

Research question one

The first question examined whether the five dynamics of the RAM existed as contributions to feelings of love and closeness in the participant's marital relationships. The answer to this research question was yes. The participants each discussed how

know, trust, rely, commit, and touch were contributors to their experience of closeness and bondedness in the marital relationship. Throughout the participants' interviews two themes related to the dynamic "know" emerged. The themes were: (1) getting to know each other in the premarital relationship and (2) staying in the know after marriage. Participants spoke about how their relationship developed and the importance of getting to know one another in the development of feelings of closeness and love premaritally. Additionally, the participants indicated that staying connected after marriage was paramount to the maintenance of connection and closeness within the marriage. Many of the participants spoke about how falling out of the know with one another led to feelings of vulnerability.

Three themes emerged in the participant's descriptions of trust. First, many of the participants described their trust in their spouse as something that was implicitly given at the beginning of the relationship and was maintained as long as it wasn't broken. The second theme was that the participants justified their trust in their partner based on what they got to know throughout the premarital relationship. This theme demonstrated the interrelationship between the RAM dynamics, know and trust, and how the development of one dynamic facilitates the development of another. Finally, the third theme was that broken trust led to distance in the relationship and an overall bad attitude toward one's spouse. Conversely, maintained trust was related to marital satisfaction and closeness. Usually, two or three of the themes were evident in participant's responses.

Reliance, defined as mutual need fulfillment, was the most talked about dynamic among the participants. Often, reliance was woven into the responses related to the other dynamics. Two overall themes were observed. The first was that greater reliability was

related to greater marital satisfaction and closeness. The second theme was the opposite of the first, that less reliability was related to greater dissatisfaction in the marriage and an overall more negative opinion of one's spouse. Again, these themes demonstrated the interplay between the RAM dynamics. The less one could rely on their spouse the more negative they felt toward their spouse, in other words, their trust in their partner suffered.

The fourth RAM dynamic, commitment, was explicitly mentioned by all of the participants. Some of the participants discussed commitment in terms of a promise made to their partner, and others talked about investments made into the marriage and an obligation to work hard on their marriage.

The final RAM dynamic, touch, was talked about in one primary way by participants. Particularly participants talked about their physical relationship fostering a sense of closeness and intimacy as well as a way to repair the relationship when things were not going well. All but one couple talked about having a healthy sex life. Considering the personal nature of this topic area, it is possible that some of the participants felt uncomfortable talking about difficulties in this area. Nonetheless, this area was mentioned and described by all participants as a contributor to their feeling of closeness in their marriage.

Research question two

The second research question examined whether or not an experience of vulnerability/dissatisfaction in the marital relationship or changes or stressors in life affected the overall relational bond. Overall, the interview findings revealed that the participants described times in their marriage where one or more RAM dynamics were affected, which led to an overall change in the experience of closeness and satisfaction in

the marriage. Participants also described times in their marriage when they were dissatisfied in one or more RAM dynamic areas which were able to be mended by focusing on the development of a different RAM dynamic. For example, an increase in touch could help to resolve a lowered level of “know”. This research question explored the dynamic nature of the RAM and whether or not it could capture complicated interactions in a participant’s marriage as well as how that interaction affected the overall marital experience. Interview findings suggested that the RAM was able to capture these marital interactions.

Research question three

The final research question examined how the married individuals in this study defined and experienced love. Three themes were observed. First, many of the participants commented on how difficult it was to define love. The second was that participants tended to list several characteristics of what contributed to love and the development of love in their marriage. Many of the characteristics listed were synonymous to the RAM dynamics. For example, H3 spoke about the compatibility between him and his wife, which is subsumed under the “know” dynamic. He also spoke about how his wife takes care of him or his reliance on her. W2 also spoke about her reliance on her husband and how H2 is “always there for me.” H3 also spoke about the trust in his relationship with W3 as well as their sexual relationship. His wife, W3, spoke about the “loyalty and commitment and knowing somebody for twenty years...” and how these factors contributed to her experience of love in marriage. The final theme was that love was viewed as a dynamic force in that it evolved over time and grows throughout marriage. The descriptions of love in this theme were often about how love took on a

different form during different stages of marriage as well as love being synonymous with commitment, comfort, and friendship.

Discussion

This study sought to examine the theoretical underpinnings of the RAM. While the theoretical constructs of the RAM appear simple and intuitive at face value, they integrate research from multiple theoretical perspectives as well as research on the development of constructs such as love, intimacy, know, trust, reliance, commitment, and sexual touch (Van Epp, 1997, 2005). The discussion will first review each of the five dynamic bonds of the RAM and how the findings regarding these dynamics relate to existing research on these constructs. Secondly, the way in which the findings of this study relate to previous theoretical perspectives will be discussed.

How the Results Relate to Research on the Bonding Dynamics

This first section will review each of the five bonding dynamics: know, trust, rely, commitment, and touch. Each bonding dynamic will be discussed in terms of how the findings of the current study relate to previous research on each of the above constructs.

Know

The first bonding dynamic of the RAM is referred to as know. Know is comprised of categories of research on mutual self-disclosure, communication, joint leisure time, and certain aspects of the construct of intimacy. All participants in this study described know and the behavioral aspects of know as a contributor to their overall feeling of closeness. Congruent with past research comparing know with intimacy, this study found that the more couples developed a sense of knowing one another and staying in the know, the more intimacy they experienced in the relationship (Derlega & Chaikin,

1975; Jourard, 1964). One way in which the couples in this study maintained closeness on the dynamic, know, was through talking and mutually self-disclosing. This is consistent with past research on self-disclosure in relationships which found that the ability to reveal one's feelings and thoughts to another is an essential skill for developing close relationships (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Berscheid & Walster, 1978).

Another way in which couples stayed in the know with one another in this study was by spending time doing joint activities together. Many of the couples talked about how getting away alone together or spending time camping or doing something enjoyable together was a way to restore their intimacy and closeness. Research has found that spending time together and doing jointly satisfying activities are critical relationship maintenance behaviors and result in greater relationship satisfaction and closeness (Aron, Norman, & Aron, 2001; Canary, Stafford, Hause, & Wallace, 1993; Stafford, 2010). More specifically, spending time together engaging in couple leisure involvement has been studied with marital couples. The findings suggested that there was a positive relationship between joint couple leisure activities and marital satisfaction (Johnson, Zabriskie, & Hill, 2006). It is likely that spending time together engaging in leisure activities allows couples to get to know one another more deeply and in different scenarios.

The participants in this study described the getting to know process as one that included behaviors previously researched such as communicating, spending time together, and mutually self-disclosing. They described the importance of talking and communicating effectively, spending time together, being and remaining compatible with one another, and feeling like they know or recognize their partner. Participants spoke

about times when a partner's mood was unrecognizable, which led to them feeling less like they knew their partner. This research study echoed what other researchers have found regarding the category; know. Overall, this study provided confirmation of previous research findings that suggested that certain behaviors are important in getting to know another and staying in the know.

Trust

The second RAM dynamic, trust, was examined in this study. Trust has long been considered to be an important aspect in close relationships; however the presence and/ or necessity of trust in a loving relationship have been treated as a “given” in research (Larzelere & Huston, 1980). Much of the research on trust has examined how it relates to other relationship constructs such as love. For example, in six studies on compassionate love in the United States and Canada, Fehr and Sprecher (2009) collected terms that people used to describe compassionate love. Trust was mentioned as a feature of compassionate love consistently in all six studies. This finding was echoed in this study. When asked to describe the love in their marriage, many of the participants spoke about trust. For example when asked to describe what love is in his marriage H3 stated, “Number one is the trust that we have in each other.”

Rempel, Holmes, and Zanna (1985) developed a theoretical model of trust comprised of three dimensions: predictability, dependability, and faith. The faith component was described as an aspect of trust that goes beyond the specific behaviors of an individual and emphasizes the attributions that each individual makes regarding their partner's behavior. The faith component described by Rempel, Holmes, and Zanna is consistent with how trust was operationalized in this research study as a positive belief or

confidence in another based on their consistency and overall trustworthiness. Contrary to having a positive belief in another, when trust is broken a bad attitude can develop. It is likely that these bad attitudes are similar to what the above authors labeled as negative attributions. The themes found in this study confirmed and added to Rempel et al.'s model of trust. For example, one theme was that participants justified their trust in their partner based on what they got to know throughout the premarital relationship. This theme suggests that the participants in this study looked for predictability and dependability in their partners which impacted how much trust they decided to invest. Also, a second theme was that broken trust was related to feelings of distance and an overall bad opinion of their partner and maintained trust facilitated closeness and marital satisfaction. This theme is similar to the dimension of faith described by Rempel et al.

The current study added to the understanding of trust in close relationships in that it found that all the participants immediately invested some level of trust in their partners at the onset of the relationship. The interviews from this study revealed that the participants invested some trust and then tested this trust out over time and ultimately made decisions about whether the partner was trustworthy. The process of how decisions are made regarding trust investment has not been presented in the current literature. This study shed some initial light on how trust is at first given and then adjusted based on observations of predictability, dependability, consistency, and congruence.

The examination of trust in this study was consistent with previous research findings and corroborated Rempel, Holmes, & Zanna's (1985) operationalization of trust. This study added to the current literature in that it provided some insight into how trust develops in close relationships and how individuals figure out another's trustworthiness.

Rely

The third dynamic of the RAM, rely, was examined in this study. Rely was defined as mutual needs fulfillment, dependability, and the amount of reliance one experiences in a given relationship. Needs included: support, financial, emotional, companionship, status, affection, etc. Having needs met in a relationship leads to feeling closer, more appreciated, secure, and more valued in a marriage. Conversely, not having one's needs met can lead to feelings of distance, dissatisfaction, feeling taken for granted, and insecurity (Van Epp, 1997).

Reliance is often referred to as mutual need fulfillment or equity in the literature and is a common element in theories of love and intimacy in close relationships (Le & Agnew, 2001; Moss & Schwebel, 2003; Reiss, 1960). The theme found in this study regarding reliance was that greater reliance was associated with greater marital satisfaction and closeness and conversely less reliance was associated with lowered levels of closeness and marital satisfaction. This finding was consistent with Le and Agnew's (2001) assertion that some of the most important outcomes in interpersonal relationships are related to need fulfillment and that need fulfillment is linked to emotional experiences within relationships. Furthermore, Traupmann, and Greenbeger (1984) examined perceived equity in marital relationships and found that when partners perceived their relationship as inequitable, they become more distressed. The more they perceive the relationship to be inequitable, the more distress they reported. This phenomenon was observed throughout the interviews with the participants in this study. For example, W4 spoke about how her husband was like her "knight in shining armor" because he would come to her rescue and meet her needs by taking care of things that she cannot.

Conversely, W1 spoke about taking on the brunt of the work around the home and with the family while her husband, H1 was going to nursing school. She described a sense of inequity during that time in her marriage and stated that during that time, she didn't like her husband very much. These statements conveyed the role that reliance or mutual need fulfillment played in the marriages of the participants. Many spoke about feeling close to their partner when their needs were met, and also distant or dissatisfied with their partner when their needs were overlooked. The findings in the current study provided confirmation of previous research findings and further expanded the point that inadequate need fulfillment or reliance ultimately impacts the amount of marital satisfaction and closeness experienced in the relationship.

Commitment

Commitment was the fourth RAM dynamic studied. Relationship researchers agree that commitment is a central component of romantic relationships (Duemmler & Kobak, 2001). Similarly, commitment was central in this study as it was mentioned explicitly by every participant in this study.

The descriptive and definitive aspects of commitment in this study were similar to previous research findings by Johnson, Caughlin, and Huston (1999). These authors asserted that there are three types of commitment: personal or a sense of wanting to stay in the relationship; moral commitment or feeling morally obligated to stay; and structural commitment or feeling constrained to stay regardless of personal or moral commitment. These defining aspects of commitment were also found in this study. Some of the participants discussed their commitment in terms of their moral vow, a sense of belonging, or a force that kept them in the marriage during difficult times.

Research has also found that commitment creates feelings of connectedness and closeness in relationships (Harvey & Omarzu, 1997; Money 1980; Forgas & Dobosz, 1980). This statement was confirmed in this study in that many of the participants discussed commitment as a contributor to the love they feel for their spouse. For example, when asked to describe what marital love means to her W3 said, “I think that the loyalty and the commitment and knowing somebody for twenty years, it's the most significant relationship I've ever had with anyone.”

Overall, the findings of this study were consistent with previous theoretical perspectives and research findings on commitment. The way in which commitment had been defined in previous research as well as how it was defined by Van Epp (1997) was found supported by the interviews in this study.

Touch/Sex

Touch was the final RAM dynamic examined in this study. Previous research has found that sexual interactions are an attachment provoking dynamic that intensifies the feeling of intimacy between individuals (Birtchnell, 1993). Conversely, research has found that a lack of sex in martial relationships can create distance and relationship dissatisfaction. These past research findings were consistent with the responses in this study. All of the participants acknowledged the bonding aspect of touch and how engaging in sexual intimacy with their spouse intensified their experience of closeness. One participant recognized how the lack of touch between her and her husband may have affected their relationship closeness when she said,

I'll tell him just go take a soapy shower, but it's not the same, that's not what they want. I think it affects it (closeness) in a way. I feel it. You can't – you can't tell the way we act around each other, I don't think. But I feel we would have more of a closeness if I would instigate it more.

Variations in sexual satisfaction have also been found to be influenced by nonsexual aspects of a relationship such as: the quality of communication, the amount of self-disclosure, perceived empathy provided by a partner, feeling loved, feeling emotionally close, and being overall satisfied with the relationship (Davidson & Darling, 1988; MacNeil & Byers, 1997; Sprecher & McKinney, 1993; Young, Denny, Young, & Luquis, 2000). The current study found that the participants described their sexual relationship as one that could help them reconnect or “clear away a lot of the noise” rather than something that improved when other aspects of the relationship were going well. It is likely that these previous research findings would be supported had other questions been asked about the sexual relationship. However, it was demonstrated by several of the participants that sex sometimes served a reparative function in the relationship. This finding adds to the current body of literature on the function of the sexual relationship as a facilitator of intimacy in marriage and may provide some insight into why some therapists suggest that clients schedule sex or engage in sex despite not being in the mood. Sex fosters closeness, bondedness, and intimacy and, while not the sole solution for relationship struggles, may serve a reparative function for some couples (Christopher & Kisler, 2004; Gehring, 2003; McCarthy, 2001; Yabiku & Gager; Zimmerman & Darden, 1991).

The findings in this study were consistent with how touch and physical intimacy have been discussed in previous research (Harvey, Wenzel, & Sprecher, 2004). The participants in this study primarily talked about touch as an element in their relationship that fostered a sense of closeness and intimacy, as a way to repair other areas of the relationship, and as an act that expressed love for one another.

How the Results Relate to Theories on Close Relationships

This section will review how the findings of this study relate to previous theories on close relationships. I will discuss two primary ways the results regarding the RAM add to current theoretical perspectives. First, the RAM captured a more comprehensive view of the couples' description of closeness and second, the model described in this study more accurately portrayed fluctuations in the bond and closeness that couples experience over time. These points and implications of these points will be expanded in the following sections.

Comprehensiveness

The model examined in this research study adds to the current theoretical perspectives on close relationships in that it provided a more comprehensive depiction of couples' descriptions of closeness and distance in their marital relationship.

One of the most popular category of theories on close relationships is behavioral theories of marriage. Behavioral theories of marriage study particular relationship behaviors, typically communication exchanges during problem-solving, as they relate to outcome variables such as divorce or marital satisfaction (Gottman, 1982; Karney & Bradbury, 1995; Markman, 1981). Markman (1991) noted that, "to the extent that normal marital disagreements are not handled well, unresolved negative feelings start to build up, fueling destructive patterns of marital interaction and eventually eroding and attacking the positive aspects of the relationship" (p. 422). However a commonly noted limitation of behavioral theories of marriage is that it explains only a limited range of marital outcomes (Karney & Bradbury). Specifically, this model explains within-couple variations in marital satisfaction but only in one direction. Additionally, the behavioral

models do not explain how previously adaptive communication patterns may deteriorate over time or how couples who do not have adequate relationship skills thrive or improve in marriage. Also, the question of when distress leads to divorce versus continuing in the marriage is not addressed (Karney & Bradbury).

The RAM has the ability to address some of the limitations of behavioral theories on marriage because the RAM suggests that communication, subsumed under the know dynamic, is not the only way in which a couple feels satisfied or dissatisfied in a relationship and that communication is not understood in isolation from other bonding forces in a relationship. For example, positive and negative types of communication can affect the way someone feels *known* and understood in their relationship. If someone feels that their partner is overly negative during a communication incident it can negatively affect a person's belief in their partner and their overall *trust* or opinion of their partner as someone who will support them, be *reliable*, and respond to them positively. Over time this continued negative communication can lead to deficits in *trust*, which may develop into lasting and unresolved resentments, which can impact how dependable and *reliable* one may experience their partner, which may cause one to question their *commitment* to the marriage. In other words, perhaps the reason that the couples who have overly negative communication divorce isn't just the negative communication alone but the way in which this negative communication starts to erode the overall bond in the relationship resulting in decreased feelings of satisfaction, closeness, and love.. The RAM allows for a more comprehensive understanding of why the negative communication patterns may lead to the questioning of one's commitment to their marriage and ultimately to divorce.

Alternatively, some couples may not divorce even though their negative communication patterns continue. The behavioral theories don't provide an understanding as to why this sometimes occurs. Because the RAM considers communication as only a part of a bonding dynamic and considers it in the context of other bonding dynamics, it suggests that connectedness in other areas of the relationship may serve to make up for struggles around communication. Also, feeling known in other ways may serve to heighten this bond regardless of the quality of communication during problem solving. Additionally, one's level of commitment and the way in which someone thinks about commitment (i.e. a religious vow, a nonnegotiable) may also explain why some individuals would stay married despite negative communication patterns.

The RAM also provides insight as to why some couples who may not be particularly skilled when it comes to communication are successful in marriage. In particular these couples may feel more bonded in other areas of the relationship which makes up for the deficits in communication. This was demonstrated by H2 and W2's interviews. W2 spoke about her difficulties understanding H2 during his "moods". She reported feeling distant during this time but that she was able to reflect on how well he met her needs and took care of her and the family, which helped to fill in the gaps of his communication short-comings. W2 also reported that she would sometimes initiate sex, a bonding activity, during times of distance due to his negative communication, which would increase their level of closeness. This interview demonstrated the importance of other bonding forces, in this case reliance and touch, rather than pinning the success or failure of a marriage on communication alone.

The RAM also addresses a limitation of behavioral theories in that it provides an understanding as to why sometimes previously adaptive communication patterns can deteriorate over time because the RAM considers communication in the context of other bonding forces in addition to accounting for both in-marriage interactions and extramarital forces that may have an impact on the relationship. Whereas behavioral theories rely solely on the interactions between the couple, the RAM considers these interactions in addition to how interactions with circumstances and life stresses can impact the marriage. The RAM asserts that stressors outside of a marriage can throw a relationship off balance and that this is a normal aspect to marriage. However if these imbalances are not addressed and remain a chronic imbalance the marriage becomes vulnerable. Therefore a couple who arguably has healthy communication patterns may be thrown out of balance due to events outside of their marital relationship such as: job stress, a death in the family, or a deployment. These normal stressors will understandably imbalance a relationship and require attention to recalibrate the relationship. If this effort does not occur a couple with seemingly healthy communication can grow out of touch, develop deep resentments, not meet one another's needs, become sexually distant, and find that they have "grown apart" or "fallen out of love" and ultimately end up in divorce. One example of this phenomenon in the current study was given by H1. He described a time in his marriage when he was attending school and that his wife, W1, was left with extra responsibilities. Because of this, they experienced extra stress and difficulty in their marriage. H1 said, "this was an especially hard time and that's actually when we started to camp—because it was something we could do together." H1 went on to say that "this busyness brought us closer because then

you really plan time together.” In this example, H1 acknowledges that during this time of stress he and his wife had to intentionally plan time together. H1 and W1’s marriage could easily have taken a different turn if they hadn’t made intentional efforts to stay in touch with one another. Because they made efforts to bolster their time together and remain in the know with one another through shared joint activities, they likely avoided a potential issue in their marriage which could have resulted in deep hurts and resentments eventually leading toward questioning their commitment to one another. This couple provided an example of how a marriage characterized by healthy communication patterns could have deteriorated over time if not intentionally managed.

Many of the couples in this study described times of distance and stress in the marriage despite having seemingly healthy communication. Usually it was during these stressful times that the couples in this study reported arguing with their partners more. The couples in this study also talked about what was needed in their marriage to repair this distance; for example individuals in this study gave reports of time together camping, having sex, and drinking coffee and talking together as ways to repair this distance. Had the couples in this study not repaired these distances it is very likely that over time their communication would have suffered and deteriorated. In this way the RAM expands upon the behavioral theories, in that it provides a model that can more clearly demonstrate how couples may initially have healthy communication patterns that eventually deteriorate.

The RAM does not contradict behavioral theories on marriage but instead adds to the interpretation of the findings by explaining how a breakdown in *know* or communication can ultimately result in a breakdown of the relationship. Additionally,

the RAM provides a more comprehensive explanation of why sometimes couples with poor communication skills may ultimately not divorce as well as how couples may initially have healthy communication that eventually deteriorates.

The RAM also adds to the past theories on love, closeness, and attachment because it is more comprehensive. Many of the past theoretical perspectives address aspects of close relationships but leave out important constructs. For example, trust is a construct that is an important element in close relationships yet is absent in the most popular theories on love and close relationships. Specifically, trust is not mentioned in Sternberg's (1986) Triangular Theory of Love, Rubin (1970) leaves trust out of his definition of loving, and Reiss (1960) doesn't include trust in his Wheel Theory of Love. Attachment theory is one of the only theories that incorporated the concept of trust (Mikulincer, 1998). Likewise, the concept of mutual need fulfillment or reliance is a cornerstone of attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) and social exchange theory (Thaibaut & W3, 1959) however, the concept of reliance or mutual need fulfillment is absent from most major theories on love and intimacy. Commitment, while a major aspect of Sternberg's theory of love is not addressed in attachment theory as well as Reiss's wheel theory of love. The point is that the previous theoretical perspectives on love and close relationships capture some but not all bonding aspects that occur in close relationships. Many of these past theoretical perspectives leave questions that cannot be addressed by the theories yet can be more comprehensively explained by the RAM. Because the RAM includes varying levels of five bonding dynamics it can more richly explain relationship subtleties that occur in close relationships. This was demonstrated throughout the current study when the participants were provided a summary of their interview and some of the

interactions they described as explained by the RAM. Many of the participants commented on how the RAM so completely captured an abstract experience they've had in their marriage in a very simple, yet comprehensive way. This strength of the RAM has implications for practice which will be discussed below.

Comprehensiveness: Implications for Practice

The first way in which the model researched in this dissertation added to the current theoretical perspectives on love and close relationships is that it provided a more comprehensive depiction of the closeness and subsequent distance couples experienced in their marriages than other theories. This addition to the literature and theoretical perspectives has implications for practice. Particularly, because past theoretical perspectives tend to take a singular approach to understanding close relationships, it makes interventions for therapists also more singular in nature. Specifically, behavioral theories on marital relationships typically prescribe communication skills based interventions (Karney & Bradbury, 1995; Gottman, 1993). While communication skills are important in marriage, intervening at this level with a distressed couple may not always be effective in particular because so many couples who divorce state reasons other than communication problems. Among studies on why couples divorce, Amato and Previti (2003) found that “growing apart” was among the fourth most common reason for divorce behind infidelity, incompatibility, and substance abuse. Similarly, Bodenmann (2006) found “loss of love” was the most significant contributor to both men’s and women’s decision to divorce. Additionally, loss of love feelings has been rated to be one of the most difficult issues to treat in marital therapy (Riehl-Emede, Thomas, & Willi, 2003; Whisman, Dixon, & Johnson, 1997). The RAM has implications

for marital therapy in that it does not offer a singular mode of intervention to treat marital problems. Like behavioral theories that offer communication oriented interventions, so can an intervention prescribed by the RAM. Unlike other theories though, the RAM can also offer interventions in regard to other aspects that affect the overall experience of closeness and bondedness in the relationship such as meeting one another's needs, developing a more positive opinion of one's spouse, strengthening commitment and acts of commitment, and also enriching the sexual relationship. Because the RAM offers a more comprehensive picture of close relationships, it also offers a more comprehensive approach to interventions in marital therapy.

Because the RAM provides a more comprehensive picture of closeness and bondedness in relationships it can help couples better operationalize their experience of closeness and love in their marriage. This is important because research on happy, long-term marriages has shown that couples often report friendship, love, intimacy, and commitment as reasons for their marriage's success (Bachand & Caron, 2001; Robinson & Blanton, 1993). These constructs can be difficult to define and ultimately treat in therapy; therefore having the dynamic pictorial RAM would assist in providing a couple with the language to discuss and visualize their marital concerns. Furthermore, in a comparison group of couples not in therapy versus couples in therapy, love was the single most important variable related to the couples' overall well-being (Riehl-Emede, Thomas, & Willi, 2003). The couples' assessment of love was also the first and foremost variable for predicting whether a couple belonged to the group with either high or low well-being with greater love indicating greater well-being (Riehl-Emede, et al.). Again, having a visual representation of five areas that contribute to feelings of closeness and

love in a relationship can assist couples in visualizing their relationship as well as therapists in determining the agenda in therapy around five areas of intervention.

The RAM is Dynamic

The model examined in this research study adds to the current theoretical perspectives on close relationships in that it provided a dynamic depiction of couples' descriptions of closeness and distance in their marital relationship. Previous models on close relationships tend to provide a snapshot of a couple in time or categorize them into a specific type of relationship. For example, Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love (1986) used three dimensions (intimacy, passion, decision/commitment) to describe eight types of love relationships based on different combinations of the components. However love is not a static experience; it is a feeling that can develop, diminish, and disappear. This was also demonstrated in the current study in that one theme in regard to love was that it was a dynamic force. Sternberg's theory captures a relationship at one point in time; however it is very likely that love in a relationship would evolve over time rather than always remain stable indicating one particular type of relationship. Because of this limitation of Sternberg's theory, it does not capture moment to moment changes in a couple's love experience or depict how love changes over time. Because the RAM depicts five bonding dynamics that are on a continuum, it allows for varying levels of each bonding dynamic as well as different combinations of the five to exist at any point in time in one relationship. Additionally, these various combinations of the five dynamics ultimately result in different felt experiences of love and bondedness. This was evaluated in the current study as the second research question: does an experience of vulnerability/dissatisfaction in the marital relationship or changes/stressors in life affect

the overall relational bond? Results of the current study continually demonstrated that different combinations of the five RAM dynamics did result in different experiences of closeness within the marriage. The ability of the RAM to capture the fluctuations in different bonding dynamics which ultimately portrayed a picture of the experienced levels of closeness in the marriage at a particular time were demonstrated in the participant summaries in Appendix D . Furthermore, when the couples in the current study were asked to provide feedback on the participant checks, they confirmed that their marital interaction was accurately depicted on the RAM and that it was surprising to have a complicated feeling be so simply explained.

Attachment, another theory on close relationships, also categorizes people into styles. However attachment theory does not include an integrated understanding of the associations among other relational systems. Fraley and Shaver (2000) stated that “in our opinion, attachment theory cannot begin to do justice to attachment-related aspects of romantic-sexual relationships, especially to the unfolding of relational dynamics over time, unless all of these systems (attachment, care giving, and sexual behavioral systems) are included and elucidated” (p. 149). The model researched in this study addressed the aforementioned limitation of attachment theory. In particular, the RAM integrated five systems of self: the sensory self, cognitive self, emotional self, volitional self, and sexual/tactile self (see Chapter 2 for a more complete discussion) that all contributed to attachment-related aspects of romantic and sexual relationships. The RAM also provided a model for examining closeness in relationships that depicted how relational dynamics unfold and develop as well as change over time.

Overall, the model researched in this study added to the current theoretical perspectives on close relationships in that it more accurately portrayed fluctuations in the bond and closeness that couples experienced over time. It extended the past theoretical perspectives in that it can capture different combinations of bonding dynamics in a relationship to create different types of relationship profiles that correspond to different experiences of closeness.

The RAM is dynamic: Implications for Practice

In general, how close a couple feels today isn't necessarily how close they felt yesterday or will feel tomorrow. The past perspectives on close relationships do not capture this phenomenon. However, the RAM's ability to capture fluctuations of love and closeness in a relationship has implications for practitioners. One implication is that by the very pictorial presentation of the model and the five bonding dynamics on continua that go both ways, it normalizes fluctuations of closeness within relationships. This normalization can provide immediate relief to a couple in a crisis or worried about feeling less close in their marriage. Normalizing fluctuations in love feelings throughout a marriage can serve to instill hope in couples. Researchers have asserted that treatment outcomes are more positive if the therapist can uncover or instill hope in clients (Cooper, Darmody, & Dolan, 2003). More specifically, Ward and Wampler (2010) used grounded theory to study the importance of instilling hope in couples counseling and found that couples who moved up on a continuum of hope had greater levels of marital satisfaction after therapy. The presentation of the RAM could assist in normalizing couples imbalances and serve to foster hope that loss of love feelings can change and improve. This installation of hope is an important therapeutic advantage of the RAM.

A second therapeutic implication is that the RAM provides a picture of the love and felt closeness in a relationship in terms of five dynamic bonds. This gives feelings of non-love or “we’ve fallen out of love” definition and therefore also give definition to what can be repaired and rebuilt. Rather than out-of-love or in-love being an all or nothing category the RAM allows for different levels of dynamics that contribute to love feelings and therefore implies that these levels can be strengthened. Overall these implications suggest that the RAM can serve to help practitioners normalize fluctuations in closeness, instill hope regarding loss of love feelings, and define areas of the relationship that should be strengthened through the therapeutic work.

Limitations

This study provided great insight into the study of love, closeness, and intimacy in marital relationships and provided an addition to the theoretical models that currently exist in the literature on these constructs. Nevertheless, this study has limitations that should be noted. Limitations included the demographic characteristics of the participants and the researcher’s familiarity with the Relationship Attachment Model.

The demographic characteristics of the participants were homogenous. Participants were all similar in terms of their race, sexual orientation, geographic location, religious preference, and length of marriage. Specifically, all the participants were white, heterosexual, from the same rural town, and identified as Catholic. In qualitative research homogeneity of a sample is considered to be one of many strategies to effective and purposive sampling because the homogeneity of the sample focuses, reduces, and simplifies the information being gathered from participants due to their similar backgrounds or characteristics (Suzuki, Ahluwalia, Arora, & Mattis, 2007).

However, it is possible that the themes that emerged from the research might have differed if the participants in this study were more diverse. One way in which the sample was homogeneous was that all participants identified as Catholic. It is unclear how this could have impacted the results but one speculation could be that the way in which the sample conceptualized commitment may have been different than a sample with varied religious affiliations. In the current study, some participants identified their commitment as being related to a religious vow for example, when W4 was asked what has kept her in her marriage she responded, “It’s commitment...For me, part of it is a vow because I am Catholic.” Conversely, W2 identified as Catholic but when asked the same question stated, “It’s not an option (leaving the marriage). It has nothing to do with religion or anything.” Similarly H2 said, “Commitment keeps it (the marriage) together, you have so much to lose if you were to separate. It has nothing to do with religion either.”

Replicating this research with more diverse samples would allow for greater variation in terms of how commitment is conceptualized as well as generalizability of the results. Additionally, all the participants were married for the first time and were married twenty years or longer. It is unknown how the results may have varied if the participants were newlyweds or in different stages of marriage. Additionally, most of the couples reported very little conflict in their marriage and seemed to have somewhat of a difficult time describing marital problems. The results may have looked different had the participants been in unhappy marriages. It is unknown but possible that marital problems in areas not captured by the RAM would have been reported.

Finally, the researcher disclosed in Chapter 3 her familiarity with the RAM.

While negative cases and contradictory findings were actively searched for throughout

the data analysis phase, it is possible that the researcher's familiarity and work with the RAM may have influenced the interpretation of the interviews. In order to minimize interpreter bias, the researcher provided summaries of all of the interviews to the participants and conducted follow-up phone calls to check the interpretation. Overall, participants did not indicate interpreter bias and reported that the summaries fit their experiences. Even so, it is still important to acknowledge the possibility of this limitation.

The limitations discussed could be addressed through replications of this study by other researchers as well as with more diverse participants. The next section will review recommendations for future research.

Recommendations for Future Research

The current study provided the preliminary foundation necessary for future study of the Relationship Attachment Model. Future researchers could replicate the current study with a more diverse sample. For example, replicating this study with married couples at different stages in marriage (i.e. newlyweds, after the birth of a child, empty nest, etc.) would provide a unique examination of how couples manage their relationships earlier in their marriage. Replicating the study with gay and lesbian couples would be an interesting follow-up study and would add to the limited research on gay and lesbian relationships. Finally, replicating this study with international couples would provide insight into the cultural applicability of the RAM and would add to the limited relationship research base on couples from other countries and couples of diverse backgrounds.

Examining the RAM quantitatively would also be an important contribution to the research on love, closeness, and intimacy. In particular, studying the RAM using quantitative methods would potentially allow for generalizability of the findings; which is not the aim of qualitative research. The development and validation of an instrument to measure the five dynamics of the RAM would add to the profession in that it would be an alternative tool to measure closeness in relationship research. Additionally, a RAM measure could serve as an assessment for couple's counselors. A measure of the RAM could provide a quick assessment of couple's relationships whether it is for research or counseling purposes because the RAM is presented as a picture and is quickly explained and understood.

Finally, the RAM was studied in this research with married couples. The RAM, however, has been used as part of relationship education curriculum for both couples as well as singles. The use of the RAM with singles focuses more on the development of the five RAM dynamics as opposed to the focus on the maintenance of the dynamics with couples. A follow-up study could look at how singles develop each of the five dynamic bonds in their relationships and whether the order and pace in which each of the dynamics is developed impacts various relationship outcomes. A study like this could provide insight into healthy versus less healthy ways of developing romantic relationships. This information could be useful to researchers, counselors, and laypeople.

Summary

This study used Deductive Qualitative Analysis to examine the theoretical underpinnings of the Relationship Attachment Model. Specifically this study examined

whether the five bonding dynamics: know, trust, rely, commitment, and touch existed as contributors to closeness, intimacy, and satisfaction in marital relationships. This research also provided insight into how the participants defined and experienced love in their marital relationship. These findings supported several elements discussed in previous theories and research and featured aspects that have not been previously delineated. The results of this research can be used as a foundation for future researchers.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

Title of Study: A Qualitative Examination of the Relationship Attachment Model (RAM) with Married Individuals

Introduction:

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in a research project examining love in marital relationships being conducted by Morgan Van Epp Cutlip, M.S., a Ph.D. student in Counseling Psychology at The University of Akron.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to explore feelings of love and closeness in marital relationships and how love feelings are developed and maintained in marriage.

Procedures: Your participation will require that you answer several open-ended questions in a one-on-one interview with the researcher, complete a demographic questionnaire, and participate in a follow-up review of your answers. The demographic questionnaire will ask questions about your age, level of education, ethnicity, and marital history. This questionnaire will not include your name or any identifying information. You will also be asked to participate in an audio-taped interview that will last approximately 90 minutes. This interview will consist of questions about your marital relationship. Finally, after the interview is transcribed and analyzed you will be asked to review the summary of your interview to ensure that the researcher interpreted your answers accurately.

Risks or Discomforts: Because the interview will be asking about your marital relationship, it is possible that some emotionally sensitive topics may be discussed. Depending on your marital situation, these topics may cause emotional discomfort or pain. In the event that you feel you need to talk further with someone about your marriage, the researcher will provide referral information to a local therapist and marriage education resource center.

Benefits: The benefits to you for participating in this study may be an increase in positive affect by reminiscing about your marital relationship. However, you may receive no benefit from participating in this study.

Right to Refuse or Withdrawal: Participation in this study is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any time.

Anonymous: Your participation in this study will be kept confidential. The interview will be audio taped; however your name will not be used on the tape. You will be assigned a pseudonym to be used on the tape and your demographic questionnaire. All information will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's office and only the researcher will have access to the data. You will not be identified in any publication or presentation of the research results, only your pseudonym will be used. Your signed consent form will also be kept separate from your data, and nobody will be able to link your responses to you.

Who to Contact with Questions:

If you have any questions about this study, you may call Morgan Van Epp Cutlip at (330) 304-7653 or Dr. John Queener at (330)972-7777. This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Akron Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may call the IRB at (330) 972-7666.

Acceptance & Signature:

I have read the information provided above and all my questions have been answered. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I will receive a copy of this consent form for my information.

Participant Signature

Date

APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

1. When were you born?
____Month ____Year
2. What is your gender?
 Male Female
3. What is your ethnicity?
 Caucasian/ White Hispanic
 Native American Asian
 African American
 Multiracial
(Specify: _____)
 Other
(Specify: _____)
4. What is your sexual orientation?
 Heterosexual
 Gay or Lesbian
 Bisexual
 Other
 Refused
Methodist
5. Which of the following best describes your religious orientation?
 No religion
 Protestant Christian
 Roman Catholic
 Evangelical Christian
 Jewish
 Muslim
 Hindu
 Buddhist
 Other specify _____
6. All things considered, how religious would you say that you are?
 Not at all religious
 Slightly religious
 Moderately religious
 Very religious
7. What is the highest grade or year in school you have completed?
 Grade school (GRADE: _____)
 Some high school (GRADE: _____)
 Graduated high school/GED
 Trade or business school
 Some college
 Graduated college
 Some graduate school
 Completed graduate school
8. What was the marital status of your parents when you were still living at home? Select the most appropriate.
 Never married and not living together
 Never married and living together
 Married
 Separated/divorced
 Widowed
9. What is your marital status?
 Married
 Separated/divorced
10. Is this your first marriage?
 Yes No (if no, including your current marriage how many times have you been married____)
11. How long have you been married to your current spouse?
____Months ____Years
12. Have you and your spouse ever attended marital counseling?
 Yes (if yes, please specify how long you were in counseling____) No
13. Did you and your current spouse engage in any premarital education or counseling?
 Yes No

14. Overall, how satisfied are you in your marriage?

- Extremely dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Mixed
- Somewhat satisfied
- Very satisfied
- Extremely satisfied

APPENDIX C
THEMATIC QUESTION GUIDE

Question 1:

I would like you to think back to when you first began dating your future husband/wife. I would like you to focus on how your relationship developed with your partner. Specifically, how did your relationship develop and when you know it was love? Please describe, in as much detail as you can remember the falling in love experience with your husband/wife.

Theme 1: *Marital Satisfaction*

Generally, how would you describe your satisfaction with your marriage? How do you think your spouse would answer this question? What contributes to how satisfied you are in your marriage?

Theme 2: *Fluctuations in love feelings*

Please talk about the day to day fluctuations in your feelings for your spouse. Are there times you feel closer to him or her? Times you feel more distant? Please talk about these times.

Theme 3: *Dissatisfaction & Unhappiness*

At some point in marriage everyone experiences a sense of dissatisfaction/unhappiness with their spouse. Please talk about a time in your marriage where you were dissatisfied/unhappy in your marriage and with your spouse . What were the events/feelings that led to your dissatisfaction/unhappiness? You do not have to reveal things that you feel are too personal...but what are some serious ways that your relationship has been or could be negatively impacted?

Theme 4: *Satisfaction & Unhappiness*

Please talk about a time in your marriage where you were satisfied/happy in your marriage and with your spouse. What were the events/feelings that led to your satisfaction/happiness? What was happening in your relationship or in how you two were relating that you believe contributed to this positive feeling?

Theme 5: *Staying in the Marriage*

Please talk about how you make it through the difficult times in your marriage. What keeps you from divorcing your spouse even when times are tough?

Theme 6: *Closeness*

Talk about a time you felt exceptionally close to your spouse. What did you spouse do or say that created this feeling of closeness? What do you believe contributes to a feeling of closeness in your marriage? Are there ways your partner relates to you that makes you feel especially close? Please describe the ways your partner makes you feel close to him/her.

Theme 7: *Rebuilding*

Please talk about a time you felt really vulnerable in your marriage or that your marriage was not stable. What happened? How did this time of instability feel? How did you and your spouse stabilize your marriage? What are some ways that either you or your spouse could begin acting or relating that would create vulnerabilities or threaten the closeness in your relationship?

Theme 8: *Trust*

Please talk about a time your trust was broken or tried in your marriage. What was this like for you? How did it feel? How did it affect your overall feeling in your marriage and toward your spouse? How did trust get re-established in your marriage?

Theme 8: *Daily Hassles*

Please talk about the daily or minor hassles/disagreements you experience in your marital relationship. How do these affect your attitude toward your partner? Talk about times when you get into a bad attitude toward your partner. How does this bad attitude affect your feelings toward your partner at that time and the overall closeness in your marriage and how do you and your spouse deal with these bad attitudes?

Theme 9: *On the Brink*

Has there been a time where you or your spouse has seriously considered divorce? If so please talk about this experience. How were you able to work through this difficult time? What factors contributed to your decision not to divorce? After making the decision not to divorce, how did your relationship proceed? How long was it before things got “back to normal” in your relationship? What helped your relationship get “back to normal”?

Theme 10: *Intimacy*

What is your idea of romance? How does your spouse show you romance? How do you show your spouse romance? What is your ideal romantic experience? Please talk about the role that affection and your overall sexual relationship plays in your marriage. Has there been a time when you and your spouse had less sex than one of you wanted? If yes, how did this affect your marriage and how you or your spouse feel in your marriage?

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Theme 11: *Life event*

Please talk about a time in your life where you and your spouse went through a significant life event (i.e. moving, birth of a child, change of career, death of a parent). How did this event affect your overall relationship? How did you take care of each other through this time? What was difficult about going through this together?

Theme 12: *Life is Busy*

Life can sometimes get busy and overwhelming, please talk about what you and your spouse do to stay close when life gets busy.

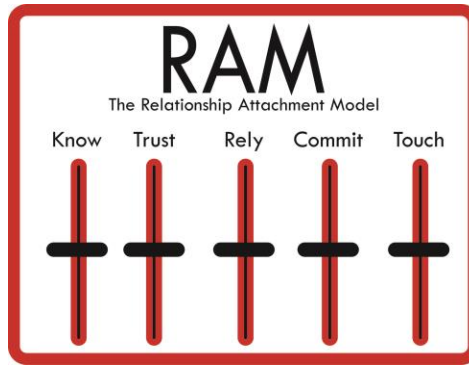
APPENDIX D
PARTICIPANT SUMMARIES

Results of the Research Summary: H1

Thank you so much for taking the time to review your interview findings. First, I will quickly provide an explanation of the study objectives so that you will be able to accurately determine whether or not you feel your interview was understood and analyzed correctly.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this research project was to see whether a model of attachment in relationships was supported through your interview. The model is called the Relationship Attachment Model (RAM; see picture below) and is made up of 5 bonding forces that are all said to lead to feelings of closeness and connection in your relationship. The idea is that each of these five areas (know, trust, rely, commit, and touch) all contribute to a feeling of connection in your marriage. At any point in time in a marriage, different levels of each of the five bonding dynamics may occur. When deficits in any of these five areas are experienced, the hypothesis is that you will feel less close to your spouse. Conversely, when these areas are nourished and taken care of you will feel closer to your spouse and overall more satisfied in your relationship. The first purpose of this study was to determine whether or not these five areas were mentioned or described as contributors to closeness (or lack of closeness) in your marriage. Essentially, based on your interview do these five areas exist? The second purpose of this study was to determine whether or not the RAM could explain processes in your marriage that either led to feeling close or distant from your spouse. This will be explained in more detail in the following sections.



WHAT ARE YOU SUPPOSED TO DO?

This research summary is basically a check of my interpretation of your interview. I will outline the findings of the study as it relates to your specific interview, then you will provide me with feedback. This feedback process provides you the opportunity to let me know if I got something wrong or if I am missing anything in my interpretation. Your feedback is a critical element in this study. I ask that you read through the following explanation and think about it. I will be in contact with you to set up a brief phone call to hear your feedback.

RESEARCH QUESTION 1: WERE THE FIVE BONDING FORCES MENTIONED OR DESCRIBED AS CONTRIBUTORS OF CLOSENESS IN YOUR MARRIAGE?

In the following table I will provide the working definitions of each of the 5 bonding dynamics. This definition was used when analyzing your interview data. I will then provide examples of your statements that fit within these definitions. Look for mistakes in my interpretation and also things that you feel happen in your marriage that could maybe not be captured by these five areas.

Bonding Dynamic Definitions	Your Interview Findings
<p>Know: Know was defined as an area that indicates how “in the know” one feels with another. Knowing someone involves talking (communication), spending time together, and experiencing diverse activities together. In a relationship it is important to get to know about a person’s values, belief systems, and areas of compatibility and complementarity. Knowing also includes how well one feels known and knows another and the processes that are required to get to know another and stay in the know with one another, such as mutual self-disclosure and communication.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How did you know she was the one?</i> I thought she was very pretty. Very attractive. Just her demeanor. We always laughed. Had a good time. We shared a lot of the same ideals. When we talked, it was fun, and we enjoyed just being around each other. • <i>What contributes to your marital satisfaction?</i> I guess we are still compatible politically. I think we have the same thoughts. Religiously, she's a little bit more churchgoing than I am but I still believe in Jesus the savior. Our thing – our issues with our kids, we're very devoted to them and our grandchildren and we like to that when we

	<p>can. We both enjoying do that. We bicycle. <i>(In both responses you mention how you and W1 enjoy spending time together. You also spoke about your compatibility, especially how compatible your values [family, ideals, religion, politics] are).</i></p>
<p>Trust: Trust indicates how much trust a person experiences in a relationship with another and is defined as a positive belief or confidence in another based on their consistency and overall <i>trustworthiness</i>. Contrary to having a positive belief in another, when trust is broken a bad attitude can develop. Breaches in trust may include major offenses such as infidelity to small resentments that build up overtime and negatively impact the overall belief or confidence in another</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How did you know you could trust W1?</i> Dating her and everything, I just always felt I could. And she has – you know, she's very religious person and we share that same belief and it's a sin to not be faithful, you know. It's a sin not to take care of your spouse, and I think we both believe that...It's huge but right now I'm at the point where I just take it for granted. I have to stop doing that. But just you know, so, yeah, I just – it's never, ever failed. It's always been there. I think they (children) saw the steadiness. There's no competition in a marriage – there is none. <i>(You, like many other participants, discussed how your trust was never breached in a major way, therefore it was given because it was never broken. You also talked about the consistency and steadiness of behavior which helped you to know that W1 was trustworthy. You had/have a positive belief in her).</i>
<p>Rely: Rely is defined as mutual needs fulfillment, dependability, and the amount of reliance one experiences in a given relationship. Needs may include: support, financial, emotional, companionship, status, affection, etc. Having needs met in a relationship leads to feeling closer, more appreciated, secure, and more valued in a marriage. Conversely, not having one's needs met can lead to feelings of distance, dissatisfaction, feeling taken for granted, and insecurity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I mean, I've always felt supported. Always. So, you know, I mean, if I ever asked to have anything that I needed done – if I had to ask her, I would, and if not, a lot of times she would anticipate. • She's always supported me....Being a guy was, but she was real supportive of me through that, because that's a poor deal.... but that kind of support, it's always there. Like I had a bad day, I came home, and she would calm me down. I'd start throwing things around. She'd say, stop, you're being stupid now. You'll just have to clean that up anyway. Before you break something important. She'd talk me down. <i>(In both of these statements you highlight how supportive W1 was to you especially while you were working on your education. You also highlighted how she would anticipate your needs which probably helped you to feel even more taken care of in your marriage).</i>
<p>Commitment: Commitment indicates how much commitment one experiences in a</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well, I really never felt that distant from W1 that I felt that I needed to (think about

relationship. Commitment is not just defined as a marital status, but as the feeling of belonging, loyalty, obligation, and responsibility for another, and the feeling that another is with you even when you are apart. Commitment is also defined as an investment into another and into the relationship. Commitment is also a decision and a choice that is made at the outset of a marriage as well as continuously through the marriage. Throughout marriage self-control is enacted, or not, to keep commitments, avoid temptations, and maintain boundaries. An intact and strong sense of commitment in marriage will foster a sense of security and comfort in the relationship.

divorce) – have I ever thought about it, I suppose I have once in a while. You think about dividing stuff up, you think about what would you – how would this impact on the kids, how would this impact on the grandkids, those kinds of thoughts – this is – it's good – why would I want to even think about jeopardizing it and the idea of living by myself just doesn't sound good. (*While you do not mention the word “commitment” you talk about the investments you have made in your marriage with W1 and how you have revisited your decision and decided that “this is good”. This continual decision making and choice to remain in a marriage is an exercise of commitment.*)

Touch: Touch indicates how much touch one experiences in a relationship. Touch can represent anything from shaking hands with a stranger to hugging to intercourse. Touch also includes showing affection, flirting, and the overall chemistry that is experienced in a relationship. This area is not just about what has occurred in a relationship, but overall how close and satisfied one feels in terms of touch and affection in a relationship.

- Well, it's fun, for one. Intimacy is just a lot of fun. I think it's an important aspect of marriage. Just as important as eating and it helps with – your – I'm trying to think of the word but – just your togetherness and your mutual respect and love for each other.

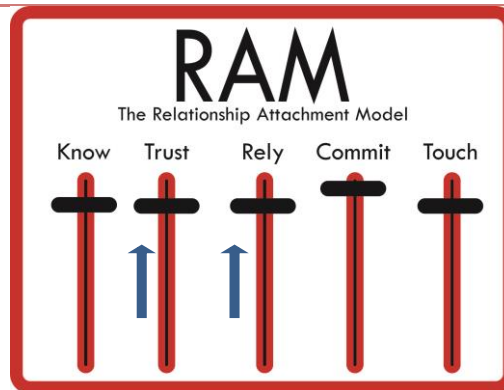
RESEARCH QUESTION 2: CAN THE RAM EXPLAIN PROCESSES IN YOUR MARRIAGE THAT LED TO YOU FEELING EITHER CLOSE OR DISTANT FROM YOUR SPOUSE ?

In the next section I will provide two examples from your interview that capture times of distance or closeness in your marriage. The distance or closeness can develop due to either events outside the marriage, events inside the marriage, or even more general statements about what makes you feel close/distant or satisfied/dissatisfied in your marriage. I will use statements from your interview and will explain the effect on your marriage using the RAM dynamics. Look for mistakes in my interpretation and things that you feel happen in your marriage that could maybe not be captured by these five areas. Remember these are just snapshots of your relationship, not an overall conclusion about your relationship.

Example One

Your statement: *What makes your marriage work?* Trusting each other. Depending on each other. The kids, raising them and really not having any disputes about that either. I've seen different people have different approaches to what they think people make their kids happy. We were never into giving them all the stuff they wanted. My thought was and I hope I preached that and I was hopefully successful that education was real important.

Interpretation and RAM profile

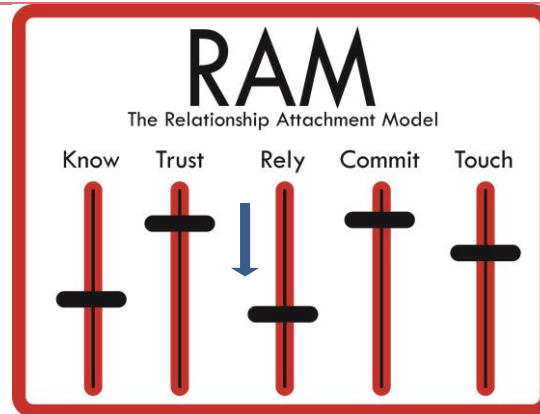


In the statement above you described how trust and depending (“rely”) on one another contributed to your marriage’s success. You also mentioned that having similar values around child rearing helped you and W1 to navigate the parenting process successfully. That area of compatibility is a demonstration of you and W1 being “in the *know*” with one another. Ultimately, you described your marriage as being strong in trust and reliance. These two dynamics created a sense of security in your marriage, enriching the commitment, feeling of being on the same page with one another (“know”) and, most likely, influenced your physical chemistry and touch. Often times in a relationship, greater levels of a specific dynamic can serve to drive the other levels up creating a greater sense of happiness and closeness in marriage. According to your RAM profile above, it is likely that you feel more secure and satisfied in your marriage when all these levels are toward the top.

Example Two

Your statement: *Can you talk about a time you felt vulnerable in your marriage?* Yeah, I think, I don't know, I'm probably a macho shit head or something, but I've been raised in that generation where I was supposed to be the one that would be the breadwinner and have the job and bring the money in and stuff and when I was out of work and going through nursing school I squabbled a lot and I thought it wasn't right that W1 would have to go to work. I was sad about that and I probably would be more vulnerable would be a good way of saying it, I think. I think it made me feel a little bit like I wasn't being a good husband.

Interpretation and RAM profile



In the above statement you spoke about a time you felt like you were not providing for W1 in a way you felt good about. You also mentioned that you were in nursing school during the time and you and W1 had an increase in arguments. On the RAM this scenario would be first illustrated by a decrease in your ability to meet W1's needs ("rely"). Also, you were probably busy during this time, being in nursing school, so it is likely that you spent less time together and less time talking, which would be indicative of a decrease in "know". These two decreases would drive some of the other levels down but, ultimately, it would create a sense of vulnerability in your marriage which is probably why you were "squabbling" more. You were not as able to take care of one another or spend time together due to life circumstances. These imbalances would have suggested less closeness and security in your marriage at that time. It is likely that when you would have the time to spend together or when school was over, these levels would balance out and you would re-establish closeness and security in your marriage.

SUMMARY:

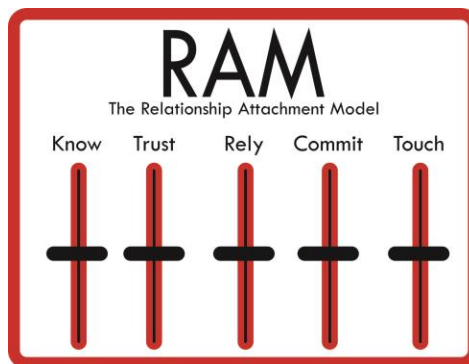
Thank you for taking the time to read through the description of your interview interpretation and results. Remember to think about how I interpreted your interview and captured it on the RAM. Consider ways in which I interpreted your interview accurately or inaccurately. I look forward to receiving your feedback. Thank you again for your time and thoughtfulness.

Results of the Research Summary: W1

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PURPOSE:

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Bonding Dynamic Definitions	Your Interview Findings
<p>Know: Know was defined as an area that indicates how “in the know” one feels with another. Knowing someone involves talking (communication), spending time together, and experiencing diverse activities together. In a relationship it is important to get to know about a person’s values, belief systems, and areas of compatibility and complementarity. Knowing also includes how well one feels known and knows another and the processes that are required to get to know another and stay in the know with one another, such as mutual self-disclosure and communication.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How did you get to know each other at a distance?</i> Telephone, letters, and he would drive in. • We have fun together. We do a lot of things – we've grown into each other, with what we like to do on vacations. And I know some people say, we're going to – I'm going to go do this, I'll go shopping, and he's going to go do this. Well, we try to find a happy medium. There's sometimes I would like to do something he doesn't do, I'm sure, vice versa, but the idea was to do things together and to have fun together. He does, he's very humorous. <i>(Here you emphasize how you and H1 stay close by spending time together).</i>
<p>Trust: Trust indicates how much trust a person experiences in a relationship with another and is defined as a positive belief or confidence in another based on their consistency and overall <i>trustworthiness</i>. Contrary to having a positive belief in another, when trust is broken a bad attitude can develop. Breaches in trust may include major offenses such as infidelity to small resentments that build up overtime and negatively impact the overall belief or confidence in another</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How did you know H1 was trustworthy?</i> Let's see, I admired that he was in the Marine Corps, that he was educated, that he had ambition and plans, and that he was uplifting and family was important and just that there was security. There seemed to be security. • I think because we're honest with each other. If something's bothering me. I won't hurt his feelings but some things I have a very sharp tongue. His is not as sharp as mine. But I'll tell him and then I think we kind of try to talk it out, work it out, but I don't think I've ever not trusted him ever...I guess because of the written word, I mean, when it's on paper it's a little bit different. And then he would come and it would verify all of the things – you know, I have all those letters, I should go through them. Yeah. He's just a good guy. He's just a good guy. And he's honest. I mean, how can you not trust an honest person? Sometimes he's too honest. He's not

	<p>as honest as me. <i>(You spoke about how you knew HI was trustworthy because of various qualities he had that led you to have a positive belief in him and his trustworthiness).</i></p>
<p>Rely: Rely is defined as mutual needs fulfillment, dependability, and the amount of reliance one experiences in a given relationship. Needs may include: support, financial, emotional, companionship, status, affection, etc. Having needs met in a relationship leads to feeling closer, more appreciated, secure, and more valued in a marriage. Conversely, not having one's needs met can lead to feelings of distance, dissatisfaction, feeling taken for granted, and insecurity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch his back. I got his back. And I'll tell him that, I got your back, don't worry about it, I got your back, and I think he's got mine too, so yeah. • I think when he was gone to nursing school and I kind of had the brunt of everything because I had to go back to work and then I got pregnant with Amanda, that was rough, that was rough, because I felt like I had to hold the ball and I don't think he enjoyed it because I don't think any man likes being out of work. He'd say, well, I'm going to go out to lunch with the girls and it's like, wait a minute, I didn't get any sleep, I work nights....<i>How did that affect your attitude toward him...I didn't like him very much. (In these statements you discussed how you meet HI's needs by supporting him. You also talked about a time where your needs were somewhat neglected and it led you to feel negatively toward HI.)</i>
<p>Commitment: Commitment indicates how much commitment one experiences in a relationship. Commitment is not just defined as a marital status, but as the feeling of belonging, loyalty, obligation, and responsibility for another, and the feeling that another is with you even when you are apart. Commitment is also defined as an investment into another and into the relationship. Commitment is also a decision and a choice that is made at the outset of a marriage as well as continuously through the marriage. Throughout marriage self-control is enacted, or not, to keep commitments, avoid temptations, and maintain boundaries. An intact and strong sense of commitment in marriage will foster a sense of security and comfort in the relationship.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well, time passed, and he finished, and it was just a matter of this is a rough time and you've got to work it out and then I got pregnant and it's just one of those things you have to work out because the commitment is there. Now would it be the same? I don't know. It'd be so easy to get out and say gee, I'm a nurse, I can do whatever I want to do, I don't need this. I think it made it stronger. I think it made us stronger. It would have to. • Well, we had children. And I think the commitment that we made on our wedding day held a lot for both of us. You just don't give that up because you made a promise. You just don't go up on your promises that easy. • Work. Working at it. Working at it. I mean, it just doesn't happen, you've got to make it work day by day by day, year by year.
<p>Touch: Touch indicates how much touch one experiences in a relationship. Touch can represent anything from shaking hands with a stranger to hugging to intercourse. Touch also includes showing affection, flirting, and the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How do you show affection to one another? Verbal and physical. So if there was no sex in your marriage, how would that affect your marriage?</i> Well, probably pretty bad. I don't think we would have survived as a couple.

overall chemistry that is experienced in a relationship. This area is not just about what has occurred in a relationship, but overall how close and satisfied one feels in terms of touch and affection in a relationship.

That's probably one of the most intimate things you can do with somebody, that's how you really know somebody. Those are the moments that you think about – the kisses and the touches. Those are the things that you always kind of go back to. It takes your mind off of everything else and you do feel closer, you do feel closer.

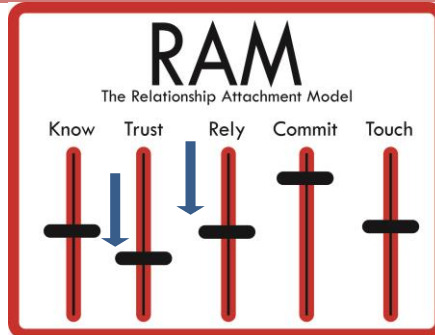
RESEARCH QUESTION 2: CAN THE RAM EXPLAIN PROCESSES IN YOUR MARRIAGE THAT LED TO YOU FEELING EITHER CLOSE OR DISTANT FROM YOUR SPOUSE ?

In the next section I will provide two examples from your interview that capture times of distance or closeness in your marriage. The distance or closeness can develop due to either events outside the marriage or events inside the marriage. I will use statements from your interview and will explain the effect on your marriage using the RAM dynamics. Look for mistakes in my interpretation and things that you feel happen in your marriage that could maybe not be captured by these five areas.

Example One

Your statement: : I think when he was gone to nursing school and I kind of had the brunt of everything because I had to go back to work and then I got pregnant with Amanda, that was rough, that was rough, because I felt like I had to hold the ball and I don't think he enjoyed it because I don't think any man likes being out of work. He'd say, well, I'm going to go out to lunch with the girls and it's like, wait a minute, I didn't get any sleep, I work nights....*How did that affect your attitude toward him?* I didn't like him very much.

Interpretation and RAM profile

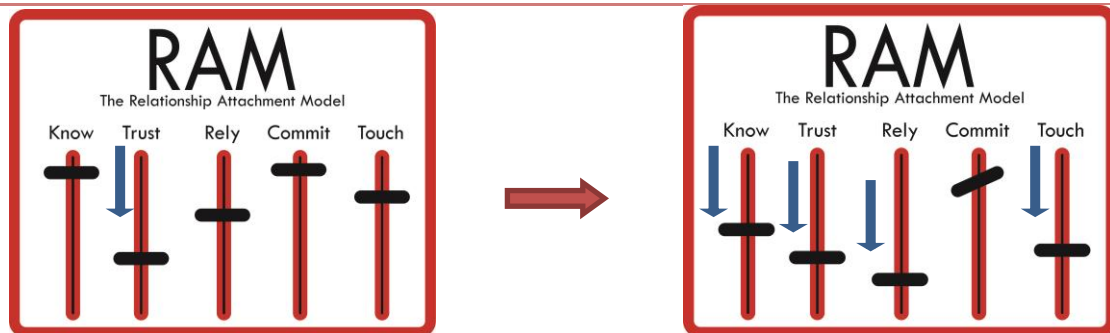


In the statement above you talked about a time when H1 was in nursing school and you had to take on more responsibilities and more caretaking. This is demonstrated on the RAM by a decrease in “rely” meaning you were less able to rely on H1 to meet your needs. You also spent less time together because he was going to school and you were working so much, this is reflected on the RAM by a decrease in “know”. Ultimately the decrease in these levels caused you to feel like you weren’t being taken care of as much as you desired and that you didn’t get as much of H1’s time as you wanted. In the end these imbalances caused you to “not like him very much” because your belief in him or opinion of him became more negative (just during that time), which is reflected by a decrease in the “trust” on the RAM. It is likely that these lowered levels caused other areas of your relationship to drop, maybe you felt less like a team and therefore less committed to the marriage and maybe even your sex life suffered during this time. Overall, these imbalances created vulnerability in your marriage and you probably felt less close to H1 and less satisfied. Over time, you two most likely found a ways to increase these levels (i.e. spending time together, going camping, etc) which would increase the know, trust, and rely and ultimately re-create a sense of closeness and satisfaction in your marriage.

Example Two

Your statement: *Can you talk about a time your trust was broken in your marriage? Yeah, I do remember one point. When he was working at the VA, there was a nurse that was going to massage school. And then I went, I'd go, and it just seemed to be everything was, he just thought a lot of her opinions I think, and I don't know, one thing led to another, and that was a rough time, but, and I'm not sure now why, but I think when I thought about okay – I don't know if this is right or if this is the right man for me or whatever, but then you think about leaving and disturbing all of this, and you go, and the thought scared me, the thought scared me. So I think it goes in your head, but I think it goes –Yeah, because you thought about it and you think – no, I don't think that's a good idea.*

Interpretation and RAM profile



In the statement above you spoke about a time H1 broke your trust. This is reflected on the first RAM by a decrease in “trust”. What, likely, happened when your trust in H1 decreased was that you started to feel vulnerable which caused you to pull back and not “rely” on him as much as you normally would. You also may have even felt that you didn’t “know” H1 (during this time) as well as you thought you did. It is also likely that you were less interested in sex during this time. Ultimately when all of the RAM levels started to drop you questioned your commitment to the marriage. You said to yourself “is this the right man for me?” Probably during this time in your marriage, you felt insecure and vulnerable and not especially close to H1. It sounds like you arrived at the conclusion that you didn’t want to leave the marriage and you and H1 worked things out. Over time the lowered levels on the RAM probably increased and you and H1 re-established trust and spending time together. These increases would help you to feel more secure in the marriage and probably closer and more satisfied.

SUMMARY:

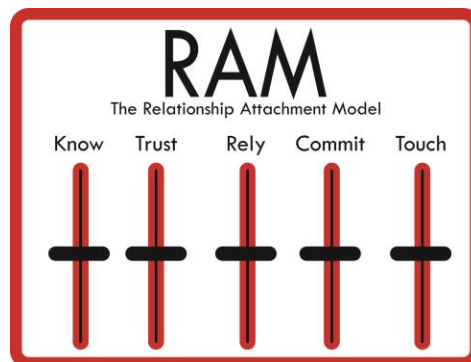
Thank you for taking the time to read through the description of your interview interpretation and results. Remember to think about how I interpreted your interview and captured it on the RAM. Consider ways in which I interpreted your interview accurately or inaccurately. I look forward to receiving your feedback. Thank you again for your time and thoughtfulness.

Results of the Research Summary: H2

Thank you so much for taking the time to review your interview findings. First, I will quickly provide an explanation of the study objectives so that you will be able to accurately determine whether or not you feel your interview was understood and analyzed correctly.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this research project was to see whether a model of attachment in relationships was supported through your interview. The model is called the Relationship Attachment Model (RAM; see picture below) and is made up of 5 bonding forces that are all said to lead to feelings of closeness and connection in your relationship. The idea is that each of these five areas (know, trust, rely, commit, and touch) all contribute to a feeling of connection in your marriage. At any point in time in a marriage, different levels of each of the five bonding dynamics may occur. When deficits in any of these five areas are experienced, the hypothesis is that you will feel less close to your spouse. Conversely, when these areas are nourished and taken care of you will feel closer to your spouse and overall more satisfied in your relationship. The first purpose of this study was to determine whether or not these five areas were mentioned or described as contributors to closeness (or lack of closeness) in your marriage. Essentially, based on your interview do these five areas exist? The second purpose of this study was to determine whether or not the RAM could explain processes in your marriage that either led to feeling close or distant from your spouse. This will be explained in more detail in the following sections.



WHAT ARE YOU SUPPOSED TO DO?

This research summary is basically a check of my interpretation of your interview. I will outline the findings of the study as it relates to your specific interview, then you will provide me with feedback. This feedback process provides you the opportunity to let me know if I got something wrong or if I am missing anything in my interpretation. Your feedback is a critical element in this study. I ask that you read through the following explanation and think about it. I will be in contact with you to set up a brief phone call to hear your feedback.

RESEARCH QUESTION 1: WERE THE FIVE BONDING FORCES MENTIONED OR DESCRIBED AS CONTRIBUTORS OF CLOSENESS IN YOUR MARRIAGE?

In the following table I will provide the working definitions of each of the 5 bonding dynamics. This definition was used when analyzing your interview data. I will then provide examples of your statements that fit within these definitions. Look for mistakes in my interpretation and also things that you feel happen in your marriage that could maybe not be captured by these five areas.

Bonding Dynamic Definitions	Your Interview Findings
<p>Know: Know was defined as an area that indicates how “in the know” one feels with another. Knowing someone involves talking (communication), spending time together, and experiencing diverse activities together. In a relationship it is important to get to know about a person’s values, belief systems, and areas of compatibility and complementarity. Knowing also includes how well one feels known and knows another and the processes that are required to get to know another and stay in the know with one another, such as mutual self-disclosure and communication.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common interests, per se, for the most part. At the time we were in our 20s and we would just do things together. And that too changed over time, but we just were together a lot and like anything else, there's ups and downs, but for the most part we, I won't say thought the same but we had like interests and yet we also had opposite – not opposite but different interests too – <i>(Here you spoke about being compatible with W2 as well as how your differences complemented one another. You also described spending a lot of time together and how that contributed to you getting to know her).</i>
<p>Trust: Trust indicates how much trust a person experiences in a relationship with another and is defined as a positive belief or confidence in another based on their consistency and overall <i>trustworthiness</i>. Contrary to having a positive belief in another, when trust is broken a bad attitude can develop. Breaches in trust may include major offenses such as infidelity to small resentments that build up overtime and negatively impact the overall belief or confidence in another</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Can you talk about a time where you were unhappy in your marriage? Other than, you know, everyday – I won't say every day, but occasional occurrences where we're just getting a bad attitude or something, we've never had any real – since we've been married – anything really big. (Here you highlight how you have never been really unhappy but that daily little things can add up to affect your overall picture or belief in your spouse. A belief in someone that becomes more negative than positive is a common way resentments in marriage occur and bad attitudes will then usually develop).</i>
<p>Rely: Rely is defined as mutual needs fulfillment, dependability, and the amount of reliance one experiences in a given relationship. Needs may include: support, financial, emotional, companionship, status, affection, etc. Having needs met in a relationship leads to feeling closer, more appreciated, secure, and more valued in a marriage. Conversely, not having one’s needs met can lead to feelings of</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • And I get a little frustrated because sometimes – and I've admitted, I've said this out loud to her and it's like a lot of times what I say doesn't mean anything as far as certain things, mostly the kids, and what I feel we should do or we shouldn't do, and I do, for the most part, bite my tongue when I think was right because I feel it doesn't do anyone a service, I've already been pouting

distance, dissatisfaction, feeling taken for granted, and insecurity.

pretty much because I was upset that we didn't do what I wanted to do – but yeah, that was probably the biggest peeve that I have at this point in the relationship is that I almost feel like what I think doesn't count. *(In this comment you talked about feeling like what you had to say was ignored or not heard. This comment suggested that your need to be validated and supported and to have a voice in the relationship was not being met. Ultimately this unmet need led to you feeling dissatisfied with or distanced from W2).*

Commitment: Commitment indicates how much commitment one experiences in a relationship. Commitment is not just defined as a marital status, but as the feeling of belonging, loyalty, obligation, and responsibility for another, and the feeling that another is with you even when you are apart. Commitment is also defined as an investment into another and into the relationship. Commitment is also a decision and a choice that is made at the outset of a marriage as well as continuously through the marriage. Throughout marriage self-control is enacted, or not, to keep commitments, avoid temptations, and maintain boundaries. An intact and strong sense of commitment in marriage will foster a sense of security and comfort in the relationship.

- *What keeps you in your marriage? I mean, there's never really – I'm just too old to start over. Just grew up. Maturity. And this is probably a fault where I should just step back and relax and get my head screwed back on right but I just – I'm just maybe like a mule, just keep my head down and keep pulling. It's just not an option. It has nothing to do with religion or anything, either. It's just – once you're together, you have so much together and so much to lose if you were to separate. So that's like giving up what we have. It took me a long time to get comfortable with that. *(Here you spoke about how you have invested time in the marriage and that these investments make separating less desirable. You also talked about an attitude or tendency you have to keep moving forward and working on the marriage. Both of these comments are aspects of commitment).**

Touch: Touch indicates how much touch one experiences in a relationship. Touch can represent anything from shaking hands with a stranger to hugging to intercourse. Touch also includes showing affection, flirting, and the overall chemistry that is experienced in a relationship. This area is not just about what has occurred in a relationship, but overall how close and satisfied one feels in terms of touch and affection in a relationship.

- *How did you know you loved W2? Started out, just liked her, physical attraction, whatever, and it just kind of grew and as far as – I wouldn't even be able to tell a time when – okay, I'm in love –*(While you don't explicitly talk about sex in this comment you do talk about how you were physically attracted to W2 and how that contributed to your feeling of love for her. This is an aspect of touch).**

RESEARCH QUESTION 2: CAN THE RAM EXPLAIN PROCESSES IN YOUR MARRIAGE THAT LED TO YOU FEELING EITHER CLOSE OR DISTANT FROM YOUR SPOUSE ?

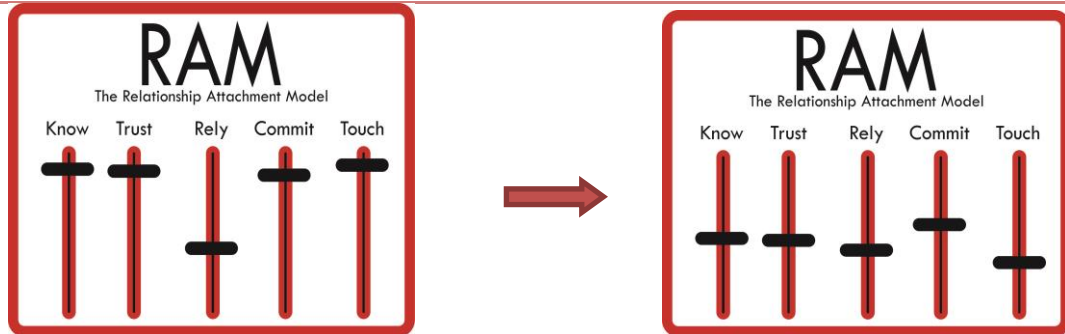
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either events outside the marriage or events inside the marriage. I will use statements from your interview and will explain the effect on your marriage using the RAM dynamics. Look for mistakes in my interpretation and things that you feel happen in your marriage that could maybe not be captured by these five areas.

Example One

Your statement: Your statement: *Can you talk about a time you felt distant from W2?* Yeah, I mean, there's always times – almost like when you feel like – I don't know, for me, sometimes I feel like a spoiled brat sometimes because I'm not getting my way and other times it's like well what did I do to deserve this? Once again, it's just – I kind of just accept it as part of life, and I don't even really think about it other than I might get a little upset or a little unhappy or whatever but other than that – I don't know if that's answering – And I get a little frustrated because sometimes – and I've admitted, I've said this out loud to her and it's like a lot of times what I say doesn't mean anything as far as certain things, mostly the kids, and what I feel we should do or we shouldn't do, and I do, for the most part, bite my tongue when I think was right because I feel it doesn't do anyone a service, I've already been pouting pretty much because I was upset that we didn't do what I wanted to do – but yeah, that was probably the biggest peeve that I have at this point in the relationship is that I almost feel like what I think doesn't count.

Interpretation and RAM profile



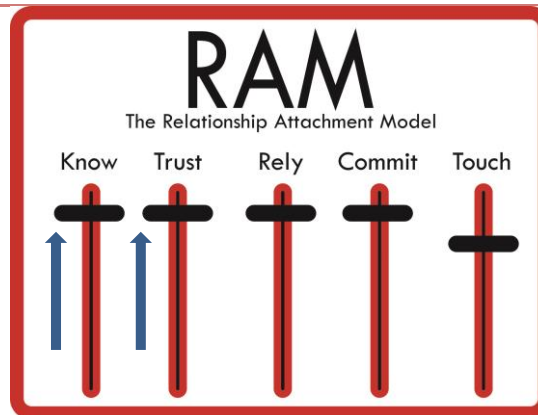
In the above statement you described feeling like sometimes in your marriage you feel like what you say/think doesn't count. This reflects a lowered level of "rely" in that your need to feel supported, taken seriously, and heard went unmet.

Ultimately this lowered level of "rely" will negatively impact the other aspects of the relationship. For example, it is likely that you felt less known by W2 which will result in a lowered level of "know". You are also likely to have had less "trust" in W2 because she let you down by not listening to you or taking you seriously. It is likely that these drops in RAM dynamics caused you to question "why you deserve this?" and your "commitment" to the relationship. Overall, these lowered levels of the RAM dynamics created vulnerability in the marriage that probably lowered your relationship satisfaction and overall feeling closeness in the marriage (at least temporarily).

Example Two

Your statement: *What are some times when you feel closest to W2?* When we're kind of like going along, we both like what we're doing together, when everything is going pretty much how – thinking about it, I would have to say almost the way I figured it work and everything – she's happy, I'm happy, naturally it always makes things go very well and smooth .

Interpretation and RAM profile



In that statement above you described feeling closest to W2 when you are both on the same page. This is demonstrated on the RAM by an increase in “know” and “trust”. Being on the same page is an increase in know because it reflects a sense of you and W2 being “in the know” with one another and her being the woman you feel like you know and expect her to be. It is also an increase in “trust” because it is an example of her being predictable and trustworthy and you maintaining a positive opinion of her. Because these two levels of the RAM increase, it is likely that you feel like you can depend on her more and you probably feel more secure and committed to the marriage. Overall, these increased levels on the RAM result in you feeling closer to W2 and probably happier in your marriage

SUMMARY:

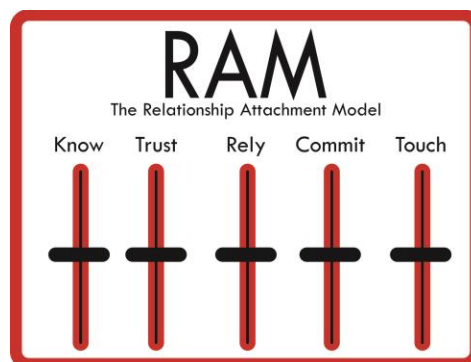
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Results of the Research Summary: W2

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PURPOSE:

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RESEARCH QUESTION 1: WERE THE FIVE BONDING FORCES MENTIONED OR DESCRIBED AS CONTRIBUTORS OF CLOSENESS IN YOUR MARRIAGE?

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Bonding Dynamic Definitions	Your Interview Findings
<p>Know: Know was defined as an area that indicates how “in the know” one feels with another. Knowing someone involves talking (communication), spending time together, and experiencing diverse activities together. In a relationship it is important to get to know about a person’s values, belief systems, and areas of compatibility and complementarity. Knowing also includes how well one feels known and knows another and the processes that are required to get to know another and stay in the know with one another, such as mutual self-disclosure and communication.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We were friends first. When we met we didn't just start dating. That other guy had dumped shortly after probably I met H2, but we just kind of hung around with a group, and it was a few months I think before he actually asked me out, and of course when we went out, it was to the rodeo that was in Cleveland, when his family was there, and he has a big extended family, and the neighbors were there and everything. That was the first place he took me and it was still kind of almost a friendly thing, but I don't know, he just always treated me – he listens. More interested in me and my comforts than other people were always interested, other men were always interested in themselves, I think. I didn't date much...it was a friendship first. <i>How did you first get to know each other...hanging at the bar. (Here you describe how you were friends with H2 first and how you got to know his family and how he treated you. You also talked about how spending time together helped you get to know H2).</i>
<p>Trust: Trust indicates how much trust a person experiences in a relationship with another and is defined as a positive belief or confidence in another based on their consistency and overall <i>trustworthiness</i>. Contrary to having a positive belief in another, when trust is broken a bad attitude can develop. Breaches in trust may include major offenses such as infidelity to small resentments that build up overtime and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>How did you know you could trust H2? Just by him always being steady. (Your response indicated that you tested out your belief in H2 which led you to realize that he was worthy of your trust).</i>

negatively impact the overall belief or confidence in another

Rely: Rely is defined as mutual needs fulfillment, dependability, and the amount of reliance one experiences in a given relationship. Needs may include: support, financial, emotional, companionship, status, affection, etc. Having needs met in a relationship leads to feeling closer, more appreciated, secure, and more valued in a marriage. Conversely, not having one's needs met can lead to feelings of distance, dissatisfaction, feeling taken for granted, and insecurity.

- He takes care of me.....Just anything I need. I mean he just – I even told my son that not too long ago, or somebody else – I'm a klutz and I break things and I'm just awful, and it's like he's always putting out my fires is what said once, he comes home and he has to put out my fires because so many things go wrong. He fixes my car, he does – I mean, I can bring home animals. Like these cats. He doesn't blink an eye. It's just like it's part of what we do, who we are. Anything I need – he never says no.
- Yeah, and your love grows stronger and your comfort. Love isn't just all exciting. It's comfort. We've been together forever, it seems like – 28 years, add the 5 to that of living together, that's forever....He just takes care of me. *(In both of these answers you talked about how H2 meets your need to be taken care of. You talked about how he puts your first and allows you to be klutzy and bring home animals and still accepts and loves you. You also talked about how being together for 28 years and feeling taken care of during those years helps you to feel loved).*

Commitment: Commitment indicates how much commitment one experiences in a relationship. Commitment is not just defined as a marital status, but as the feeling of belonging, loyalty, obligation, and responsibility for another, and the feeling that another is with you even when you are apart. Commitment is also defined as an investment into another and into the relationship. Commitment is also a decision and a choice that is made at the outset of a marriage as well as continuously through the marriage. Throughout marriage self-control is enacted, or not, to keep commitments, avoid temptations, and maintain boundaries. An intact and strong sense of commitment in marriage will foster a sense of security and comfort in the relationship.

- *What was the difference between living together and being married?* Nothing, I don't think nothing. We – I mean, we were committed already. After five years, it was pretty much the same as being married. I think I myself was a little more content being actually married to him. But he – right away he started helping with rent when he moved in with me and all that stuff, so I never felt taken advantage of, but I think I felt a little more secure at that point. *(In this response you talked about the investments that you and H2 made in the relationship, such as paying rent, as well as your feeling of contentment and security after marriage).*
- *What keeps you from divorcing?* It's just not an option. It has nothing to do with religion or anything, either. It's just – once you're together, you have so much together and so much to lose if you were to separate. So that's like giving up what we have. It took me a long time to get comfortable with that.

Touch: Touch indicates how much touch one experiences in a relationship. Touch can represent anything from shaking hands with a stranger to hugging to intercourse. Touch also includes showing affection, flirting, and the overall chemistry that is experienced in a relationship. This area is not just about what has occurred in a relationship, but overall how close and satisfied one feels in terms of touch and affection in a relationship.

- Affection, I think, is important. I mean, it doesn't have to be physical, hugs and kisses and stuff. He never leaves without kissing me goodbye in the morning. He wakes me up to kiss me goodbye and sometimes it drives me nuts because then I can't fall back asleep. That's something that's important to him, though, is to always kiss me goodbye when he was good work. Or even this morning when he took Chessa to the bus, because I was still in bed, and he always kisses me, anyway. Yeah. Sex is, to me, not important. Not now, anyway, after all these years, I don't even care about it anymore, which is sad, sometimes, I think. I think that really bothers him probably but I don't think sex is important in a relationship. *(Here you talk about how day to day affections are important in your relationship. You also highlight how you tend to value sex less in your marriage now and maybe less than H2).*
- I think it does. I think – and again, I think it's more for him. Because I could do without it. As good as he is – he's always cared about me and my needs first. I think he needs it and I should probably do it more, but I've gone through menopause and I have no desire. And sometimes I try and I just – oh, I've got to do it just to make him feel better – so I guess I think it is a little important. I really don't know – I just think men seem to feel they need sex. The actual physical intimacy of it, not just the ejaculation, whatever you want to call it – because there's times I'll tell him just go take a soapy shower, but it's not the same, that's not what they want. I think it affects it (the marriage) in a way. I feel it. You can't – you can't tell the way we act around each other, I don't think. I feel we would have more of a closeness if I would instigate it more.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2: CAN THE RAM EXPLAIN PROCESSES IN YOUR MARRIAGE THAT LED TO YOU FEELING EITHER CLOSE OR DISTANT FROM YOUR SPOUSE ?

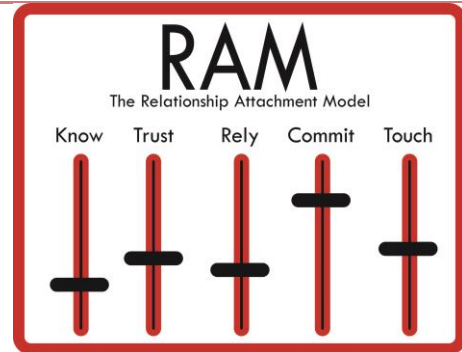
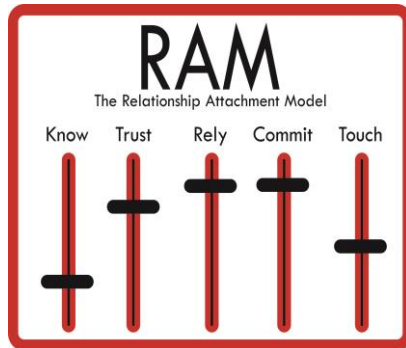
In the next section I will provide two examples from your interview that capture times of distance or closeness in your marriage. The distance or closeness can develop due to either events outside the marriage or events inside the marriage. I will use statements from your interview and will explain the effect on your marriage using the RAM

dynamics. Look for mistakes in my interpretation and things that you feel happen in your marriage that could maybe not be captured by these five areas.

Example One

Your statement: *When do you feel most distant from H2? I don't know – I know there's times when he's kind of moody and the kids and I will sense it and then we know we have to just leave him alone until he gets over. But I think he's got so much on his mind with work and possibly losing his job and everything, and we just kind of walk like egg shells around him, just leave him be until he starts to talk again.*

Interpretation and RAM profile



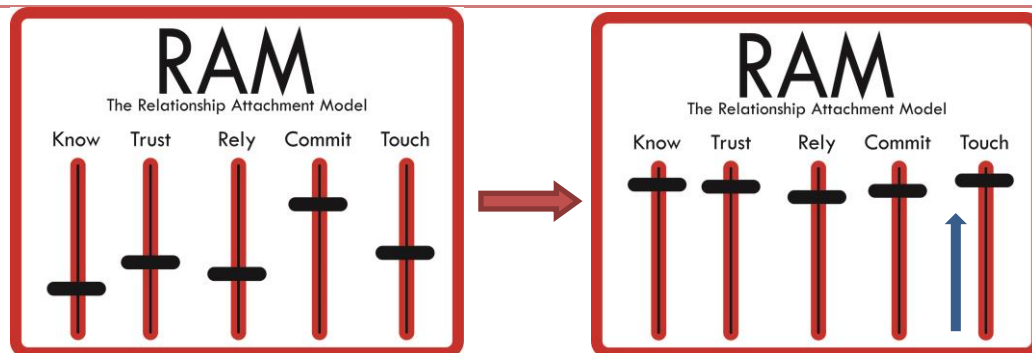
In the statement above you describe a time when you don't really understand why H2 is "moody" or upset as a time when you feel most distant. During these moody episodes it is likely that you don't recognize H2 and do not recognize his mood. This causes you to feel like you don't "know" him and what he is going through. Ultimately this results in a lowered level of "know".

When the "know" is decreased it is likely that it impacts the other areas of the RAM. Specifically, your opinion of H2 ("trust") is challenged because he is acting differently or inconsistent when compared to how he usually acts. This challenged trust in him also affects how much you can rely on him during this time. You said you "just leave him alone" which means that it is likely that some of your needs are going unmet and that you can't always depend on H2 because his moods can sometimes unexpectedly change. Overall, these lowered levels of the RAM dynamics result in you feeling somewhat more distant from H2 (even if just temporarily).

Example Two

Your statement: No, there's nothing you can do because you can't talk to him or anything, he won't talk, he'll just say nothing's wrong – what's wrong? Nothing. And – yeah, actually, sometimes if we would have sex, because when I'm distant like that, you don't want it – so if I would kind of – when it goes on for more than a couple of weeks then I'm feeling really bad when you're apart like that, and I would initiate, and then that sometimes would break the ice and we'd get back to normal.

Interpretation and RAM profile



The statement above is a continuation of the conversation about H2's moods. When asked what you could do to help him "snap out of it" you stated that sometimes you would initiate sex. The RAMs above depict the imbalance during H2's mood and what, most likely, happened when you initiated sex. You increased the touch level of the RAM which would help to pull up the other dynamics. Meaning when you had sex, H2 snapped out of his mood. Then he started to act like himself again. When he would get back to normal you would start to feel like you "know" him again and that you can depend ("rely") on him more and that he is the H2 you can "trust" and have a good opinion of. Ultimately repairing the one RAM dynamic, likely re-balanced the imbalance in your relationship causing you to feel closer to H2 and probably more satisfied in the relationship.

SUMMARY:

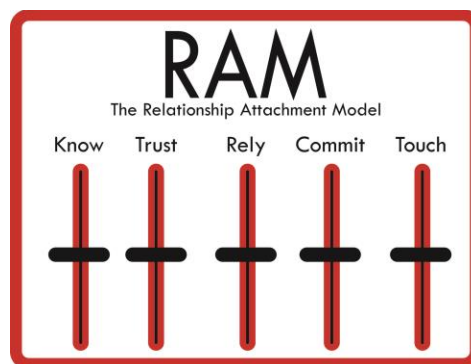
Thank you for taking the time to read through the description of your interview interpretation and results. Remember to think about how I interpreted your interview and captured it on the RAM. Consider ways in which I interpreted your interview accurately or inaccurately. I look forward to receiving your feedback. Thank you again for your time and thoughtfulness.

Results of the Research Summary: H3

Thank you so much for taking the time to review your interview findings. First, I will quickly provide an explanation of the study objectives so that you will be able to accurately determine whether or not you feel your interview was understood and analyzed correctly.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this research project was to see whether a model of attachment in relationships was supported through your interview. The model is called the Relationship Attachment Model (RAM; see picture below) and is made up of 5 bonding forces that are all said to lead to feelings of closeness and connection in your relationship. The idea is that each of these five areas (know, trust, rely, commit, and touch) all contribute to a feeling of connection in your marriage. At any point in time in a marriage, different levels of each of the five bonding dynamics may occur. When deficits in any of these five areas are experienced, the hypothesis is that you will feel less close to your spouse. Conversely, when these areas are nourished and taken care of you will feel closer to your spouse and overall more satisfied in your relationship. The first purpose of this study was to determine whether or not these five areas were mentioned or described as contributors to closeness (or lack of closeness) in your marriage. Essentially, based on your interview do these five areas exist? The second purpose of this study was to determine whether or not the RAM could explain processes in your marriage that either led to feeling close or distant from your spouse. This will be explained in more detail in the following sections.



WHAT ARE YOU SUPPOSED TO DO?

This research summary is basically a check of my interpretation of your interview. I will outline the findings of the study as it relates to your specific interview, then you will provide me with feedback. This feedback process provides you the opportunity to let me know if I got something wrong or if I am missing anything in my interpretation. Your feedback is a critical element in this study. I ask that you read through the following

explanation and think about it. I will be in contact with you to set up a brief phone call to hear your feedback.

RESEARCH QUESTION 1: WERE THE FIVE BONDING FORCES MENTIONED OR DESCRIBED AS CONTRIBUTORS OF CLOSENESS IN YOUR MARRIAGE?

In the following table I will provide the working definitions of each of the 5 bonding dynamics. This definition was used when analyzing your interview data. I will then provide examples of your statements that fit within these definitions. Look for mistakes in my interpretation and also things that you feel happen in your marriage that could maybe not be captured by these five areas.

Bonding Dynamic Definitions	Your Interview Findings
<p>Know: Know was defined as an area that indicates how “in the know” one feels with another. Knowing someone involves talking (communication), spending time together, and experiencing diverse activities together. In a relationship it is important to get to know about a person’s values, belief systems, and areas of compatibility and complementarity. Knowing also includes how well one feels known and knows another and the processes that are required to get to know another and stay in the know with one another, such as mutual self-disclosure and communication.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We were pretty compatible, I mean, she's very independent – she was never a cling-y person, wasn't needy, and she didn't try to change me. She knew who I was and I enjoyed being with her. She's kind of a quiet person. It took a long time to get to know her. She never called me. To this day, she doesn't call. If there's a purpose to call, to tell me something, she'll call, but she never calls just to talk. She's never been that way. Yeah but we both kind of – we have the same temperament, I mean, we don't get riled up about things and don't get upset about little things. And we both make accommodations for each other. And it was just a good fit. <i>(This response highlights your compatibility with W3 and how the process of getting to know her took longer because she is quiet and isn't as much of a talker).</i>
<p>Trust: Trust indicates how much trust a person experiences in a relationship with another and is defined as a positive belief or confidence in another based on their consistency and overall <i>trustworthiness</i>. Contrary to having a positive belief in another, when trust is broken a bad attitude can develop. Breaches in trust may include major offenses such as infidelity to small resentments that build up overtime and negatively impact the overall belief or confidence in another</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I always know she has my back and even when I make a mistake, she never holds things against you – she's not one, either of us, to bring up old things from the past or I told you so kind of things. If we have an issue, we work through it, and when it's passed, it's passed, and we move on from there. She would never like try – we look out for each other because we'd never do anything to embarrass each other and if she knows – if there's something she's not comfortable with that's going on, she's can talk to me about it and vice versa, and we've always put each other first. And I always

	<p>made that pretty clear with the kids too. That they were second after their mother. <i>(This response emphasizes that you have a positive belief in W3 and that you have this belief because you view her as trustworthy and she has proved herself over time as someone who has your back and will not hold grudges.)</i></p>
<p>Rely: Rely is defined as mutual needs fulfillment, dependability, and the amount of reliance one experiences in a given relationship. Needs may include: support, financial, emotional, companionship, status, affection, etc. Having needs met in a relationship leads to feeling closer, more appreciated, secure, and more valued in a marriage. Conversely, not having one's needs met can lead to feelings of distance, dissatisfaction, feeling taken for granted, and insecurity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No, I've never been unhappy in our marriage. I know there's probably been some times when she hasn't been as happy because of – the amount of time that we get to spend together and there were times in my career when I was gone a lot and that was very difficult for her but I've always been – I haven't had – you know – there's never been a time when I haven't looked forward to coming home. I don't talk about work at home. I really don't like to because when I walk in the house, I leave all that stuff behind, and I just like keeping it separate, and she accommodates in that way because I know she'd probably like to talk more about it and want to know more about it but I like being able to come home and forget about all that and do stuff at home. <i>(One of the reasons you mention for being happy in your marriage is that your needs are met by W3, in that she allows you to come home from work and relax and forget about work.)</i> • I try to do little things. I try to get her flowers. I know that she likes – she has errands to run, she likes – during the day, the kids will just throw all their dishes in the sink and she always comes home with a messy sink or whatever. So I'll clean the kitchen for her and just – you know, it's a short thing, but she likes being able to walk in and not have more to do. <i>(Here you describe meeting W3's needs).</i>
<p>Commitment: Commitment indicates how much commitment one experiences in a relationship. Commitment is not just defined as a marital status, but as the feeling of belonging, loyalty, obligation, and responsibility for another, and the feeling that another is with you even when you are apart. Commitment is also defined as an investment into another and into the relationship. Commitment is also a decision</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Couldn't imagine not being with her and just – I would feel the loneliness of not having her there. And I can't imagine that there would be anybody else more suitable for me. So it's never anything I really even thought about. <i>(While you do not say "commitment" you describe a feeling of loyalty to W3 and difficulty imagining not having W3 in your life. These statements are all statements of</i>

and a choice that is made at the outset of a marriage as well as continuously through the marriage. Throughout marriage self-control is enacted, or not, to keep commitments, avoid temptations, and maintain boundaries. An intact and strong sense of commitment in marriage will foster a sense of security and comfort in the relationship.

commitment).

Touch: Touch indicates how much touch one experiences in a relationship. Touch can represent anything from shaking hands with a stranger to hugging to intercourse. Touch also includes showing affection, flirting, and the overall chemistry that is experienced in a relationship. This area is not just about what has occurred in a relationship, but overall how close and satisfied one feels in terms of touch and affection in a relationship.

- It's important. It's a very important bonding factor. It clears away a lot of the noise of everything else that you're dealing with and it just kind of makes you remember that it's you two and why you're together and it's a big part of the glue that holds a marriage together. And we were always very compatible that way and that's one of the things I tried explaining to my daughter – that you've got to have a good partner from that aspect too. I mean, everything else is important too, but if you don't have a good partner that way, the chances are it's not going to get better....Yeah, and because it's easier for it to go away than for it grow just over time with each other. And we've always been – that has never been a problem for us.

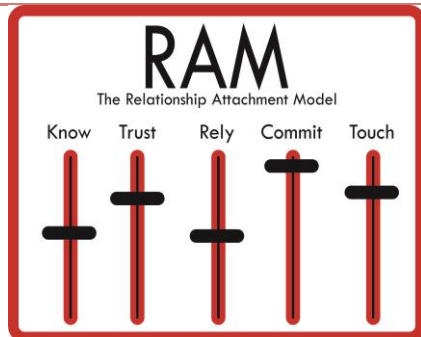
RESEARCH QUESTION 2: CAN THE RAM EXPLAIN PROCESSES IN YOUR MARRIAGE THAT LED TO YOU FEELING EITHER CLOSE OR DISTANT FROM YOUR SPOUSE ?

In the next section I will provide two examples from your interview that capture times of distance or closeness in your marriage. The distance or closeness can develop due to either events outside the marriage or events inside the marriage. I will use statements from your interview and will explain the effect on your marriage using the RAM dynamics. Look for mistakes in my interpretation and things that you feel happen in your marriage that could maybe not be captured by these five areas.

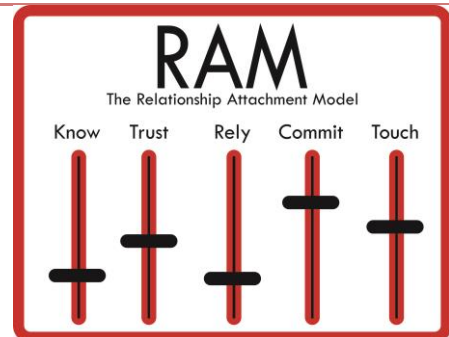
Example One

Your statement: Sometimes she's not real communicative and she'd probably say the same thing about me but for a guy most of the time you expect your wife to kind of be that person (communicative) but she's a quiet person so – and like I said, she never calls, and sometimes it'd be nice to have somebody reach out to ask you what's going on or how you're doing. So what happens is sometimes I'll start to withdraw because it's the easier thing to do instead of continually reaching out but you can't always do that – and then, you know, and then she'll, sometimes she'll let me know that I'm not engaging and I need to talk more and things like that.

Interpretation and RAM profile



In your statement you said that sometimes W3 is not very communicative and that you sometimes wish she would call you and reach out to you. In this situation you would most likely have a decrease in “know” which suggests that you are feeling out of touch with W3 and that she has not been trying to stay in the know with you as much as you would like. You also are probably experiencing a decrease in rely, because your need to feel like W3 is thinking of you and wondering how you are doing wasn't being met.

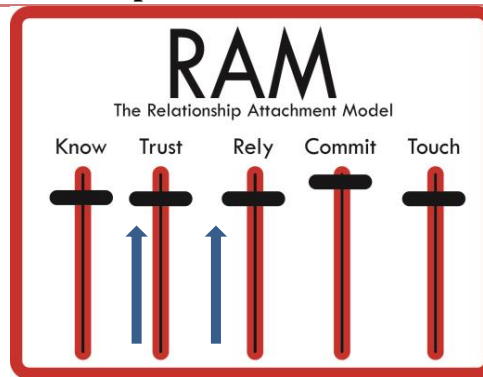


Ultimately when your levels of “know” and “rely” were lowered it probably pulled down the other levels. Specifically, you didn't have as positive of a belief (“trust”) in W3. These lowered levels of know, trust, and rely resulted in you “withdrawing” from W3. At this point you probably felt more distant from W3 and less satisfied in your relationship (if even for a moment). Most likely, when you two increased your know and time talking you repaired the drops in these levels ultimately increasing your satisfaction and closeness.

Example Two

Your statement: *What contributes to your marital satisfaction?* I always know she has my back and even when I make a mistake, she never holds things against you – she's not one, either of us, to bring up old things from the past or I told you so kind of things. If we have an issue, we work through it, and when it's passed, it's passed, and we move on from there. She would never like try – we look out for each other because we'd never do anything to embarrass each other and if she knows – if there's something she's not comfortable with that's going on, she's can talk to me about it and vice versa, and we've always put each other first

Interpretation and RAM profile



The statement above described what contributes to your marital satisfaction. You said that you feel like W3 “has your back.” This statement suggests a high level of “rely” in that W3 supports you and meets your needs. You also described having a high level of trust in that “we’d never do anything to embarrass each other” and “she never holds things against you.” Trust is defined as a belief in another or an opinion of another. Your statements suggest that you believe W3 is someone who doesn’t hold grudges and who would never embarrass you. These are indicators that you have a positive belief in W3 and that she continues to fulfill that belief. Overall, the high levels of trust and reliance feed the other dynamics in that you feel like you really “know” W3 during these times and you probably feel like a united front (“commitment”) and that probably increases you physical closeness. These high levels certainly create a feeling of connection, closeness, and satisfaction in your relationship.

SUMMARY:

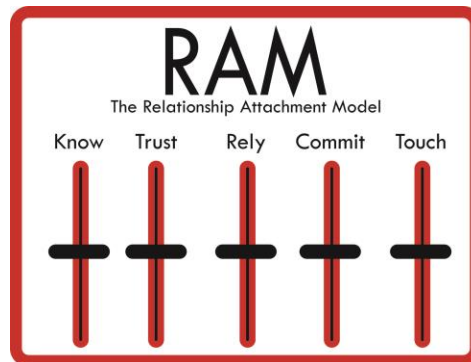
Thank you for taking the time to read through the description of your interview interpretation and results. Remember to think about how I interpreted your interview and captured it on the RAM. Consider ways in which I interpreted your interview accurately or inaccurately. I look forward to receiving your feedback. Thank you again for your time and thoughtfulness.

Results of the Research Summary: W3

Thank you so much for taking the time to review your interview findings. First, I will quickly provide an explanation of the study objectives so that you will be able to accurately determine whether or not you feel your interview was understood and analyzed correctly.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this research project was to see whether a model of attachment in relationships was supported through your interview. The model is called the Relationship Attachment Model (RAM; see picture below) and is made up of 5 bonding forces that are all said to lead to feelings of closeness and connection in your relationship. The idea is that each of these five areas (know, trust, rely, commit, and touch) all contribute to a feeling of connection in your marriage. At any point in time in a marriage, different levels of each of the five bonding dynamics may occur. When deficits in any of these five areas are experienced, the hypothesis is that you will feel less close to your spouse. Conversely, when these areas are nourished and taken care of you will feel closer to your spouse and overall more satisfied in your relationship. The first purpose of this study was to determine whether or not these five areas were mentioned or described as contributors to closeness (or lack of closeness) in your marriage. Essentially, based on your interview do these five areas exist? The second purpose of this study was to determine whether or not the RAM could explain processes in your marriage that either led to feeling close or distant from your spouse. This will be explained in more detail in the following sections.



WHAT ARE YOU SUPPOSED TO DO?

This research summary is basically a check of my interpretation of your interview. I will outline the findings of the study as it relates to your specific interview, then you will provide me with feedback. This feedback process provides you the opportunity to let me know if I got something wrong or if I am missing anything in my interpretation. Your feedback is a critical element in this study. I ask that you read through the following explanation and think about it. I will be in contact with you to set up a brief phone call to hear your feedback.

RESEARCH QUESTION 1: WERE THE FIVE BONDING FORCES MENTIONED OR DESCRIBED AS CONTRIBUTORS OF CLOSENESS IN YOUR MARRIAGE?

In the following table I will provide the working definitions of each of the 5 bonding dynamics. This definition was used when analyzing your interview data. I will then provide examples of your statements that fit within these definitions. Look for mistakes in my interpretation and also things that you feel happen in your marriage that could maybe not be captured by these five areas.

Bonding Dynamic Definitions	Your Interview Findings
<p>Know: Know was defined as an area that indicates how “in the know” one feels with another. Knowing someone involves talking (communication), spending time together, and experiencing diverse activities together. In a relationship it is important to get to know about a person’s values, belief systems, and areas of compatibility and complementarity. Knowing also includes how well one feels known and knows another and the processes that are required to get to know another and stay in the know with one another, such as mutual self-disclosure and communication.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just getting to know him, I wasn't really looking for a relationship, I just really enjoyed spending time with him. We enjoyed time together. <i>(Early process of developing your relationship, was really heavily influenced by the getting to know one another process which ultimately was bonding).</i> • He was very respectful, very kind, very chivalrous. A very hard worker. We had the same sort of family ethics and values, kind of had the same background, both came from big families, and I think we were very alike in personality. <i>(Compatibility)</i> • Neither one of us are needy people, so we're pretty easy to please. We still have fun together. We still go out. We have friends, we go out, we do stuff together. He doesn't make demands on me and I don't make demands on him. We just respect each other and enjoy the time we have. <i>(This answer taps into your compatibility as well as how you keep spending time together and getting to know each other and how that process facilitates closeness and satisfaction in your relationship).</i> • <i>When do you feel most distant from H3?</i> When we're not communicating well. Oh, definitely – everything, it's like putting bricks in a wall, it just kind of builds, and eventually, and he's – I'm the one that usually has to come forward, we need to have at talk or I need to express my frustration and then usually it gets better. I think, as a woman, I kind of want him to be a mind reader and I think – talking to other people, that's typical of many women.

<p>Trust: Trust indicates how much trust a person experiences in a relationship with another and is defined as a positive belief or confidence in another based on their consistency and overall <i>trustworthiness</i>. Contrary to having a positive belief in another, when trust is broken a bad attitude can develop. Breaches in trust may include major offenses such as infidelity to small resentments that build up overtime and negatively impact the overall belief or confidence in another</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. I have total trust. I think it was character thing that I spotted early on. I don't know, I don't think he ever had to lie to me about anything. I don't know. Just character. I see him with his friends and how loyal he is with them and with his family, his mother, and brothers and sisters, and I knew that he's a man of integrity and character and for him to – it'd be cheating himself, I think he's that type of person
<p>Rely: Rely is defined as mutual needs fulfillment, dependability, and the amount of reliance one experiences in a given relationship. Needs may include: support, financial, emotional, companionship, status, affection, etc. Having needs met in a relationship leads to feeling closer, more appreciated, secure, and more valued in a marriage. Conversely, not having one's needs met can lead to feelings of distance, dissatisfaction, feeling taken for granted, and insecurity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How do you show H3 love? How do you take care of him?</i> Probably not enough. I tell him. But – I don't know, yeah, he's probably better at it than me. He doesn't need me to take care of him. We're not like that. I guess I go to the grocery store. I do his laundry. Fold his clothes. Just listen when he needs to vent without being judgmental and just try to support him. <i>(While you downplay what you do for H3 in this response, you do mention several ways that you meet his needs such as: manage the household, listen to him, and support him. All of these are needs of H3's that you meet and ultimately help to maintain closeness in the marriage).</i>
<p>Commitment: Commitment indicates how much commitment one experiences in a relationship. Commitment is not just defined as a marital status, but as the feeling of belonging, loyalty, obligation, and responsibility for another, and the feeling that another is with you even when you are apart. Commitment is also defined as an investment into another and into the relationship. Commitment is also a decision and a choice that is made at the outset of a marriage as well as continuously through the marriage. Throughout marriage self-control is enacted, or not, to keep commitments, avoid temptations, and maintain boundaries. An intact and strong sense of commitment in marriage will foster a sense of security and comfort in the relationship.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment. You make a commitment, you follow through, we're a family. It means you make a promise and you keep it.
<p>Touch: Touch indicates how much touch one experiences in a relationship. Touch can represent anything from shaking hands with a stranger to hugging to intercourse. Touch also includes showing affection, flirting, and the overall chemistry that is experienced in a</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I kind of think during times of intimacy is I think when most people feel closest and I would say that's true with us too. Affection and sexual intimacy brings people closer, that's when you really connect and are able to express yourself, I think.

relationship. This area is not just about what has occurred in a relationship, but overall how close and satisfied one feels in terms of touch and affection in a relationship.

- I think it's important because I think it helps people reconnect. It's always been a strong point in our marriage and sometimes that will get you through other parts. It doesn't solve problems but it opens doors, makes you more comfortable, and closer, that you can deal with stuff.

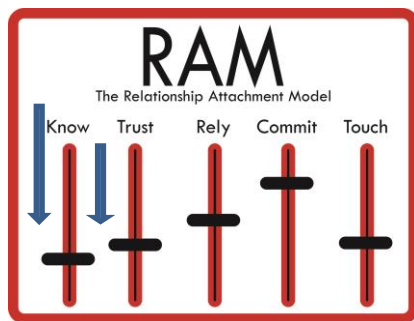
RESEARCH QUESTION 2: CAN THE RAM EXPLAIN PROCESSES IN YOUR MARRIAGE THAT LED TO YOU FEELING EITHER CLOSE OR DISTANT FROM YOUR SPOUSE ?

In the next section I will provide two examples from your interview that capture times of distance or closeness in your marriage. The distance or closeness can develop due to either events outside the marriage or events inside the marriage. I will use statements from your interview and will explain the effect on your marriage using the RAM dynamics. Look for mistakes in my interpretation and things that you feel happen in your marriage that could maybe not be captured by these five areas.

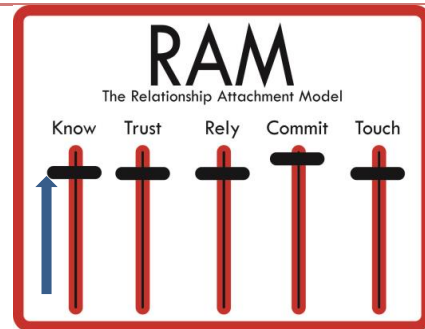
Example One

Your statement: *When do you feel most distant from H3?* When we're not communicating well... it's like putting bricks in a wall, it just kind of builds, and eventually, and he's – I'm the one that usually has to come forward, we need to have a talk or I need to express my frustration and then usually it gets better. I think, as a woman, I kind of want him to be a mind reader and I think – talking to other people, it's typical of many women.

Interpretation and RAM profile



In this quote you spoke about feeling distant from H3 when you two aren't communicating well. During these times, it is likely you feel out of touch with H3 or like you two aren't on the same page. This is indicative of a drop in the "know" dynamic. A lowered "know" will start to affect your belief in H3 or your "trust" in him which ultimately may impact how you feel you can depend on him and maybe even your sense of belonging to H3 and your sexual relationship.

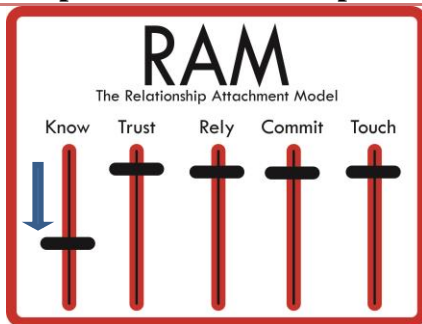


In the above quote you said "I'm usually the one that comes forward...and then it gets better." Here you demonstrated how you repaired the lowered "know" dynamic by going to H3 and talking about what was upsetting you. When you repaired the "know" you probably felt understood and heard by H3 which led to an increase in your trust in him and your dependence on him. Repairing one RAM dynamic led to a repair in the others and ultimately an increased feeling of closeness and satisfaction.

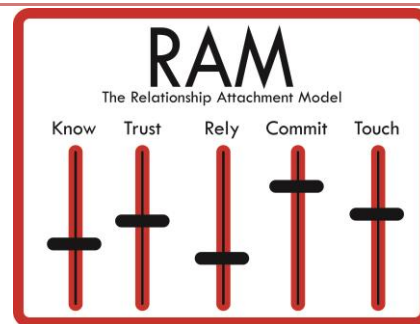
Example Two

Your statement: I think sometimes he will get very wrapped up in his stuff. His friends are very important to him, his work, and I'll sort of feel left behind. Like sometimes I feel like he gives them more attention. And loves being with them and his time with them – and I get a little jealous of that. I'll start to get distant and then he will kind of shut down, go into sort of a mushroom mode, and then I'll get frustrated and then reconnected ... Sometimes just little things – like doing the dishes or he'll call me during the day and see how I'm doing. Or we'll just go out and spend the afternoon together, it's really nice. It's nice. Like I said, we're not real complicated, we're pretty simple. But that's one thing that's compatible about us, I think, we're not real emotionally needy people

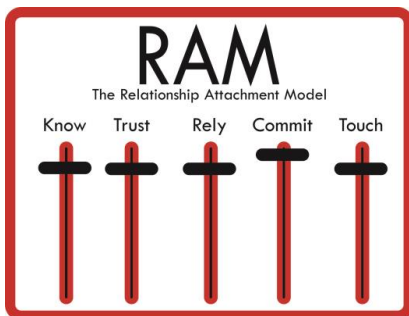
Interpretation and RAM profile



So in this example you spoke about how sometimes H3 spends time with his friends and seems more invested in them, which causes you to feel a little left out and jealous. This is reflected on the RAM by a lowered level of “know” because you feel out of touch with H3 and that he isn’t investing as much into staying in the “know” with you.



When your “know” was decreased, it is likely that your trust in him or belief in him was temporarily tarnished. This led to you pulling away and going into “mushroom mode” which probably meant that you depended on him less and felt less of a belonging to the relationship and less of a unified front. This scenario shows how when one level of the RAM was lowered, others were also pulled down. Most likely, you felt distant from H3 and not all that happy (in that moment) in the relationship



You spoke about the distance being repaired when H3 would “do little things” like the dishes or call you during the day to check on you. Or you would spend the afternoon together. If the distance was repaired by H3 calling you...this would be H3 meeting a need of yours which would result in an increase in your reliance. This increase would most likely fuel an increase in your trust in H3 and ultimately pull up the other levels in your relationship resulting in an overall increased experience of closeness and satisfaction

SUMMARY:

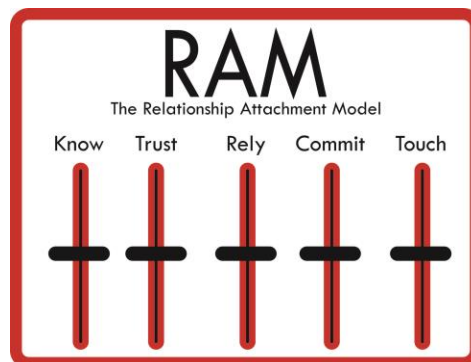
Thank you for taking the time to read through the description of your interview interpretation and results. Remember to think about how I interpreted your interview and captured it on the RAM. Consider ways in which I interpreted your interview accurately or inaccurately. I look forward to receiving your feedback. Thank you again for your time and thoughtfulness.

Results of the Research Summary: H4

Thank you so much for taking the time to review your interview findings. First, I will quickly provide an explanation of the study objectives so that you will be able to accurately determine whether or not you feel your interview was understood and analyzed correctly.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this research project was to see whether a model of attachment in relationships was supported through your interview. The model is called the Relationship Attachment Model (RAM; see picture below) and is made up of 5 bonding forces that are all said to lead to feelings of closeness and connection in your relationship. The idea is that each of these five areas (know, trust, rely, commit, and touch) all contribute to a feeling of connection in your marriage. At any point in time in a marriage, different levels of each of the five bonding dynamics may occur. When deficits in any of these five areas are experienced, the hypothesis is that you will feel less close to your spouse. Conversely, when these areas are nourished and taken care of you will feel closer to your spouse and overall more satisfied in your relationship. The first purpose of this study was to determine whether or not these five areas were mentioned or described as contributors to closeness (or lack of closeness) in your marriage. Essentially, based on your interview do these five areas exist? The second purpose of this study was to determine whether or not the RAM could explain processes in your marriage that either led to feeling close or distant from your spouse. This will be explained in more detail in the following sections.



WHAT ARE YOU SUPPOSED TO DO?

This research summary is basically a check of my interpretation of your interview. I will outline the findings of the study as it relates to your specific interview, then you will provide me with feedback. This feedback process provides you the opportunity to let me know if I got something wrong or if I am missing anything in my interpretation. Your feedback is a critical element in this study. I ask that you read through the following explanation and think about it. I will be in contact with you to set up a brief phone call to hear your feedback.

RESEARCH QUESTION 1: WERE THE FIVE BONDING FORCES MENTIONED OR DESCRIBED AS CONTRIBUTORS OF CLOSENESS IN YOUR MARRIAGE?

In the following table I will provide the working definitions of each of the 5 bonding dynamics. This definition was used when analyzing your interview data. I will then provide examples of your statements that fit within these definitions. Look for mistakes in my interpretation and also things that you feel happen in your marriage that could maybe not be captured by these five areas.

Bonding Dynamic Definitions	Your Interview Findings
<p>Know: Know was defined as an area that indicates how “in the know” one feels with another. Knowing someone involves talking (communication), spending time together, and experiencing diverse activities together. In a relationship it is important to get to know about a person’s values, belief systems, and areas of compatibility and complementarity. Knowing also includes how well one feels known and knows another and the processes that are required to get to know another and stay in the know with one another, such as mutual self-disclosure and communication.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Can you tell me about a time you feel disconnected? Yeah, when – maybe she's in a mood that I don't recognize or whatever or I'm not familiar with or whatever. (This statement basically is you describing how you feel distant when you do not feel like you “know” W4).</i> • We share some common ground, common interests in things. Definitely the children. That's a lot of binding things. There's times that we get in – like in the middle of the winter or whatever, the end of the winter, we pick a time like at the end of February or March or something and we just kind of like disappear and take a little excursion down or whatever, spend some time with each other, those kind of things, I guess. <i>(Here you describe your compatibility and also how when times get busy you reconnect by spending time together).</i>
<p>Trust: Trust indicates how much trust a person experiences in a relationship with another and is defined as a positive belief or confidence in another based on their consistency and overall <i>trustworthiness</i>. Contrary to having a positive belief in another, when trust is broken a bad attitude can develop. Breaches in trust may include major offenses such as infidelity to small resentments that build up overtime and negatively impact the overall belief or confidence in another</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There's a trust about her. I always knew, back then and I know now, especially now, that she would never betray you if she's your friend or whatever, and that's really important to me because I had a lot of family that were more interested in their own things. My parents' problems were more important than their children's or whatever, and the same thing, very same thing true with W4, and I just knew that I could always trust her and that she would never betray me. • <i>What helps you to feel satisfied in your marriage?</i> Like I said, the biggest thing probably is trust. She understands me to a T. Probably maybe sometimes more than I do of my own self. As a mother, there's no better, that I've ever seen...she's a good friend to

	<p>people...she's (grandmother) special soul and so is W4 and that's very hard to break down.</p>
<p>Rely: Rely is defined as mutual needs fulfillment, dependability, and the amount of reliance one experiences in a given relationship. Needs may include: support, financial, emotional, companionship, status, affection, etc. Having needs met in a relationship leads to feeling closer, more appreciated, secure, and more valued in a marriage. Conversely, not having one's needs met can lead to feelings of distance, dissatisfaction, feeling taken for granted, and insecurity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I try to make sure that I take care of all her needs, and I put her first and I put the children first and this household before my own needs, which is a lot different than my upbringing and her upbringing, so hopefully I've lived up to that promise that I made to her. <i>(Here you acknowledge the importance of need fulfillment not just for you but also for W4).</i> • She meets my needs in all the ways that a wife or a good friend and a lover would, so that's how she meets my needs. That triad there, I would say.
<p>Commitment: Commitment indicates how much commitment one experiences in a relationship. Commitment is not just defined as a marital status, but as the feeling of belonging, loyalty, obligation, and responsibility for another, and the feeling that another is with you even when you are apart. Commitment is also defined as an investment into another and into the relationship. Commitment is also a decision and a choice that is made at the outset of a marriage as well as continuously through the marriage. Throughout marriage self-control is enacted, or not, to keep commitments, avoid temptations, and maintain boundaries. An intact and strong sense of commitment in marriage will foster a sense of security and comfort in the relationship.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • But when I went up to the altar and I said I do, I made that promise not only to her but I made it to God and so you'll see on that checklist, I mean, I'm not an overly religious person but I have a religion and a conviction, so turning my back and walking away on her and the promise that I made to God, I mean, that's just not an option. And I don't like failure. I lived through my parents' failed marriage. And I view divorce pretty much as a selfish thing other than if the lady's getting beat up or maybe the lady's abusing her husband or whatever, you know you're married, right? – you may know him now, you might not know him in five years. And that kind of thing, I think, it's just easier to call things quits. Everybody calls things quits so easy now. We don't. She and I never have. It's not because we're stubborn – maybe a little bit of stubborn – Well, but I mean, I mean I love her. You know what I mean? And I would rather be with no one else than W4, so that's not even an option for me. <i>(In this answer you don't say "commitment" but you mention many of the defining characteristics of commitment such as a "promise" or a vow in front of God. You also state that you are stubborn and you won't call it quits. These are all aspects of commitment.)</i>
<p>Touch: Touch indicates how much touch one experiences in a relationship. Touch can represent anything from shaking hands with a stranger to hugging to intercourse. Touch also includes showing affection, flirting, and the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • W4, when I first saw W4, that's the first time that I ever had that kind of like flash or whatever...I guess it would be chemistry • I think there's physical attractions, chemical attractions. I like who she is. I try to tease

overall chemistry that is experienced in a relationship. This area is not just about what has occurred in a relationship, but overall how close and satisfied one feels in terms of touch and affection in a relationship.

her, call her cute names, whatever, sometimes. And like I say, when we have time that we can go away, then we spend it with each other and though that may not sound romantic, it is when you don't have kids biting at you all the time or problems. So that's part of our romance, too, I guess.

- It's a very integral part of our marriage. Like I said, it's the physical side but it also shows her to me and me to her how much a different way of expressing that love to each other.

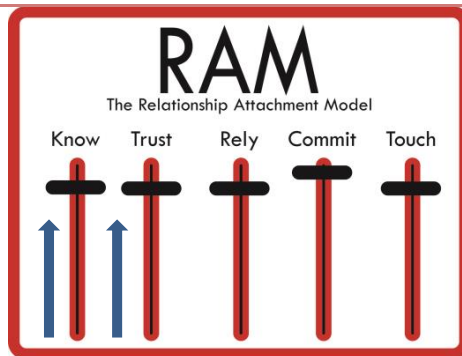
RESEARCH QUESTION 2: CAN THE RAM EXPLAIN PROCESSES IN YOUR MARRIAGE THAT LED TO YOU FEELING EITHER CLOSE OR DISTANT FROM YOUR SPOUSE ?

In the next section I will provide two examples from your interview that capture times of distance or closeness in your marriage. The distance or closeness can develop due to either events outside the marriage or events inside the marriage. I will use statements from your interview and will explain the effect on your marriage using the RAM dynamics. Look for mistakes in my interpretation and things that you feel happen in your marriage that could maybe not be captured by these five areas.

Example One

Your statement: *What makes your marriage work and what contributes to your marital satisfaction?* Communication makes it work. Obviously the trust that's been built over the years. We're almost at the thirty-year mark now, together, so that has a lot to do with it. The knowledge of each other. I know a lot about her, she knows a lot about me. There's a lot of things that I don't have to say. The same thing with her. They're just givens now. You don't have to talk about stuff like that...I guess it's basically nice to come home to somebody like that, that's kind of your refuge.

Interpretation and RAM profiles (see below)

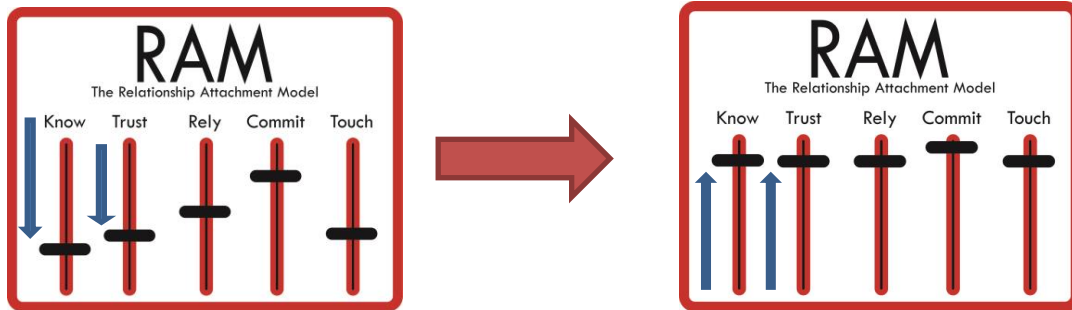


In your statement about what contributes to your satisfaction, you explained that the accumulation of “knowing” one another over almost 30 years of marriage as well as a positive belief or trust in one another are two of the primary contributors to your satisfaction. During times in your marriage when the “know” and “trust” dynamics are high, it is likely that you feel like you can depend (rely) on W4 more and it is likely you feel more committed to the relationship and more likely to desire or engage in physical touch. Typically when one or more levels on the RAM are high, they tend to pull the other levels up. A RAM picture like the one to the left, with all high levels, would indicate greater marital satisfaction and closeness.

Example Two

Your statement: He's an ADD boy, he's a good kid, he really is, he's a smart kid, and we differed a lot on how to raise him. ..– I think there was compromising on both and I was trying to see her side a little bit and she was trying mine, and I guess for a little while there, there was a little bit of tension or whatever. The ultimate result, though, I guess, in a roundabout way, to try to answer it, is that we got stronger because of it.

Interpretation and RAM profile



This RAM depicts how you most likely felt when you and W4 would “differ on how to raise him”. It is likely that you felt that you didn’t know her as well as you thought you did, which impacted your belief in her (trust) and felt that she couldn’t meet your needs in the same way because you two were on different pages. Ultimately these disconnects probably impacted your sense of belonging to the marriage (your feeling as a unified front; commitment) and possibly even your sexual relationship.

Ultimately you and W4 found a way to compromise. This compromise increased your sense of knowing one another, trust in her, and an increase in your ability to depend on her to meet your needs. You felt in sync with W4 again which led to an increase in all the RAM dynamics. These high levels across the RAM led you to feel stronger and closer after working through this difficult time.

SUMMARY:

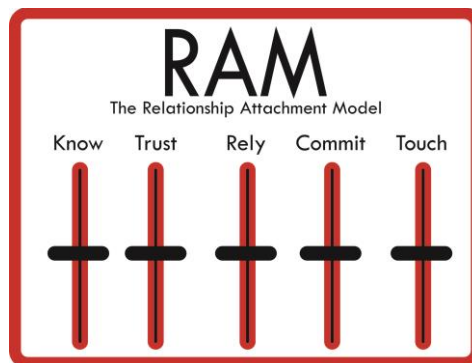
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Results of the Research Summary: W4

Thank you so much for taking the time to review your interview findings. First, I will quickly provide an explanation of the study objectives so that you will be able to accurately determine whether or not you feel your interview was understood and analyzed correctly.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this research project was to see whether a model of attachment in relationships was supported through your interview. The model is called the Relationship Attachment Model (RAM; see picture below) and is made up of 5 bonding forces that are all said to lead to feelings of closeness and connection in your relationship. The idea is that each of these five areas (know, trust, rely, commit, and touch) all contribute to a feeling of connection in your marriage. At any point in time in a marriage, different levels of each of the five bonding dynamics may occur. When deficits in any of these five areas are experienced, the hypothesis is that you will feel less close to your spouse. Conversely, when these areas are nourished and taken care of you will feel closer to your spouse and overall more satisfied in your relationship. The first purpose of this study was to determine whether or not these five areas were mentioned or described as contributors to closeness (or lack of closeness) in your marriage. Essentially, based on your interview do these five areas exist? The second purpose of this study was to determine whether or not the RAM could explain processes in your marriage that either led to feeling close or distant from your spouse. This will be explained in more detail in the following sections.



WHAT ARE YOU SUPPOSED TO DO?

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provide me with feedback. This feedback process provides you the opportunity to let me know if I got something wrong or if I am missing anything in my interpretation. Your feedback is a critical element in this study. I ask that you read through the following explanation and think about it. I will be in contact with you to set up a brief phone call to hear your feedback.

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In the following table I will provide the working definitions of each of the 5 bonding dynamics. This definition was used when analyzing your interview data. I will then provide examples of your statements that fit within these definitions. Look for mistakes in my interpretation and also things that you feel happen in your marriage that could maybe not be captured by these five areas.

Bonding Dynamic Definitions

Your Interview Findings

Know: Know was defined as an area that indicates how “in the know” one feels with another. Knowing someone involves talking (communication), spending time together, and experiencing diverse activities together. In a relationship it is important to get to know about a person’s values, belief systems, and areas of **compatibility** and complementarity. Knowing also includes how well one feels known and knows another and the processes that are required to get to know another and stay in the know with one another, such as mutual self-disclosure and communication.

- Our meeting was serendipitous...Just spending a lot of time talking. We talked and talked and talked and talked – like we would talk until like two or three in the morning.....it definitely wasn't pow, oh my gosh, I'm in love, I think it was more of a subtle thing. It was just such an ease. Like I said, with the constant talking and then we were constantly around each other – it just became natural, if that makes sense.
- *When do you feel the closest?* The closest? When we're in agreement. When we can discuss something that may be challenging in a calm way and that it's just like – like something that could really potentially be an argument or, you know, oh, well I disagree, and you know – when we can discuss it in a calm manner and we both agree on it and it's like okay, we're going to handle it like this....*Most distant?* When we butt heads. It's just the fact that when he and I are on the same page with something and we're on the same team and we're working through something together in a calm, rational fashion....It feels like one mind, one goal, one. *(The interpretation of this statement is that when you are on the same page or really feel like you know one another you feel closest)*
- ...I have not seen you in a week and a half. And it'll be like, Okay, I've got to try and make some time here. *(Time apart starts to feel like you are out of the know with one another which leads to distance...H4 initiates time together which repairs the connection).*

Trust: Trust indicates how much trust a person experiences in a relationship with another and is defined as a positive belief or confidence in another based on their consistency and overall *trustworthiness*. Contrary to having a positive belief in another, when trust is broken a bad attitude can develop. Breaches in trust may include major offenses such as infidelity to small resentments that build up overtime and negatively impact the overall belief or

- as far as trust, I trust H4 implicitly – if I were to say where I felt kind of like what he said in the beginning of our relationship isn't exactly what transpired, I would say it's religious-based, because I – I wanted to marry someone who's Catholic, and it just so happened I didn't know he was when we started dating, but he was Catholic, and I told him it was really important that my kids get raised Catholic and this and that. And he was like, oh yeah, and I agree – because he baptized Catholic but he was never given like

confidence in another

taken to church and all that, like very little his grandmother would take him, but he made his sacraments until he met me. And he wanted to do all this, and so he did. Before we got married, he made his communion and confirmed and everything. But as the kids came and as they got older, the responsibility of raising them Catholic, 90% fell onto me. So it wasn't exactly what I wanted and it wasn't exactly what he kind of said in the beginning (*your trust in H4 was shaken because you **believed** him to be more religious than he has behaved in your marriage and with your children, this affected your confidence in him*)

Rely: Rely is defined as mutual needs fulfillment, dependability, and the amount of reliance one experiences in a given relationship. Needs may include: support, financial, emotional, companionship, status, affection, etc. Having needs met in a relationship leads to feeling closer, more appreciated, secure, and more valued in a marriage. Conversely, not having one's needs met can lead to feelings of distance, dissatisfaction, feeling taken for granted, and insecurity.

- He's like the knight in shining armor, comes to my rescue, takes care of me, handles the insurance. I'm very dependent on him at the time and then we work through that together. Those kind of issues we've always done well. H4's there, he's a sounding board, he's there to talk to me, and vice versa.
- Well, yeah, as far as like maintaining the house – he does the guy work. He'll do the lawn and anything that needs to be fixed. But I'm fortunate in the way that H4 is very affectionate, and so am I – so he gives affection, he gives it – I don't have to ask for it because he gives it. If I don't have a need met, I go get it from him.
- Yeah, I think it comes from – even though I'm very independent and that works to help in our marriage but at the same time it can be a pain in the ass, because he's more than willing to have me take on so much, and there are times where I can be resentful.

Commitment: Commitment indicates how much commitment one experiences in a relationship. Commitment is not just defined as a marital status, but as the feeling of belonging, loyalty, obligation, and responsibility for another, and the feeling that another is with you even when you are apart. Commitment is also defined as an investment into another and into the relationship. Commitment is also a decision and a choice that is made at the outset of a marriage as well as continuously through the marriage. Throughout marriage self-control is

- ...yeah, what has kept me? I ask myself that same question. And really what's kept H4 in it too. And I think, if I were to answer that, it's commitment. You have two people that are committed in a relationship, in this relationship – I think what maybe can cause a lot of problems is when you only have one person in a committed relationship. But I think we're fortunate that we have two people. think, for me, part of it is a vow because I am Catholic. But I don't think that's the number one thing – I think for me that stubbornness works into that. A sense of loyalty and just that commitment.

enacted, or not, to keep commitments, avoid temptations, and maintain boundaries. An intact and strong sense of commitment in marriage will foster a sense of security and comfort in the relationship.

- ... not only that, but I think that combination is why we're still here because we are stubborn, we are – we both have a strong sense of loyalty, both strong sense of commitment. Where I think if one of those things were missing in either he or I, I don't think we'd be here today.

Touch: Touch indicates how much touch one experiences in a relationship. Touch can represent anything from shaking hands with a stranger to hugging to intercourse. Touch also includes showing affection, flirting, and the overall chemistry that is experienced in a relationship. This area is not just about what has occurred in a relationship, but overall how close and satisfied one feels in terms of touch and affection in a relationship.

- It (sex) makes me feel attractive. H4 makes me feel pretty. He makes me feel sexy. He makes me feel wanted. He makes me feel loved. So it makes – it's one of the things that really makes me feel close to him. I have like total and complete trust and I can't even think of even a better word than that in that aspect. If I were to say who would be the last man on earth that would cheat on me, it would be my husband.
- He's very affectionate. He really is. I think our kids are very fortunate in the fact that he's always grabbing me – that's what he calls it – but just – and we have a joke with our daughter because he might go, your mommy's so woofable, and she'll be like, I don't want to hear it, and he just goes on and on and on – and she's like, no, I don't want to hear it! So they do – we do – he's very affectionate, I'm very affectionate too – you know – so we're always hugging and kissing and all that kind of stuff.

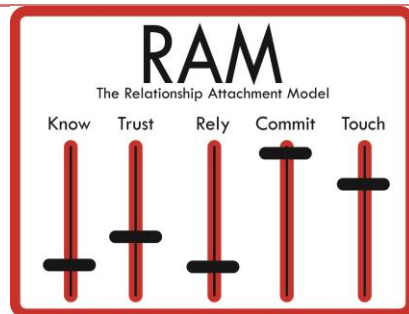
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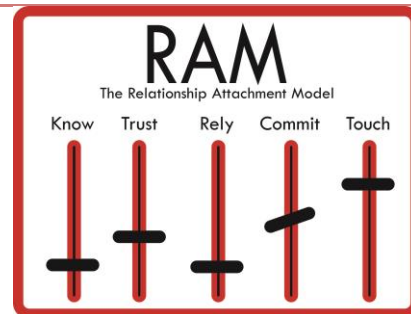
Example One

Your statement: *When do you feel most distant from H4? If there's a lot of arguing. I guess I could say – these high school years, I hate teenage years. I love my kids but so far, out of three kids, two of them, it's like, oh my gosh, and Steven was incredible – I'm surprised we've survived it. Yeah, it's those things. It's those times like – like I said, the arguments where nothing seems to be resolved, where there seems to be constant turmoil in the house. Whether it's an external factor or an internal factor – those are the times where it's like, you know what? I have these fantasies of like just getting in the car and leaving.*

Interpretation and RAM profiles (see below)



Stressors external to the marriage (teenage kids) affected your marriage in that you and H4 argued more. You said that “nothing seemed to be resolved”. This statement may be an indication that your need (*rely*) to have arguments resolved was not being met. This caused you to feel distant from H4 and even feel that you may not *know* him as well as you thought you did. Lowered levels of rely and know will no doubt impact your belief in H4 or your *trust* in him causing a lowered level of trust.

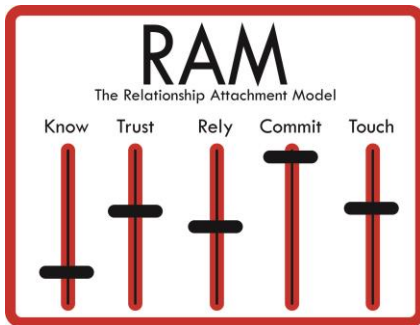


Ultimately these lowered areas of the RAM led to you questioning your commitment to the marriage (“...fantasies of like just getting in the car and leaving.”). This example demonstrated how stressors external to the marriage may have an impact on the bonding dynamics within the marriage. This example also showed that a decrease in one area of the RAM can lead to lowered levels of other areas which may, in the end if not addressed, cause vulnerabilities in the marriage.

Example Two

Your statement: *I tend to just be quiet and kind of let things go on, believe it or not. But H4 will be the one, if he's feeling a disconnect, he will be the one that will sit down and go, you know, I haven't been feeling close to you, I think we're drifting apart – so I always say he's the girl in our relationship.*

Interpretation and RAM profile



The statement above reflects your awareness that H4 tends to be the one who manages your connection in your marriage. Chances are that when you “let things go on” you begin to pull away for some reason (maybe you’re feeling like you take on too much or you are too busy taking care of the kids) and H4 feels the disconnect in your relationship. He probably feels out of touch with you and will therefore initiate time to talk or spend time together to repair the distance. This example would be represented on the RAM as a decrease in *know* which results in a feeling of disconnection or being “out of touch” in the relationship. Other areas of the RAM may have been affected but not discussed in the interview. It would make sense for both of your needs to go unmet (*rely*) during times of busyness or even your sex life (*touch*) to be affected. All of these lowered levels or even just a lowered level of *know* would ultimately impact your experience, as well as H4’s, overall experience of closeness in the marriage.

SUMMARY:

Thank you for taking the time to read through the description of your interview interpretation and results. Remember to think about how I interpreted your interview and captured it on the RAM. Consider ways in which I interpreted your interview accurately or inaccurately. I look forward to receiving your feedback. Thank you again for your time and thoughtfulness.

APPENDIX E

IRB APPROVAL



NOTICE OF APPROVAL

February 7, 2011

Morgan Van Epp Cutlip
108 West Marshall Street
Middleburg, VA 20117

From: Sharon McWhorter, IRB Administrator

Re: IRB Number 20110202 "A Qualitative Examination of the Relationship Attachment Model (RAM) with Married Individuals"

Thank you for submitting your Exemption Request for the referenced study. Your request was approved on February 7, 2011. The protocol represents minimal risk to subjects and matches the following federal category for exemption:

- Exemption 1 - Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices.
- Exemption 2 - Research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior.
- Exemption 3 - Research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior not exempt under category 2, but subjects are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office.
- Exemption 4 - Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens.
- Exemption 5 - Research and demonstration projects conducted by or subject to the approval of department or agency heads, and which are designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine public programs or benefits.
- Exemption 6 - Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies.

Annual continuation applications are not required for exempt projects. If you make changes to the study's design or procedures that increase the risk to subjects or include activities that do not fall within the approved exemption category, please contact me to discuss whether or not a new application must be submitted. Any such changes or modifications must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to implementation.

Please retain this letter for your files. This office will hold your exemption application for a period of three years from the approval date. If you wish to continue this protocol beyond this period, you will need to submit another Exemption Request. If the research is being conducted for a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, the student must file a copy of this letter with the thesis or dissertation.

Approved consent form/s enclosed

Cc: John Queener - Advisor
Stephanie Woods - IRB Chair

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