

**Linkages Between Identity Formation, Romantic Relationship Attachment,  
and Life Role Salience Among Young Adult Women**

by

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## Abstract

Several important developmental processes occur in the young adulthood period. Young adults must form their identities, determine trajectories regarding careers, marriage, and parenthood (as well as the importance of these roles), and typically they form romantic relationships. The existing literature is rich in information regarding each of these processes, yet there are no studies to date that specifically examine the intersection of all three areas. The primary goal of the present investigation was to determine the nature of the linkages between identity development (measured by identity style, exploration, and commitment), romantic relationship attachment (measured by levels of avoidance and anxiety), and life role salience (using the roles of marriage, parenthood, and career). The data for this study were based on a sample of female undergraduate students at a southeastern university ( $n = 656$ ).

Results indicated that relationship avoidance and anxiety were negatively associated with identity commitment, and were positively related to diffuse/avoidant identity style, as was hypothesized. Additionally, the hypothesis that marital role salience would be negatively related to avoidance was supported. Among the general patterns regarding life role salience, information identity style and commitment were positively related to career role salience, normative style was positively related to marital role salience, and diffuse/avoidant style was negatively related to the salience of all three life roles. After examining the life role salience variables as potential moderators of identity and attachment, career role salience moderated the association between commitment and anxiety, and the association between diffuse/avoidant style and anxiety. In

addition, marital life role salience moderated the relationship between normative style and avoidance.

Overall, the present study provides compelling evidence that identity formation, determination of life role salience, and romantic relationship attachment are interrelated processes. Possible directions for future research are discussed.

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## INTRODUCTION

Early adulthood is a time of transition. During this period, individuals are preparing for the life choices and responsibilities they will assume during their adult lives. Theory and empirical research indicate that several important developmental processes occur in these early adulthood years. Among these processes are identity formation (Erikson, 1959, 1980; Schwartz, Côté, & Arnett, 2005; Stephen, Fraser, & Marcia, 1992) and the early stages of romantic relationship attachment development (Fraley & Shaver, 2000; Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Also during this time, young adults are determining the importance of parental, marital, and career life roles (Ammons & Kelly, 2008; Barnett & Hyde, 2001). The areas of identity, attachment, and life role salience should be thought of as interrelated during early adulthood; the nature of these interrelations will be the focus of the current study.

### *Identity Development*

Identity development, from an Eriksonian (1959, 1980) perspective, is conceptualized as a process beginning in adolescence and peaking in the early adulthood period during which one explores and commits to possibilities in interpersonal (such as romantic and peer relationships) and ideological (such as career and religious beliefs) domains. Erikson (1950) referred to identity as “one’s ability to maintain inner sameness and continuity of one’s meaning for others” (p. 89), and believed identity formation to be a predictor of an individual’s later outcomes in life. Existing literature suggests that when a period of exploration (i.e., considering different alternatives for one’s identity) is followed by commitment to various values, beliefs and goals,

the result is a clearer idea of one's identity and the most positive outcomes (e.g., effective problem-solving and decision making skills, and a sense of self-efficacy) (Berzonsky, 1999; Grotevant & Cooper, 1985; Luyckx, Goossens, Soenens, Beyers, & Vansteenkiste, 2005; Schwartz, 2001).

Identity formation is an integral part of young adults' journeys from adolescence to later adulthood. Early adulthood is characterized by uncertainty about one's life goals, beliefs, values, and a variety of other integral parts of individual identity (Stephen, Fraser, & Marcia, 1992). Questions such as, generally, "Who am I?" and more specifically, "What will I do for a career?" "What are my religious beliefs?" or "What qualities do I want in a mate?" arise during this identity-forming period in adolescence and young adulthood.

Erikson's theoretical model proposes eight stages of psychosocial development across the lifespan (Erikson, 1950/1963, 1959/1980, 1968, 1975.). The stages mark important developmental milestones, which are posed as dialectics. The stages of "identity versus role confusion" and "intimacy versus isolation" are salient in adolescence and young adulthood. Erikson used the term "identity crisis" to describe the exploration process he believed to be critical for identity development. Marcia further extended Erikson's work by developing a framework for identity formation based on an individual's status of exploration and commitment (Marcia, 1966, 1976, 1980). Identity status can be conceptualized as steps in a process, with the different statuses indicating an individual's location in the process. The four primary statuses are diffused (characterized by a lack of both exploration and commitment), achieved (both exploration and commitment have occurred), foreclosed (commitment without exploration) and moratorium (exploration without commitment).

Exploration is a developmental process that encompasses the individuals' active search for information and examination of choices related to identity (Schwartz, 2001). There are seemingly an infinite number of possibilities facing the young adult regarding issues such as sexuality, politics, religion, education, career, peers, romantic partners, interests and hobbies, finances, and so on. Thus, the best identity outcomes are believed to be the result of an exploratory period in which young adults become equipped with knowledge of the various alternatives available to them before making commitments (Berman, Schwartz, Kurtines, & Berman, 2001). Commitment refers to individuals' decisions regarding these alternatives and possibilities, and determines their trajectories towards future goals. Initial commitment decisions often are tentative and then become more firm, or are sometimes abandoned after more in-depth exploration and life experience have occurred (Luyckx, Goossens, Soenens, Beyers, & Vansteenkiste, 2005).

In addition to research addressing identity exploration and commitment, another stream of research has focused on adolescents' and young adults' *orientations* to identity formation, labeling such orientations "identity styles" (Berzonsky, 1990; Berzonsky & Ferrari, 1996; Berzonsky & Kuk, 2000; Berzonsky & Neimeyer, 1994). Identity styles help shape the focus of how one approaches identity work (i.e., exploration and commitment), ranging from being open to diverse information and possibilities (informational style), relying on the guidance of respected others (normative style), or being apathetic or avoidant toward engaging in the identity formation process (diffuse/avoidant style) (Berzonsky).

Informational style is associated with exploration and is predictive of an achieved identity status (Berman, Schwartz, Kurtines, & Berman, 2001), thus it is associated with the most positive outcomes, and is typically viewed as the most highly developed identity style

(Berzonsky, 1990, 2002, 2003; Berzonsky & Ferrari, 1996; Berzonsky & Kuk, 2000; Ferrari, Wolfe, Wesley, Schoff, & Beck, 1995). Normative and diffuse/avoidant identity styles are linked with lower levels of exploration, and have been associated with less desirable outcomes. However, normative style depends on context, and outcomes for this style also have been associated with positive indicators of development and adjustment (e.g., Berzonsky & Kuk, 2000). Exploration of the environment is a critical step in the creation of a stable sense of self, while a lack of exploration is associated with a fragmented sense of self and poorer interpersonal competence (Paulk, 2009).

It is clear that identity formation is a complex process that affects the individual in a variety of domains. Some researchers have suggested that the domain of interpersonal relationships is of special importance in terms of identity exploration (Berman, Weems, Rodriguez, & Zamora, 2006; Grotevant & Cooper, 1985; Montgomery, 2005). This domain is explored primarily through family, peer, and romantic partner interactions (Thorbecke & Grotevant, 1982). For the purpose of the current study, romantic relationships in particular are salient, and the link between romantic partner attachment and the identity formation process will be examined in depth.

#### *Romantic Relationship Attachment*

Romantic relationships are important during young adulthood, as they shape individuals' beliefs and ideals about sexual intimacy, emotional intimacy, communication skills, conflict skills, and goals regarding marriage and parenthood (Meier & Allen, 2009). Individuals in romantic relationships have been shown to exhibit particular attachment styles (Bretherton, 1982; Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Adult attachment styles are defined as the emotional connection individuals share with a romantic partner (the attachment figure), and differ based on the degree

of comfort with closeness to one's partner and anxiety over relationships (Feeney, 2002), as well as the ability to give and receive care within the relationship (Crowell, Treboux, Pan, Gao, Fyffe, & Waters, 2002).

The theory of attachment styles in romantic relationships emerged from the foundation of earlier work by John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth regarding the attachment between infants and their caregivers. The Bowlby/Ainsworth theory explains infant-caregiver attachment as an evolutionarily-based process centered on the infant's proximity seeking and care-seeking behaviors towards the caregiver, and the caregiver's responsiveness and attentiveness to these signals (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1982, 1990). The caregiver (usually the mother) becomes the attachment figure for the infant, and serves as the "secure base" from which the infant can explore his or her world. The caregiver's responsiveness to the infant's signals (i.e., attending to the infant when he cries and providing the proximity, comfort, and care he requires) provides the basis for the development of a specific attachment style. Additionally, the caregiver-child interactions are believed to influence the child's emotion regulation ability, which in turn influences the child's ability to engage in the exploration process. The Bowlby/Ainsworth theory distinguishes two main categories of attachment style: secure attachment and insecure attachment. The category of insecure attachment is divided into three subcategories: insecure-anxious, insecure-avoidant, and insecure-disorganized. Based on Ainsworth's research, she concluded that approximately 70% of people are securely attached, with the remaining 30% falling into the insecurely attached categories (Ainsworth et al., 1978).

Bowlby's theory implies that the attachment process, which begins in infancy, will later shape an individual's beliefs and interactions regarding interpersonal relationships (Bowlby, 1990). Bowlby believed in a strong causal relationship between one's experiences with parents

and one's later capacity to make affectional bonds. Hazan and Shaver (1987, 1990) extended his work by studying attachment styles among adults within the context of romantic relationships (with the partner as the attachment figure). Their theory of romantic attachment style suggests that within romantic relationships, individuals may be influenced by childhood attachment to behave in ways that elicit rejection or withdrawal of the current partner, as well as a variety of other responses. Thus, early attachment styles incite behaviors that promote the same attachment environment. However, different relationships may elicit variability in the expression of an individual's attachment style (Pittman, Keiley, Kerpelman, & Vaughn, 2011).

Two dimensions of attachment style that have been examined in the adult attachment literature include anxiety (defined as being overly concerned about receiving love and care from a partner) and avoidance (defined as being wary and dismissing of closeness in a relationship) (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Wei, Russell, Mallinckrodt, & Vogel, 2007; Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Individuals with a high amount of anxiety within the attachment context are believed to experience anxiety as a result of fear of rejection or abandonment, while high avoidance results from the individual's fear of his or her own incompetence within a relational context.

Attachment styles, initially formed in the infant-caregiver relationship (Bowlby, 1982), carried forward and developed in romantic relationships can shape future relationship choices and heavily influence life decisions for young adults (Pittman et al., 2011).

Based on existing literature of adult romantic attachment, the majority of people (55%-65%) are believed to be securely attached, as evidenced by low levels of avoidance and anxiety (Bartholomew, 1990; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991, Mickelson, Kessler, & Shaver, 1997). Research indicates that a secure attachment in adulthood appears to be associated with the most positive outcomes (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Holland & Roisman, 2010; Seiffge-Krenke, 2003).

For example, individuals who are classified as securely attached report the greatest satisfaction with their romantic relationships and tend to experience high self-esteem (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Holland & Roisman, 2010; Meyers & Landsberger, 2002). In the realm of insecure attachment, those who are classified as anxious-ambivalently attached report greater feelings of loneliness and lower self-esteem, whereas those who have an avoidant attachment report knowingly distancing themselves from others emotionally and avoid expressing vulnerable feelings (Bartholomew & Horowitz). For the purpose of the current study, attachment will be measured using the two continuous variables of individuals' reported levels of avoidance and anxiety within the context of romantic relationships.

### *Attachment and Identity*

There have been only a handful of studies that have directly examined the link between romantic attachment style and identity status or style. One such study was conducted by Berman, Weems, Rodriguez, and Zamora (2006), who found that identity status and romantic attachment style were significantly related for male and female college students, but were not significantly associated in a younger high school sample. Among the college sample, foreclosed individuals were significantly lower in avoidance than diffused individuals. Foreclosed individuals also scored lower on relationship anxiety than those who were achieved and in moratorium. Identity achieved individuals appeared to be more likely to have high relationship anxiety (though it was expected that they would be securely attached, with low anxiety and low avoidance), and foreclosed were more likely to be secure. The authors suggested that ethnic differences may have accounted for the achieved individuals having high anxiety, given the diversity of the sample in comparison to similar studies (as ethnic minorities have lower rates of secure attachment compared to Caucasians).

Additionally, Arseth et al. (2009) conducted a meta-analysis of studies examining the link between Marcia's identity statuses and romantic relationship attachment. Results of the meta-analysis indicated that achievement and moratorium statuses were associated with high intimacy (having low relationship avoidance and anxiety); while diffusion and foreclosure statuses appeared predictive of an insecure attachment (with higher levels of avoidance and anxiety). However, these associations proved stronger for men than for women when measures for identity status were used categorically (Identity Status Interview [ISI], Marcia, 1966; Marcia, Waterman, Matteson, Archer, & Orlofsky, 1993), but not when measures were used continuously (Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status II [EOM-EIS-II], Adams, Bennion, & Huh, 1989). The researchers suggested that this may be due to theoretical differences in the course of identity development for men and women.

Finally, Paulk (2009) found that romantic relationship avoidance mediated the associations between information- and diffuse/avoidant-orientation identity styles and interpersonal competence (which includes initiating and maintaining friendships, providing emotional support, disclosing personal information, and the ability to be assertive with others). Specifically, information style was negatively related to romantic relationship avoidance, diffuse/avoidant style was positively related to romantic relationship avoidance, normative style was negatively related to avoidance, and romantic relationship avoidance was negatively related to interpersonal competence.

Other studies have explored the links between identity and relational constructs similar to attachment. For example, Meeus, Oosterwegel, and Vollebergh (2002) found a correlation between identity exploration and parent/peer relationships. Specifically, results of the study indicated a significant correlation between parental attachment and peer attachment, and that

peer attachment was predictive of academic identity exploration. Another study by Cook and Jones (2002) found that married couples with similar identity styles reported greater relationship satisfaction than couples who differed in their identity styles. In this case, the correlation was stronger among women than men in the sample. Finally, Passmore, Fogarty, and Bourke (2005) investigated the relationship between parental bonding, identity style, and self-esteem; finding that a normative-orientation identity style was significantly correlated with parental bonding.

Overall, the existing body of literature suggests that identity formation and adult attachment are interrelated and potentially mutually influential (Arseth, et al., 2009; Samuolis, Layburn, & Schiaffino, 2001). Identity and adult romantic attachment processes both occur during the young adulthood period when individuals are simultaneously determining the meaning and importance of life roles, which may also matter for the interface between identity and attachment.

### *Life Role Salience*

Given that both identity formation and romantic relationship attachment evolve within current and anticipated life contexts, they would be expected to be linked to life role salience. Life role salience is defined as one's internal beliefs and attitudes regarding the personal importance of a particular life role, such as the marital role, career role, or parental role (Amatea, Cross, Clark, & Bobby, 1986). The process by which individuals determine the salience of available roles is believed to occur in the young adulthood period. Role theorists view identity as a process linked to social roles or domains (such as career, marriage, and parenthood) and the salience of these roles (Stryker, 1968; Stryker & Burke, 2000). Stryker and Serpe (1982), consistent with developmental theory, conceptualize identity as the multiple answers to the question "Who am I?" However, the answers to this question center on the social roles one

occupies or intends to occupy. For example, an individual who has determined the salience of life roles might have multiple answers to this question, such as: mother, wife, and teacher. The same individual, however, might place varying degrees of importance on these roles. For some, the role of motherhood might become highly salient, while employment outside the home is necessary for the family's financial security and has little to no importance in terms of identity. For others, career may become a defining aspect of identity regardless of financial need.

Historically, women have tended to be socialized in a manner that promotes the salience of parental and marital roles, while men have held the primary provider role and thus invested more of their identity importance in careers than on parenthood or marriage (Bielby & Bielby, 1989; Dennehy & Mortimer, 1992; Ferree, 1990; Reitzes & Mutran, 1994; Wiley, 1991).

However, the changing demographics of the workforce over the last few decades has resulted in an increase in the amount of working women and mothers, with the current percentage of women working outside the home very close to the percentage of men who work outside the home (US Department of Labor, 2006). These transitions in work and gender have necessitated a renegotiation of traditional roles that often did not include employment outside of the home as a role for women (Barnett & Hyde, 2001).

In addition to increasing numbers of women in the work force, women also currently are enrolling in and graduating from universities and graduate programs at a rate equal to or greater than men (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009), leading to an increase in women working in management and leadership positions. These types of career roles may have a greater impact on the work and family domains in comparison to other types of employment due to the time and responsibility investment. The majority of women and men will marry and have children (Cherlin, 1999); and the more education individuals receive the more likely they are to

experience competing family and career roles, which is especially true for women (Ammons & Kelly, 2008).

Although there are apparent gender differences regarding the challenges of balancing the career and family roles, one study found that men and women did not differ in the importance placed on either their career or marital identities (Kerpelman & Schvaneveldt, 1999). The same study found that women did, however, place greater importance on their parental identity than men did. It has been established that work and family mutually affect each other as two main components of daily life (Halpern, 2008), and traditional research on work and family has focused on the conflict existing between these two areas in terms of competing roles. These conflict models assume that demands and responsibilities in the workplace interfere with the demands and responsibilities of family life, and that family or other personal life demands interfere with one's performance at work (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998).

There are alternative models of the work-family interface that take into consideration the ways work and family roles are compatible rather than conflicting (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). The ability to balance multiple roles may be associated with the most positive outcomes, as a positive relationship between role balance and self-esteem has been found among individuals who were married with children, and worked (Marks & MacDermid, 1996). Some of the known benefits to having multiple roles include enhanced self-esteem and self-efficacy, and reduced rates of depression (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). Full-time employment among married women is also associated with greater family stability both in terms of marital status and satisfaction and financial security (Schoen, Rogers, & Amato, 2006). Due to the present demand for both men and women to manage the multiple roles of parenthood, marriage, and career, it is important to consider the role salience of these different domains for young adults.

In summary, early adulthood is an important developmental period when individuals are preparing to assume their adult life roles. As young adults engage in the processes of identity exploration and commitment, and consider the social roles they will hold in adulthood, they also are in the life stage when romantic relationships are being formed. When examining associations between life role salience and the development of identity and romantic relationship attachment, it is important to consider gender. Women are more challenged to balance work and family roles than are men (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992; Hammer, Allen, & Grigsby, 1997). Additionally, college educated young women are more likely to experience competing work and family roles than are less educated women, or than men in general (Ammons & Kelly, 2008).

#### *Aims of the Current Study*

To date, no studies specifically have examined the intersection of identity, attachment and role salience in young adulthood. This will be the primary focus of the current investigation. Because assessment of variables across the areas of identity, romantic attachment, and role salience has been so diverse, the comparison of studies is difficult and there are many questions yet to be answered. The current study, therefore, will examine whether and how indicators of identity formation (exploration, commitment, and style) are associated with indicators of attachment style (i.e., dimensions of avoidance and anxiety), and will determine how role salience (i.e., for the parental, marital, and career roles) is linked with identity and attachment. The present study will focus on a sample of college women who are in the early stages of deciding whether and how to apply their educations towards future careers, as well as whether and how to invest in the adult life roles of marriage and parenthood.

## *Research Questions and Hypotheses*

Four research questions that address associations among identity, attachment and life role salience are offered; where theoretical or empirical support exists, hypotheses also are posed.

**Research Question 1.** What are the associations between identity formation (exploration and commitment, identity style), and the attachment style dimensions of avoidance and anxiety?

We hypothesize that:

**Hypothesis 1a.** Identity exploration and commitment will be negatively associated with romantic relationship avoidance and anxiety.

**Hypothesis 1b.** Under the condition of high exploration, commitment will be more strongly and negatively associated with relationship avoidance and anxiety than under the condition of low exploration.

**Hypothesis 1c.** Under the condition of high commitment, exploration will be more strongly and negatively associated with relationship avoidance and anxiety than under the condition of low commitment.

We make these hypotheses based on previous research and theory examining these constructs. For example, Marcia (1988) theorized that a securely attached individual would likely experience greater capacity for exploration, and thus would reach an achieved identity status (indicated by both high exploration and high commitment). Other researchers have suggested that because individuals with a secure attachment tend to be more self-directed, intentional, and able to appropriately respond to and internalize feedback, these individuals would also be better equipped to make commitments (Pittman et al., 2011). Indeed, previous studies have supported the idea that secure early childhood attachment is predictive of the ability to problem-solve and adapt (Sroufe, 1989; Waters & Cummings, 2000), which is required in the process of identity

commitment. Additionally, Arseth et al. (2009) conducted a meta-analysis of studies examining the link between Marcia's identity status and romantic relationship attachment. Results indicated a positive correlation between achievement and moratorium statuses and secure attachment; while diffusion and foreclosure statuses were correlated with insecure attachment.

Additionally, we will explore associations between the three identity styles and romantic relationship avoidance and anxiety. Past theory and research have not discussed or examined these constructs together. It is tentatively expected that:

***Hypothesis 1d.*** Diffuse/avoidant identity style will be positively associated with relationship avoidance and anxiety, given the positive empirical associations between diffuse status (low exploration and low commitment) and diffuse/avoidant style.

***Hypothesis 1e.*** Informational identity style will be negatively associated with both avoidance and anxiety, given its association with both the achievement and moratorium statuses (Berzonsky, 1990) and research showing that both statuses are associated with secure attachment (Arseth, 2009).

Past research has yielded mixed findings for predicting associations between relationship avoidance and anxiety and normative identity style, with some studies suggesting that commitment is positively associated with secure attachment; however, foreclosure has been found to be associated positively with insecure attachment (Arseth, 2009). Therefore, for the current study, the associations between normative style and the attachment dimensions will be explored, but no specific hypotheses will be posed.

**Research Question 2:** What is the relationship between the dimensions of relationship avoidance and anxiety and life role salience (i.e., salience of the parental, marital, and career roles)? Although no previous studies have directly investigated this question, Hazan and Shaver

(1990) have studied the link between attachment and career attitudes, finding that individuals who were low in relationship avoidance and anxiety were more likely to enjoy working with co-workers, felt they had opportunities for advancement, and reported greater job security satisfaction. In contrast, high relationship anxiety individuals perceived fewer opportunities for advancement and did not feel satisfied with their job security. Finally, individuals with high relationship avoidance indicated a preference for working alone (in one of two studies). The researchers suggested that individuals who are avoidant towards interpersonal relationships may focus on work as a substitute for relationships. However, in a replication study by McCutcheon (2000), no significant correlations were found in regard to attachment style and work attitudes. Therefore, the present study will extend these studies to explore the possible links between relationship avoidance and anxiety and career, marital, and parental role salience.

***Hypothesis 2a.*** It is hypothesized that marital life role salience will be negatively associated with romantic relationship avoidance. The associations between marital role salience and anxiety could be positive or negative, and will be explored.

***Hypothesis 2b.*** For young women with low marital role salience, there may be a positive relationship between romantic relationship avoidance and career role salience.

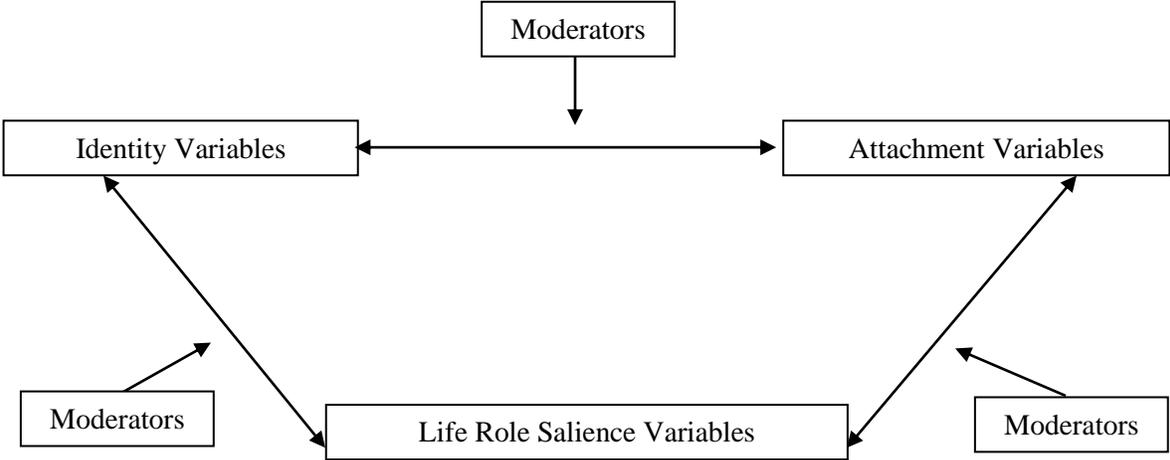
**Research Question 3:** How is identity formation (exploration, commitment, and style) related to life role salience of the parental, marital and career roles? This research question is exploratory. No existing theory or empirical work specifically addresses associations among identity formation and life role salience variables.

**Research Question 4:** Does life role salience moderate associations among identity and relationship avoidance and anxiety? The final research question also is exploratory given that no prior research has addressed moderating influences on associations between identity and

attachment. However, theory suggests that these three areas are interrelated and may influence one another (and adult development) in meaningful ways. It may be that those who favor family roles over career roles, compared to those who favor a balance between career and family roles may show different strengths of association among the identity formation and romantic attachment variables. For example, do young women who favor a balance between career and family have stronger associations between exploration and informational style with the attachment dimensions of avoidance and anxiety than those who strongly favor family roles over career? Do young women who favor family over career show stronger associations between normative style and the attachment dimensions of avoidance and anxiety than women who are seeking a balance between family and career, or who favor career over family?

In addition to testing the specified hypotheses and exploratory research questions, the current study will take into consideration potential demographic moderating variables, such as relationship status (dating versus not dating; length and seriousness of current dating relationship), academic goals (4-year degree versus graduate degree), and mothers' education (less than high school to graduate school) and work status (unemployed, part-time, or full-time). Because of existing literature suggesting that women tend to be more influenced by their mothers than their fathers as role models (Kerpelman & Schvaneveldt, 1999; Parsons, Adler, & Kaczala, 1982; Sholomskas & Axelrod, 1986), only mother variables will be examined.

Overarching Conceptual Model



## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The goal of the current study is to examine interrelations among the processes of identity formation and early stages of romantic attachment, and how identity and attachment are associated with anticipated salience of parental, marital, and career life roles among young adult women. First, theory and research on identity formation, generally thought to peak during the young adulthood period, are reviewed. Next, a description of theory and research on adult romantic attachment is provided. This is followed by a section that addresses the limited research investigating identity and attachment together. Finally, a review of research on life role salience is presented.

### *Identity Development*

The psychosocial development theory of Erikson describes identity as a “self-constructed dynamic organization of drives, abilities, beliefs, and personal history into a coherent and autonomous self that guides the unfolding of one’s adult life course” (Montgomery, 2005, p.347). Erikson suggested that concepts of identity are multidimensional, including ego identity (consistency of personal character), personal identity (values and beliefs one expresses through interactions), and social identity (connectedness to family and peer group, racial background, country of origin, religion, etc.) (Erikson, 1968). According to Erikson, the progression of identity development can be measured on a continuum, with “identity synthesis” describing the advanced stages of development and “identity confusion” describing the underdevelopment of identity (Erikson, 1950, 1968).

Marcia (1966, 1976, 1980) theorized that two processes, exploration and commitment, served as the foundation for identity formation. Identity exploration is the process by which individuals identify choices and alternative domains relevant to identity formation, such as career, religion, personal values, and interests. Identity commitment occurs once an individual makes a decision regarding these choices, and assimilates the decision into his or her personal beliefs and values.

Marcia derived four different statuses from the processes of exploration and commitment, which he named achievement, moratorium, foreclosure, and diffusion. Achievement status refers to engaging in a period of exploration followed by commitment. Moratorium status implies engagement in exploration, without having made commitments. Foreclosed status is characterized by commitment without prior exploration. Finally, diffused status refers to a lack of both exploration and commitment. Marcia's identity status paradigm has influenced over four decades of identity research addressing exploration and commitment.

A second stream of identity theorizing and research initially inspired by Erikson is the identity styles literature established by Berzonsky (1989, 1990). Berzonsky proposed three identity processing orientations or styles that are based on individuals' levels of exploration and commitment: information orientation, diffuse/avoidant orientation, and normative orientation. Individuals with an information orientation exhibit high levels of exploration and variable levels of commitment (ranging from low to high), and are active participants in seeking out, processing, and utilizing information relevant to their identity formation. This type of orientation is associated with the most positive outcomes and is believed to be the most advanced type of identity style (Adams, Munro, Doherty-Poirer, Munro, Peterson, & Edwards, 2001; Berzonsky, 1990, 2002, 2003; Berzonsky & Ferrari, 1996; Berzonsky & Kuk, 2000; Ferrari, Wolfe, Wesley,

Schoff & Beck, 1995; Nurmi, Berzonsky, Tammi, & Kinney, 1997; Vleioras & Bosma, 2005). Individuals with a diffuse/avoidant orientation typically exhibit low levels of both exploration and commitment, and often avoid or procrastinate decision making. Finally, those with a normative orientation exhibit high levels of commitment and low levels of exploration, and make decisions primarily based on the norms and expectations of their family, peers, and culture.

Of particular interest here are those studies that have examined associations between identity and relational/social outcomes, as previous research has shown interpersonal relationships to be critical for the development of identity across many domains (Grotevant & Cooper, 1985; Schwartz, 2001). Grotevant and Cooper (1985) studied the link between individuation in relationships and identity exploration in late adolescence. The study used a sample of 84 high school seniors from two-parent families. The participants were observed in a family interaction task designed to create the opportunity for the family to exhibit both individuality (by being prompted for suggestions for activities) and connectedness (as observed through agreements, questions, or compromises). Overall findings revealed that individuation occurred among individuals who had experienced supportive and warm parenting environments, and was associated with higher identity exploration. The researchers suggested that individuals' interactions within family relationships that exhibited positive communication, responsiveness, and emotional support appeared to promote the confidence and skills necessary for the adolescent to engage in exploration outside of the family context.

Berman, Schwartz, Kurtines, and Berman (2001) conducted a study in order to gain a better understanding of the process of identity formation; specifically, by empirically investigating the associations between cognitive competence, identity exploration, and identity style. The study used a sample ( $n = 215$ ) that was demographically diverse in terms of ethnicity,

geographic location, age, and gender. The researchers conceptualized cognitive competence as a key component of exploration (i.e., the capacity to identify and examine alternatives when challenges or problems arise,) and measured problem-solving competence using The Critical Problem Solving Scale (Ferrer-Wreder et al., 2002). The Ego Identity Process Questionnaire (EIPQ; Balistreri et al., 1995) measured identity status, and the Identity Style Inventory (ISI; Berzonsky, 1997) was used to determine identity style.

Results of the study indicated that identity style and competence play differing and important roles in the process of identity formation. Identity style appeared to account for more of the variance in identity exploration than competence did. Although competence was not predictive of identity style, identity styles were significantly correlated with identity status. Informational style was positively associated with the moratorium status, and normative style was negatively associated with the moratorium status, while informational was the only style found to be significantly related to the achieved status. The researchers concluded that competence is one component of the process of exploration that allows individuals to use critical thinking skills when considering alternatives and making decisions.

Kerpelman and White (2006) investigated the relationship between identity formation and perceptions of social capital quality (an individual's perception of available social support resources), using a sample of 374 (161 males, 213 females) African-American adolescents between the ages of 12 and 19. Participants in the study were also of low socioeconomic status and rural geographic location. Among their findings was that the identity statuses associated with the highest social capital quality were achieved and foreclosed. Furthermore, identity commitment appeared to mediate the effects of exploration on social capital quality, indicating

that exploration without commitment is not as facilitative of positive outcomes as exploration with commitment.

In another study using a sample of 1,356 high school students, Paulk (2009) investigated the developmental factors of attachment style and identity style as predictors of interpersonal competence. Participants completed surveys that included the Experiences in Close Relationships scale (ECR; Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998) to assess attachment style; the Identity Style Inventory (ISI; Berzonsky, 1992) to assess identity style; and the Interpersonal Competence Questionnaire (ICQ; Buhrmester, Furman, Wittenberg, & Reis, 1988) to measure interpersonal competence.

Results of the study indicated that identity exploration was a critical part of adolescent interpersonal competence, and suggested that an individual's willingness to explore the environment is key in the creation of a stable sense of self through the ability to try new things, and experience social interaction and interpersonal relationships. High interpersonal competence was linked with optimal outcomes during the adolescent and young adulthood period, such as greater success with friendships and romantic relationships, higher academic achievement, and decreased likelihood of psychopathology (Aronen & Kurkela, 1998; Hoffmann, Powlishta, & White, 2004). The results of Paulk's study also indicated that a lack of exploration led to a rigid (normative-oriented) or fragmented (diffuse/avoidant-oriented) sense of self, leading to poorer interpersonal competence. Additionally, the attachment dimensions of anxiety and avoidance appeared to mediate the association between identity styles and interpersonal competence. More specifically, the relationship between information style and interpersonal competence was partially mediated by avoidance and the relationship between diffuse/avoidant style and interpersonal competence was fully mediated by avoidance. Partial mediation of the association

between attachment and interpersonal competence by the identity style variables also was found (i.e., the association between avoidance and interpersonal competence was partially mediated by informational style).

Also focusing on young adults, Mullis et al. (2003) studied the association between identity formation and family characteristics. The sample was comprised of 151 undergraduate students (57 male and 94 female) aged 18 to 25; the majority were African American or Caucasian. The Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales II (FACES II; Olson, Sprenkle, & Russell, 1979) was used to measure perceived family cohesion and adaptability, which are constructs linked with healthy family functioning. Cohesion refers to the degree of emotional closeness bonding between family members, while adaptability describes the family's ability to change over time as the family needs evolve, and the degree of flexibility in rules, structure, and hierarchy (Olson et al). The Ego Identity Process Questionnaire (EIPQ; Balistreri, Busch-Rossnagel, & Geisinger, 1995) was used to measure identity exploration and commitment. Results of the study provided some support for previous research suggesting identity formation is facilitated by a family environment characterized by emotional closeness and adaptability. The study determined a significant relationship between family cohesion and identity commitment among males, but this association was not significant among females in the sample. Family adaptability was related to identity commitment among participants.

A small body of research also has investigated the associations between identity styles and social outcomes (Berzonsky & Kuk, 2000; Berzonsky, Nurmi, Kinney, & Tammi, 1999). In one study, using a sample of 198 young adult undergraduate students, Berzonsky et al. (1999) found that a diffuse/avoidant-orientation was positively associated with social avoidance and anxiety, and that diffuse/avoidant-oriented individuals also reported low confidence in their

ability to be successful in social situations. In contrast, information-orientation and normative-orientation were negatively associated with social avoidance and anxiety, and individuals in these categories reported higher confidence in their ability to succeed in social situations.

Furthering the results of this study, Berzonsky and Kuk (2000) investigated the association between identity style and adjustment in new social situations using 363 freshman university students. The transition to a university setting served as the new social context measured in the study. In support of the previous study, results revealed that diffuse/avoidant-oriented individuals reported the least amount of social competence in terms of their ability to initiate and maintain friendships, and were more likely to require approval or reassurance from others compared with individuals from the other identity style groups. Conversely, information-oriented and normative-oriented individuals reported higher social competence and were less likely to require approval or reassurance from others.

More recently, Eryigit and Kerpelman (2009) conducted a study including 371 Turkish college students, using the Turkish version of the Identity Processing Style Q-Sort (IPSQ; Pittman, Kerpelman, Lamke, & Sollie, 2009) to measure Berzonsky's identity styles of information-orientation, normative-orientation, and diffuse/avoidant-orientation. Using this measure, participants sorted 60 written descriptions of the styles into columns in order of most to least similar to themselves. Results of the study were consistent with previous research, indicating that an informational style was predictive of resourcefulness and skill in coping with identity issues and was negatively correlated with avoidance or denial, whereas diffuse/avoidant style showed the opposite pattern. A normative-orientation was predictive of an emotion-focused coping style, which can be maladaptive; whereas an information-orientation was associated with a problem-focused coping style, which has been shown to result in more positive outcomes.

In summary, the current body of identity related literature has established that exploration and commitment are key components of identity formation. The best outcomes appear to result from a period of exploration, whereby one examines possible identity relevant choices, followed by commitment. Furthermore, there are different styles, or orientations, by which individuals engage in the identity formation process, based on the way they seek out and use identity relevant information. These orientations include informational style, normative style, and diffuse/avoidant style. These key concepts of identity formation will be examined in terms of their associations with adult romantic attachment.

### *Attachment Theory*

Attachment theory was conceptualized by John Bowlby (1969, 1982, 1973, 1990), who studied children that were orphaned or otherwise displaced from their primary caregivers during the World War II period. He was able to make a connection between behavioral and mental problems and maternal deprivation and separation among these children. The child's relationship with his or her mother, who typically served as the child's main caregiver and attachment figure, was of primary importance to Bowlby. He described the attachment between a mother and child as a "lasting psychological connectedness between human beings" (Bowlby, 1969, p. 194).

Bowlby's theory implies that the attachment process, which begins in infancy, would later shape an individual's beliefs and interactions regarding interpersonal relationships (Bowlby, 1990). He believed in a strong causal relationship between one's experiences with parents and one's later capacity to make affectional bonds. Hazan and Shaver (1987, 1990) extended his work by studying attachment styles among adults within the context of romantic relationships (with the partner as the attachment figure). Their theory of romantic attachment style suggests that within romantic relationships, individuals may be influenced by childhood attachment to

behave in ways that elicit rejection or withdrawal of the current partner, as well as a variety of other responses (Hazan & Shaver). Thus, early attachment styles incite behaviors that promote the same attachment environment.

Bowlby asserted that children naturally seek proximity to their mothers when they are experiencing distress due to their vulnerability when separated from their primary caregiver. Bowlby proposed that these early child-caregiver interactions would provide the basis for internal working models, or mental representations of self and others. These internal working models are theorized to influence an individual's feelings, preferences, and interactions within the context of interpersonal relationships. They also influence expectations of how others will interact with them that is ultimately tied to their beliefs about their worthiness to receive care.

Bowlby produced three main propositions of attachment theory (Bowlby, 1973). The first suggests that when an individual learns from experiences in infancy that the attachment figure will be responsive and available when he seeks care, the individual becomes confident in his ability to receive care (secure attachment); thus, he is much less likely to experience intense anxiety or fear regarding physical and emotional needs within the context of close relationships than individuals who lack this confidence (insecure attachment). In essence, he develops an internal working model of the world as generally a safe place and is unlikely to be concerned that his physical and emotional needs will go unmet. He will also have a positive model of self suggesting that he is worthy of care. Conversely, an individual who lacks this confidence is more likely to view the world as unsafe, and experience chronic fear and anxiety regarding their ability to have their needs met. He will also be likely to believe himself unlovable and unworthy of care.

When the caregiver is inconsistent in responding to the infant, providing care sometimes but not other times, the infant becomes insecure-anxiously attached (Ainsworth et al., 1978).

These infants tend to escalate their efforts to engage their caretaker, and later in life are more likely to become extremely upset when separated from their caregiver, and tend to fear abandonment. When the caregiver is consistently unresponsive to the infant, the infant will become insecure-avoidantly attached. These infants are less likely to exhibit caregiver signaling behaviors, and later in life tend to withdraw from others when they are in need of care or experiencing distress.

The second proposition indicates that this confidence in the accessibility of the attachment figure develops over time from infancy through adolescence, and that the internal working models of the world and others are fairly stable and unchanging throughout the lifespan. Thus, an individual who is insecurely attached is likely to experience fear and anxiety within other relationships well beyond that of the caregiver relationship.

Finally, the third proposition suggests individual differences in internal working models of the accessibility and responsiveness of attachment figures are likely to reflect the individual's actual experiences. One who has confidence in how the caregiver will consistently respond has likely experienced a consistently responsive caregiver, while those who lack this confidence have probably experienced a caregiver who was inconsistently responsive or consistently unresponsive.

Mary Ainsworth later expanded Bowlby's work by observing infant-mother interactions, with a primary focus on infants' proximity seeking signals and behaviors. She theorized that the attachment figure served as a secure base from which an infant can explore the world. Ainsworth also proposed that mothers' sensitivity and responsiveness to the infant's signals played a central role in the development of the infant's attachment style (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978).

Although both Bowlby's primary interest was in child-caregiver attachment, he believed that individuals' interactions in other relationships later in their lives could lead to a change in the internal working models formed in early childhood. He theorized a strong causal relationship between an individual's experiences with caregiving in infancy and their capacity to connect with other relationship partners.

### *Adult Romantic Attachment*

Cassidy (2000, 2001) theorized that individual differences in adult romantic attachments could be the result of individual childhood attachment styles. She described the characteristics of different attachment styles in the context of romantic relationships. Those who are securely attached are believed to be able to turn to trusted others in times of distress. They are also thought to become close to others fairly easily, and are comfortable both depending on others as well as being someone others can depend on. They typically worry little about abandonment or their partners becoming too close to them. These individuals would be expected to have an internal working model of self as worthy of love and care; consequently, they would be less likely to desire constant reassurance of their worth, seek closeness out of fear of abandonment, or withhold closeness out of fear of losing themselves in the relationship. Based on Bowlby's work, in their infancy securely attached adults would most likely have had sensitive and responsive mothers in who were consistently comforting and care giving. Secure attachment is also thought to be associated with validating the truth of a child's experiences.

Cassidy theorized that adults with an insecure-avoidant attachment style would not be comfortable being close to others and become fearful when others get too close. They are likely to feel that their romantic partners desire greater intimacy and closeness than they are comfortable with. They may also have difficulty trusting their partner and would avoid any type

of dependence on the partner. Thus, they are less likely to seek care from others in times of distress, and generally do not find it enjoyable to give or receive physical affection in romantic relationships. In infancy, these individuals are believed to have experienced mothers who were emotionally distant or closed off, and were responsive when the infant had a positive affect, but became withdrawn and rejecting when the infant expressed a negative affect. This pattern is thought to cause the infant to eventually stop signaling for comfort or care.

Regarding adults with an insecure-ambivalent attachment, Cassidy suggested that they perceive others as resistant to becoming as close as they would like to, and they fear their partner will abandon them or doesn't really love them. Because they seek such an extreme amount of closeness and intimacy, they often find that their partner does withdraw. These individuals have difficulty being comforted and feeling satisfied in relationships because they perceive others as being insufficiently responsive. It is believed that in infancy these individuals experienced mothers who were inconsistently available and caregiving; thus they learned they could receive care only by exaggerating their signal for comfort and care.

In addition, within romantic relationships, individuals may be influenced by their childhood attachment to behave in ways that elicit rejection or withdrawal of their partner, potentially reinforcing the internal model of self (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Thus, early attachment styles influence the individual to behave in ways that are likely to recreate the interactions experienced in infancy. However, Cassidy suggested that changes in attachment can occur between childhood and adulthood, and continue throughout adulthood. The formation of new attachments with relationship partners could change working models of self that become more salient than the early childhood attachment experiences.

Hazan and Shaver (1987) studied adolescents' and adults' experiences in romantic relationships in relation to their attachment styles. Using a sample of 205 males and 415 females, ages 14 to 82, they collected data in the form of questionnaires that asked questions regarding participants' most important relationship, followed by a section on whether it was a current or past relationship. Additionally, a measure of attachment style was designed using Ainsworth's (1978) observations of infants to adapt the descriptions of attachment styles into adult romantic relationships. Attachment history was measured using a checklist of adjectives describing participants' relationships with parents in childhood.

Participants of different attachment styles reported different internal working models of the self involving beliefs about romantic love, their partners' trustworthiness and availability, and their own worthiness to be loved and cared for. Results of the study revealed that more than half of participants (56%) reported feelings and behaviors that suggested a secure attachment, 25% insecure-avoidant, and 19% insecure-anxious/ambivalent. Among participants classified as insecure-anxious/ambivalent, there was indication of greater loneliness, despite their efforts to be close to others, compared to secure participants. In contrast, the majority of avoidant participants reported being consciously distant from others but did not report feelings of loneliness.

Bookwala (2003) studied the relationship between individuals' adult attachment styles and their present level of relationship commitment. The sample included 161 mainly Caucasian undergraduate students (102 females and 59 males) between the ages of 18 and 20 years. The Relationship Questionnaire (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) was used to determine the adult attachment styles of secure, dismissing, preoccupied, and fearful. Participants were also asked to indicate their current relationship status.

Among the findings of the study was that individuals who were casually dating or were not in a romantic relationship at all were most likely to have an insecure (fearful or dismissing) attachment style than those who were in a serious dating relationship. Predictably, those who were classified as securely attached had the highest percentage of any other attachment group in serious dating relationships (47.2%). Bookwala concluded that individuals who were insecurely attached, especially those with a fearful attachment style, were at an increased risk for loneliness and unmet emotional and social needs.

Seiffge-Krenke (2003) conducted an 8-year prospective study using a sample of 103 participants, beginning when participants were 13 years of age, examining the individual and relationship precursors to and developmental sequence of romantic relationships among adolescents and young adults. Measures used in the study included the Love Experience Questionnaire (LEQ; Hazan & Shaver, 1987) which was used to assess quality of romantic relationships; the Network of Relationship Inventory (NRI; Furman & Buhrmester, 1985) to measure the quality of relationships with parents and friends; and the Offer Self Image Questionnaire (OSIQ; Offer & Dieneshaus, 1969) to measure self-concept. All participants also completed semi-structured interviews about their relationships with parents, peers, and romantic partners.

Among the findings of the study was evidence for a developmental sequence in romance in which the more experience adolescents gain in romantic relationships, the longer they maintain relationships, and the higher their ratings of partner support. Peer support appeared to have an impact on length of relationships and partner support ratings only during later stages of romantic development. Previous romantic relationship experience appeared to have a greater

impact on adolescent and young adult romantic relationship quality than peer relationships or self-concept does.

Holland and Roisman (2010) conducted a study examining the association of adult attachment with romantic relationship functioning, using a sample of heterosexual dating couples aged 18 to 25. They collected data twice, with 115 couples at Time 1, and 57 couples at Time 2 one year later. The Adult Attachment Interview (AAI; George, Kaplan, & Main, 1985) was used to assess romantic relationship functioning and attachment security. Participants were also assigned to complete a conflict resolution task that was observed, and during which their electrodermal reactivity was monitored. Finally, they were asked to complete self-reports about their relationships. Results of the study indicated that adult attachment security was predictive of the quality of adults' romantic relationships, based on both laboratory observation and self-reports. Secure attachment, characterized by low levels of relationship avoidance and anxiety, appeared to be associated with more positive outcomes within romantic relationships, and also with overall higher relationship satisfaction. Additionally, confirming previous research findings, individuals identified as insecurely attached exhibited greater electrodermal reactivity during the conflict resolution task, indicating greater distress than those who were low in relationship avoidance and anxiety.

In a similar vein, Weems and colleagues (2002) conducted a study designed to investigate the relationship between attachment and anxiety sensitivity (defined as the awareness of physical sensations associated with anxiety, such as increased heart rate, shortness of breath, tremors, perspiration, etc.). They used an ethnically diverse sample of high school ( $n = 203$ ) and university ( $n = 324$ ) students, consisting of 375 females and 150 males. To assess attachment, participants completed the Experiences in Close Relationships Scale (ECR; Brennan, et al.,

1998). The Anxiety Sensitivity Index (ASI; Peterson & Reiss, 1987) was used to measure anxiety sensitivity levels.

Results of the study revealed high anxiety sensitivity scores among participants classified as preoccupied and fearful in their attachment styles compared to those classified as securely attached. This finding was consistent across both the high school and university groups. The researchers concluded that models of the self and/or other as negative (insecure attachment) or models of self and other as positive (secure attachment) had a significant impact on participants' ability to tolerate anxiety, with a secure attachment leading to the best outcomes.

To summarize, attachment styles are formed early in life and have a lasting impact on an individual's model of self (in terms of worthiness to receive comfort and care) and others (as warm and responsive versus rejecting or uncaring). There are three main types of attachment: secure, insecure-avoidant, and insecure-ambivalent (anxious). There is a clear and distinctive association between secure attachment and the most positive outcomes in a variety of domains; especially within the realm of interpersonal functioning and relationships. In adulthood, romantic attachment to a partner can be conceptualized as an individual's comfort with emotional intimacy, anxiety about relationships, and the ability to give and receive care. Although attachment sometimes is reported categorically (secure versus insecure), the current study will use the continuous dimensions of avoidance and anxiety to conceptualize attachment. This investigation views the processes of attachment and identity development as interrelated and mutually influential. In the section to follow, studies that have examined the link between attachment style and identity formation will be reviewed.

### *Attachment and Identity*

It is believed that young adulthood is a period during which both identity and the capacity for intimacy are developed (Adams & Archer, 1994; Dyk & Adams, 1987; Marcia & Kroger 1993; Orlofsky, Marcia, & Lesser, 1973; Paul & White, 1990). Emerging research has begun to examine the link between identity formation and attachment styles. Berman, Weems, Rodriguez, and Zamora (2006) examined the link between identity status and romantic attachment style among an ethnically diverse sample of college ( $n = 324$ ) and high school students ( $n = 189$ ). The study used Marcia's four identity statuses of diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, and achievement as a theoretical framework for identity status, which was measured using the Ego Identity Process Questionnaire (EIPQ; Balistreri, Busch-Rossnagel, & Geisinger, 1995). Romantic attachment styles were classified based on Bartholomew's four styles of secure, preoccupied, dismissing, and fearful, and were measured using the Experience in Close Relationships Scale (ECR; Brennan, et al., 1998).

The main goals of the study were to understand how identity achieved and foreclosed individuals compared to those in moratorium and diffusion on relationship avoidance, and whether identity achieved individuals were more likely to have secure or preoccupied attachment. The results of the study indicated that identity status and romantic attachment style were significantly related for males and females in the college sample, but was not significant in the high school sample. It was also found that a person in any identity status could have any of the attachment styles. However, foreclosed individuals were significantly lower in avoidance than diffused individuals were. Foreclosed individuals also scored lower on relationship anxiety than those who were achieved or in moratorium.

Finally, identity achieved individuals appeared to be more likely to have preoccupied attachment (although it was expected that they would be secure), and foreclosed were more likely to be secure. The authors attributed these unexpected findings to possible ethnic differences, as the sample used was more diverse than comparable studies, and participants who identified as ethnic minority members tended to have significantly lower rates of secure attachment than Caucasian participants did. Future studies would need to more closely examine this possibility.

Additionally, Arseth et al (2009) conducted a meta-analysis of studies using 14 published studies that examined the relationship between Marcia's identity status and romantic relationship attachment. Their investigation conceptualized attachment and intimacy as closely related constructs that are reciprocal and mutually influential, as both are based on the processes of ego development. Therefore, the overall findings of the meta-analysis were believed to encompass both constructs.

Variables coded for the 14 studies included the year of publication, the type of article, the primary theme of study, sample size, gender, ethnicity geographic location, and the identity status measure used. Measures of attachment among the studies included consisted of the Relationship Questionnaire (RQ; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991), the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA), and the Relationship Scale Questionnaire (RSQ; Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994), which used four attachment categories of secure, dismissing, preoccupied, and fearful.

The results of the meta-analysis revealed a weak to moderate association between attachment style and identity status. Achievement and moratorium status were both found to be

positively correlated with secure attachment and high intimacy, whereas diffusion and foreclosure statuses appeared to be linked with insecure attachment and low intimacy.

Moreover, Montgomery (2005) investigated the links between psychosocial identity and relationship intimacy using a sample of 473 adolescents and emerging adults ranging from age 12 to 24. Gender and age differences were also examined. A survey was administered using several assessments, including the Erikson Psycho-social Index (EPSI; Rosenthal, Gurney, & Moore, 1981), the Dating Experience Scale (DES; Montgomery & Sorell, 1998), the Romantic Beliefs Scale (RBS; Sprecher & Metts, 1989), the Juvenile Love Scale (JLS; Hatfield, Schmitz, Cornelius, & Rapson, 1988), and the Imaginary Audience Scale (IAS; Elkind & Bowen, 1979). Romantic experience was also measured by asking how many times the participants had been in love, and whether they were currently in love.

Findings revealed gender differences for both identity and intimacy. Females reported being in love fewer times and were less likely to believe in love at first sight than males were, but reported experiencing greater intimacy in their relationships than males did. Females also scored higher than males regarding their capacity for mutual relational intimacy. Finally, older females showed higher scores than younger females in intimacy and identity, whereas males did not show significant differences across age groups. Finally, identity processes were highly significant predictors of psychosocial intimacy, with at least one measure from each of the psychosocial developmental domains yielding a significant correlation with intimacy outcomes. Thus, the development of romantic relationship intimacy capacity and identity formation appear to be interrelated but independent processes.

Wautier and Blume (2004) investigated how the ideological and interpersonal ego identity domains, overall ego identity status, adult attachment style, and gender-role orientation

affect levels of depression and anxiety among young adults. The study included 150 undergraduate students (102 females and 48 males) ranged from age 18 to 55 ( $M = 28.9$  years). Participants were mainly Caucasian (45%) and African American (44%).

The Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status–Revised (EOMEIS–2; Bennion & Adams, 1986) was used to determine ego identity status. Attachment style was measured using the Attachment Style Questionnaire (ASQ; Feeney, Noller, & Hanrahan, 1994), and the Bem Sex-Role Inventory–Short Form (BSRI–SF; Bem, 1981) was used to classify participants into gender-role orientation groups. The Beck Depression Inventory–II (BDI–II; Beck & Steer, 1993) and the Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI; Beck, Epstein, Brown, & Steer, 1988) were used to assess levels of depression and anxiety, respectively.

Results of the study indicated that both depression and anxiety were significantly influenced by adult attachment style, with the lowest levels of depression and anxiety found among secure individuals and the highest among insecure individuals. There was also a significant interaction reported between attachment style, identity status, and gender-role orientation. Individuals who had a feminine gender-role orientation, insecure attachment style, and uncommitted identity status had higher levels of anxiety than those with a masculine, androgynous, or undifferentiated gender-role orientation. Further, attachment style had the most significant impact on anxiety, with secure attachment associated with lower levels of anxiety than insecure attachment.

Additionally, some gender differences were found. Women who were classified as insecurely attached and had an uncommitted identity status scored higher on depression than insecurely attached women who had a committed identity status. However, for men in the sample, identity commitment was not significantly related to either depression or anxiety.

Among men and women, a feminine gender-role orientation appeared to predict a higher risk for both depression and anxiety. This may be particularly problematic for some women to manage work-family roles, given that women are more likely than men to have a feminine gender role orientation.

Lending support to the limited literature directly examining identity and romantic attachment, there are some studies that have investigated related constructs that may support an attachment and identity style association. For example, in a study conducted in the Netherlands, Meeus, Oosterwegel, and Vollebergh (2002) explored the relationship between school and interpersonal relationship identity and the parent/peer attachment among adolescents ( $n = 148$ ). The Utrecht-Groningen Identity Development Scale (U-GIDS; Meeus, 1996) was used to measure identity and commitment in both the school and relationship domains. Parent/peer attachment was assessed using the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA; Armsden & Greenberg, 1987), a self-report measure which asks participants about their degree of trust in peers and parents, and how much they can depend on them for comfort.

Findings of the study revealed a correlation between identity exploration and commitment and parental/peer attachment. Specifically, commitment in school was predicted by participants' attachment relationship to their fathers. Attachment to peers was positively correlated with school exploration and commitment in interpersonal relationships. Attachment to the mother appeared to be significantly correlated with peer attachment, which was predictive of school exploration, suggesting a possible link between identity style and attachment style.

In another study using a sample of 84 recently married couples, Cook and Jones (2002) examined the degree to which similarity in identity styles predicted marital satisfaction. The Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS; Busby, Christensen, Crane, & Larson, 1995) was

used to assess the marital relationship by measuring marital satisfaction (in terms of conflict and stability), marital consensus (agreement regarding decision making, values, and affection), and marital cohesion (shared activities and mutual self-disclosure). The Identity Style Inventory (ISI; Berzonsky, 1989) was used to measure identity style. Among the findings of the study were that couples with similar identity styles reported greater marital satisfaction than couples with different identity styles did. In addition, similarity of identity style was more predictive of marital satisfaction for women than for men, suggesting some possible gender differences. These results lend further support to the idea of an association between identity style and close relationship variables.

Finally, Passmore, Fogarty, and Bourke (2005) conducted a study in which the association between parental bonding, identity style, and self-esteem in adoptees ( $n = 100$ ) and non-adoptees ( $n = 100$ ) were examined, using a sample of 200 men and women with a mean age of 37. The Parental Bonding Inventory (PBI; Parker, Tupling & Brown, 1979) was used to measure parent-child bonding. The PBI is a questionnaire consisting of 25 items that asks participants report their perception of each parents' responsiveness and protectiveness using a 4-point Likert scale. Berzonsky's (1992) Identity Style Inventory was used to assess participants' identity style, and self-esteem was assessed using Rosenberg's (1989) Self-Esteem Scale. Inter-correlations between variables indicated that a normative-orientation was correlated positively with parental bonding. This was the only significant correlation found between variables of identity style and parental bonding. As high levels of responsiveness and protectiveness appear to be constructs similar to those involved in attachment processes, the findings of this study indicate a relationship may exist between attachment and identity style. In the Passmore et al. study, the link between normative style and parental bonding may suggest that greatest feelings

of bonding occur when children are more likely to follow the norms and expectations of their parents for identity formation, or conversely, children who follow the norms and expectations of their parents in forming identities may feel more bonded to their parents.

Overall, previous investigations of the relationship between attachment and identity are few in number. There does appear to be a link between these processes; however, specific findings have varied. Some studies have indicated that achievement and moratorium statuses are predictive of secure attachment, whereas diffusion and foreclosure statuses appeared to be linked with insecure attachment and low intimacy. For example, diffused status individuals, who avoid or procrastinate the exploration and commitment processes, appear to have high levels of avoidance in regard to romantic relationship attachment as well. The present investigation will continue to explore the associations between identity variables and adult romantic attachment, further examining whether individuals' approach to the identity development process mirrors their attitudes towards romantic relationships (i.e., if an individual avoids or procrastinates exploration, will she also have a high degree of avoidance within the romantic relationship context?). Additionally, these processes will also be examined in terms of their association with life role salience, which will be reviewed in detail in the following section.

### *Life Role Salience*

Super (1982, 1990) used the term *role salience* to describe the relative importance and significance of life roles an individual occupies over the course of the lifespan. He referred to these roles as worker, home and family person, community member, student, and leisurite. Super theorized that either stress or satisfaction could result from an individual's combination of life roles, depending upon the salience of each role for that individual. For the purpose of the present

study, the roles of worker (i.e., career role) and home and family person (i.e., marital and parental roles) are the roles of focus.

A common stressor resulting from participation in the life roles of career, marriage, and parenthood is competition between the work and family roles, which is known as work-family conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). In the past, women have tended to report greater salience of parenthood and marriage roles, whereas men have placed greater identity importance on careers than on parenthood or marriage (Bielby & Bielby, 1989; Dennehy & Mortimer, 1992; Ferree, 1990; Reitzes & Mutran, 1994; Wiley, 1991). However, young adults today experience more variation in their work and family roles than previous generations have (Greene & Wheatley, 1992; Novack & Novack, 1996; Willinger, 1993).

Noor (2004) investigated the relationship between work-family conflict, role salience, and well-being using a sample of 147 employed women who had children living at home. The majority of the women in the sample were married (83.0%), and the rest were separated, divorced, widowed (14.3%), or never married (2.7%). The study used the 22-item Work-Family Conflict Scale (Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrian, 1996) to measure work-family conflict, the 5-item Job Satisfaction Scale (Hackman & Oldham, 1975) and the 12-item General Health Questionnaire (Goldberg, 1978) to assess measure overall well-being, and a 6-item questionnaire developed for the study to measure work and family role salience.

Although, several previous studies had found that women tend to report more conflict in terms of their career interfering with their family life than family interfering with work conflict (Gutek, Searle, & Klepa, 1991; Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998), Noor (2004) discovered family interfering with work (FIW) conflict to have a greater negative impact on women's well-being than work interfering with family (WIF) conflict. FIW rather than WIF conflict was more related

to well-being. Additionally, family salience was not significantly correlated to job satisfaction. Some limitations of the study are a relatively small sample size, and that the sample was also cross-sectional, making it impossible to determine causation.

There are apparent gender differences among men and women's role salience. Examining some of these differences, Kerpelman and Schvaneveldt (1999) conducted a two-part investigation using a sample of 1,267 university students (approximately 75% of whom were female) who had never been married or a parent for Study 1. Using survey packets, participants were instructed to divide a provided pie graph into three sections based on importance: one for the career role, one for the marital role, and one for the parental role. Four role balance orientations were identified based on the proportions of the three sections: family-oriented, career-oriented, career/marriage oriented, and balance-oriented. The Life Role Salience Scale instrument (LRSS; Amatea, Cross, Clark, & Bobby, 1986) was used to measure role identity salience for parental, marital, and career roles, and gender attributes were assessed using the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ; Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1975).

As expected, results of Study 1 indicated that women placed greater importance on the parental identity than men did. However, men and women did not differ in the importance placed on either the career or marital identities. It was also reported that women expected to marry sooner and start careers later than men. Further, men and women who had a family-oriented role balance appeared to be more traditional in their belief regarding men's and women's roles. It was suggested that social pressure to conform to traditional gendered expectations for roles is met by some young adults with relative ease, while others with nontraditional role balance orientations may experience greater challenges in developing their identities.

Study 2 of the same investigation used a sample of 147 university students, and asked participants to complete the role balance orientation pie measure for themselves, and additionally, the same measure for their perceptions of their mothers and fathers. Overall, the majority of young adults perceived their parents as adhering to traditional gender roles, especially for the career and parental roles. For the roles that were most important in their preferred role balance orientation, participants viewed their role importance to be either equal to or greater than the importance held by their parents, or at least by the same-sex parent. Men's parental identity importance level appeared relatively similar to that of their fathers, while family-oriented women tended to be the same as their mothers in terms of parental importance and had significantly less career importance than their fathers.

Johnstone and Lee (2009) conducted a longitudinal study of Australian women, ages 18–23 in the first wave; ages 22–27 in the second, and ages 25–30 in the final wave of data collection. A total of 7,790 women responded to all three waves. Participants completed questionnaires with items assessing their plans for motherhood, employment and relationships. The majority of the cohort of Australian women, aged 18 to 23 years in 1996, aspired to a combination of paid work and family roles.

Results indicated that career, relationship, and parenthood aspirations were likely to change over time. However, the majority of participants aspired to be in a stable romantic relationship, have children and be in a paid work position by age 35. At the second wave, participants were classified into three groups based on their reported aspirations: “home-centered” (aspiring to full-time unpaid work in the home and a family of two or more children), “work-centered” (aspiring to full-time paid work and no children or one child) or “adaptive” (aspiring to a combination of motherhood with two or more children, and some form of paid

work outside of the home). At the second wave (ages 22-27), work-centered women were less likely to be in a paid work position, but more likely to be enrolled in college (with some pursuing graduate degrees), and were also most likely to have aspirations for higher education than the other groups. Conversely, the home-centered women were less likely to have a college degree and the majority was employed outside the home. Adaptive women were equally likely to be married as were home-centered women, while work-centered women were most likely never to have married. Interestingly, at the final wave of data collection the adaptive women were more likely to be mothers than not only the work-centered women but also the home-centered women. The researchers hypothesized that this unexpected finding may be a result of the adaptive women encountering work–family conflict and responding by shifting their priorities to the parental role. However, future research would need to examine this further.

The determination of life role salience appears to be a critical aspect of the identity formation process among young adults. As they begin the transition from youth to adulthood, they will be faced with the question of “What do I want to be?” As they determine which roles are critical to their identities and which are not, each will begin to chart his or her life’s course. For women in particular, this process can be complicated by the influence of gendered expectations. Thus, the present study will have a narrowed focus using a sample consisting only of females. It seems likely that determining the salience of the life roles of career, marriage, and parenthood is relevant to the identity formation process, especially for women. Overall, the existing body of literature makes a compelling case for the hypothesis that identity formation, the development of adult romantic attachment, and determining life role salience may be interrelated and mutually influential processes. The current study will proceed by examining the possible links between these variables among young adult women.

## METHOD

### *Participants and Procedure*

The data used in the present study are derived from secondary dataset which was drawn from a larger study designed to examine the associations between identity and attachment. Using an internet-based questionnaire, data were collected from undergraduate students currently taking courses in the department of Human Development and Family Studies at a southeastern university. The students earned extra credit for their participation in the study. The total number of participants that completed the questionnaires was 740 (685 females and 55 males). For the purpose of the current study, only females between the ages of 18 and 26 (with a mean age of 20.32) who were single, never married, were used for the sample ( $n = 656$ ). With respect to the ethnic composition of the sample, 92.7% of the participants identified as Caucasian, 5.8% as African-American, .8% as Hispanic/Latino, .3% as Asian American, .2% as Native American, .2% as Biracial, and .2% identified themselves as “other.” Among the participants, 37.5% reported they were not dating, 14.2% reported casually dating, 46.5% were seriously/exclusively dating, and 1.8% were engaged to be married. In terms of reported current relationship length, responses varied from 0 to 82 months, with a mean of 27.2 months ( $SD = 15.94$ ). For participants’ highest expected level of education, 47.2% reported Master’s degree, 41.3% reported 4-year college degree, and 10.1% reported Ph.D., M.D., or other advanced degree (1.4% indicated “other”).

Most of the participants’ mothers’ had attained a 4-year college degree (41.2%), whereas 20.9% had a Master’s level degree, 18.3% had a high school education or less, 14.9% had a 2-

year degree, and 2.1% had a Ph.D., M.D., or other advanced degree. Most mothers were employed full-time (55.7%), while 23.4% were unemployed and not looking for work, .9% were unemployed and looking for work, 17.6% were employed part-time, and the remainder were deceased or retired (2%). Additionally, 75.5% of participants' mothers were married to their fathers, 9.8% were remarried, with the remainder were unmarried.

Among participants' fathers, the majority had also attained a 4-year college degree (39.2%), while 21.6% had a Master's degree, 9% had a two-year college degree, 17.8% had a high school education or less, and 10.9% had a PhD, M.D., or other advanced degree. In terms of employment, 89% of fathers were employed full-time, while 1.7% were employed part time, 3.2% were unemployed, and 4.3% were deceased or retired. 77% of fathers were married to the participants' mothers, 11% were remarried, and the remainder were unmarried.

There were six demographic variables that were controlled for in the analyses and were recoded in the dataset. Two of these were continuous variables: length of current relationship (in months), and percent chance of marrying current partner (0 – 100). The remaining four variables were categorical, and were recoded as follows: relationship status (0 = not in a relationship, 1= in a relationship), expected education (0 = 4 year college degree, 1 = graduate degree or beyond), mother's education (0 = high school diploma or less, 1 = 2 years of college, 2 = 4 year college degree, 1 = graduate degree or beyond), and mother's employment (0 = not employed, 1 = part-time employment, 2 = full-time employment).

### *Measures<sup>1</sup>*

**The Identity Styles Inventory IV** (ISI-IV; Smits, 2009) was used to assess the three styles of identity. There are four subscales included in the ISI IV, with one subscale for each

identity style and one subscale for identity commitment. The ISI-IV consists of 33 identity style items; including 7 items to assess informational style, 8 for normative style, 9 for

*<sup>1</sup>The full set of items in the measures used can be found in Appendix A.*

diffuse/avoidant style, and 9 items for identity commitment. Only the three scales for the styles will be used in the current study. Smits (2009) reported alpha reliability statistics for the ISI-IV ranging from .71 to .76 for the informational style subscale, .69 to .78 for the normative style subscale, and .77 to .82 for the diffuse/avoidant subscale. For the current study, reliability for the scales was found to be .84 for informational style, .81 for normative style, and .90 for diffuse/avoidant style. The measure uses a Likert-scale response format ranging from 1 to 5, with participants indicating to what degree statements describe them. Among some of the statements are “It is important for me to obtain and evaluate information from a variety of sources before I make important life decisions” (informational style), “I think it’s better to hold on to fixed values rather than to consider alternative value systems” (normative style), and “I am not really thinking about my future now, it is still a long way off” (diffuse/avoidant style).

**The Dimensions of Identity Development Scale (DIDS;** Luyckx et al., 2008) was used to examine identity exploration and commitment; however, only two of the four dimensions of the measure (commitment making and exploration in breadth) were used in the current study. The DIDS contains 5 items for each dimension, and uses a Likert-scale 5 point response format indicating the extent to which statements describe the participant. An example item for the exploration in breadth scale is “I think actively about the direction I want to take in my life.” An item from the commitment making scale is “I have decided on the direction I want to follow in my life.” Luyckx and colleagues (2008) reported reliability scores for the dimensions included in the measure as .86 for commitment-making, and .86 for exploration in-breadth. The current

study found reliability for the commitment-making scale was .91 and the exploration in-depth was .84.

**The Experiences in Close Relationships Scale** (ECR; Brennan et al., 1998) was used to assess adult romantic attachment using dimensions of avoidance and anxiety. This self-report measure includes 36 items that ask about an individual's beliefs and perceptions concerning romantic relationships; and more specifically, their comfort with closeness and intimacy according to the romantic attachment dimensions of anxiety (18 items) and avoidance (18 items). The ECR uses a five-point Likert scale response format by which participants indicated to what degree statements described them. Items that measured relationship anxiety included statements such as "I worry about being abandoned by romantic partners," "I often wish that my partners' feelings for me were as strong as my feelings for him/her," and "When I'm not involved in a relationship, I feel somewhat anxious and insecure." Items that measured relationship avoidance used statements such as, "Just when my partner starts to get close to me, I find myself pulling away," "I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on romantic partners," and "I try to avoid getting too close to my partner." Brennan and colleagues found good reliability for the subscales of the ECR, reporting .91 for anxiety and .94 for avoidance. Reliability for the present study was found to be .88 for anxiety and .94 for avoidance .

**The Life Role Saliency Scales** (LRSS; Amatea et al., 1986) was used to measure identity role salience. Using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree), participants indicated their agreement with questions such as "My life would be empty if I never had children," "Having a successful marriage is the most important thing in life to me," and "I expect to make as many sacrifices as are necessary in order to advance in my career." The LRSS contains 10 items for each of the subscales of career, marital, and parent roles. Kerpelman and

Schvaneveldt (1999) reported good reliability for the subscales, with .81 for career, .82 for marital, and .85 for parental (with reliability for the current study at .83, .80, and .87 for career, marital and parental role salience, respectively). Furthermore, Amatea et al. (1986) tested the validity of the LRSS using a sample of undergraduate students and determined the dimensions of the measure to be valid.

## ANALYSIS STRATEGY

Prior to examining the study hypotheses, preliminary analyses were conducted. Preliminary analyses included examination of descriptive statistics such as measures of central tendency (mean, median), measures of variability (range, variance, standard deviation) and measures of distribution (skewness, kurtosis). Additionally, the association between the parental and marital role salience variables was explored in order to determine whether these variables were highly correlated. We also examined the relationship between these variables and the identity and attachment variables. It was determined that parental and marital role salience variables were distinct and should remain as separate variables rather than be combined to form a single “family” role salience variable.

Initial steps to address the research questions and hypotheses employed correlation and multiple regression analyses. After examining bivariate associations among the variables to determine direction and strength of relationships, multiple regression analysis was used to determine whether bivariate associations, especially those associated with the hypotheses, remained after controlling for other relevant variables. Relevant variables include demographics such as participants’ relationship status, seriousness and length of current dating relationship, education goals, and maternal education level and work status, as well as other closely related constructs (e.g., identity variables that are correlated with each other and would be anticipated to affect the association between any individual identity variable and an attachment or life role salience variable. For example, does the association between exploration and avoidance remain after commitment is added to the model). For hypotheses addressing moderation (i.e.,  $H_0$ ,  $H_1$ ,  $H_2$ ).

1c, ho. 2b, and research question 4) hierarchal multiple regression analyses with the appropriate interaction terms were employed.

## RESULTS

Overall, the primary goal of the present study was to determine the nature of the associations between identity exploration and commitment, identity style, life role salience, and relationship anxiety and avoidance. Several research questions and hypotheses were posed; other research questions were exploratory. First, preliminary analyses will be reviewed followed by the results associated with the research questions and hypotheses. All tables and figures are placed in order at the end of the results section.

### *Preliminary Analyses*

The descriptive statistics for the data (the mean, standard deviation, skew, and standard error of the skew) are provided in Table 1. With the exception of four variables, all had a skew of less than 1. Relationship length, percent likelihood of marrying current partner, mother's marital status, and parental role salience had skew statistics greater than 1. The parental role salience variable was transformed using the "reflect and inverse" transformation. The transformed variable (skew=-.30, SE=.096) was used in all subsequent analyses.).

On average, participants in the current study scored high in identity exploration and moderate to high in identity commitment. For identity styles, participants' average scores were high for informational style, low to moderate for normative style, and low for diffuse/avoidant style. Average scores for parental and marital role salience were in the high range, and in the moderate range for career role salience. Finally, the majority of participants were in the low range for avoidance, and in the low to moderate range for anxiety.

Bivariate associations between the main study variables were also examined (see Table 2). In general, the bivariate associations were consistent with the study expectations, and a number of interesting cross-domain correlations were found. Higher levels of identity exploration were associated with lower relationship avoidance. Similarly, at high levels of commitment, both relationship avoidance and anxiety were lower. This suggests that the more a person explores her identity choices, the less likely she is to fear closeness within relationships or withdraw from a romantic partner. Furthermore, the more an individual is able to commit to the identity choices available, the more likely she is to feel secure in romantic relationships; experiencing less concern about being abandoned and also less concern about losing herself within the relationship when compared with those who do not make identity commitments.

Diffuse/avoidant identity style was positively related to both relationship avoidance and anxiety, while informational style was negatively associated with avoidance, and normative style was positively associated with both avoidance and anxiety. Thus, the more one uses a diffuse/avoidant or normative identity style, the more anxious and/or avoidant she will be within the romantic relationship context; while the more one uses an informational style, she will experience less avoidance.

For life role salience, parental role salience was negatively correlated with avoidance, while marital role salience was negatively correlated with avoidance and positively correlated with anxiety. It appears those for whom the parental and marital role are highly important, there is less concern about closeness within romantic relationships; and those who have high marital role salience are more likely to desire increased closeness with their partners and fear abandonment.

Additionally, exploration and commitment were both positively related to all three life role salience variables. This suggests that life roles, in general, become more salient as individuals explore their options and make decisions regarding their identities (and vice versa). Further, parental role salience was positively related to informational style, and negatively related to diffuse/avoidant style. Marital role salience was positively related to both informational and normative styles, but was negatively related to diffuse/avoidant style. Finally, career role salience was positively related to informational style and negatively related to diffuse/avoidant style. This final set of correlations indicates that individuals who have a diffuse/avoidant identity style are less likely to place importance on any of the life roles, which fits with the previous set of correlations in that a diffuse/avoidant style is characterized by a lack of both exploration and commitment.

Next, bivariate associations between demographic variables and main study variables were examined (see Table 3). Among the patterns were that individuals who reported a lower likelihood of marrying their current partner also reported higher levels of avoidance and anxiety. The more education an individual expected to receive, the less likely they were to have a diffuse/avoidant identity style. Additionally, diffuse/avoidant style was negatively associated with the likelihood individuals reported of marrying their current partner, and negatively associated with mother's employment.

The intercorrelations among the demographic variables are shown in Table 4. The percent likelihood of marrying current partner was positively correlated with both relationship status and relationship length, and was also positively related to mother's employment status. Additionally, mother's education attainment was positively associated with relationship status.

### *Analyses Addressing the Research Questions and Hypotheses*

A series of regression models was fit. Demographic variables (relationship status, relationship length, percent likelihood of marrying current partner, expected education, mother's education, and mother's employment) were included as covariates in each model. In the first set of equations, anxiety and avoidance served as the outcome variables, and the direct effects of the predictor identity variables (exploration, commitment, identity styles) in one set of equations, and the direct effects of the life role salience variables in another set of equations were tested. Next, the associations between the identity variables (predictors) and the life role salience variables (outcomes) were explored. Finally, the life role salience variables were examined as moderators of the associations between the identity variables (predictors) and avoidance and anxiety (outcomes).

*Identity exploration and commitment will be negatively associated with relationship avoidance and anxiety (Hypotheses 1a).*

Regression models were fit in order to further examine associations between exploration and commitment and avoidance and anxiety (see Table 5). Multivariate analyses indicated that exploration was not related to avoidance or anxiety. In contrast, higher commitment was marginally associated with lower levels of avoidance and significantly associated with lower anxiety. The set of variables explained 26% of the variance in avoidance and 18% of the variance in anxiety. These results indicate partial support for hypothesis 1a.

*Under the condition of high exploration, commitment will be more strongly and negatively associated with avoidance and anxiety than under the condition of low exploration (Hypothesis 1b). Similarly, under the condition of high commitment, exploration will be more*

*strongly and negatively associated with avoidance and anxiety than under the condition of low commitment (Hypothesis 1c).*

Hierarchical multiple regression models were used to examine whether exploration moderated relations between commitment and relationship avoidance and anxiety (Hypothesis 1b) and whether commitment was a moderator in the link between exploration and relationship avoidance and anxiety (Hypothesis 1c). Analyses revealed that the interaction effects were not statistically significant for exploration as a moderator (Table 6a) or for commitment as a moderator (Table 6b). Thus, neither Hypothesis 1b nor 1c was supported.

*Diffuse/avoidant identity style will be positively associated with relationship avoidance and anxiety (Hypothesis 1d).*

As shown in Table 7, multiple regression models were used to examine whether diffuse/avoidant style was related to attachment avoidance and anxiety. The hypothesis was supported at the bivariate level, and the regression analyses indicated that the association remained significant in the multivariate environment, indicating that a higher level of diffuse/avoidant style was significantly related to higher levels of relationship avoidance and anxiety when the demographics and other identity styles were controlled. Therefore, Hypothesis 1d received full support. The set of variables explained 32% of the variance in avoidance and 22% of the variance in anxiety.

*Informational identity style will be negatively associated with both avoidance and anxiety (Hypothesis 1e).*

Regression analysis indicated that there was no relationship between informational style and avoidance or anxiety (see Table 7) when the demographic variables and the other identity styles were accounted for. The association between normative style and avoidance and anxiety

was also explored (although no hypothesis was posed). It was found that normative style was not associated with either avoidance or anxiety when the other two styles and the demographic variables were included in the model.

*Marital role salience will be negatively associated with relationship avoidance. The associations between marital role salience and anxiety could be positive or negative (Hypothesis 2a).*

As seen in Table 8, this hypothesis was supported at the multivariate level when demographics and the other life role salience variables were included in the regression model, with results indicating a negative relationship between marital role salience and avoidance. There was no relationship between marital role salience and anxiety.

*For young women with low marital role salience, there may be a positive relationship between relationship avoidance and career role salience (Hypothesis 2b).*

Multivariate analyses revealed that marital role salience did not moderate the relationship between avoidance and career role salience (Table 9); thus, the data did not support this hypothesis.

*How is identity formation (exploration, commitment, and style) related to life role salience of the parental, marital and career roles (Research Question 3)?*

In the multivariate environment, as shown in Table 10, there was an association only between commitment and career role salience, where higher commitment was associated with higher career role salience. The association of the set of variables with parental role salience was not significant; only relationship length predicted marital role salience. The set of variables that included demographic variables, identity commitment and exploration predicted 15% of the variance in career role salience, 11% of the variance in marital role salience. Further, as shown in

Table 11, higher information style was related to higher career role salience, and higher normative style was linked with higher marital role salience. Lastly, higher diffuse/avoidant style was associated with lower parental, marital, and career role salience. The set of variables that included the three identity styles predicted 18%, 15%, and 8% of the variance in career, marital, and parental roles, respectively.

*Does life role salience moderate associations among identity variables and avoidance and anxiety (Research Question 4)?*

In order to address this final research question, interaction terms were created by multiplying each role salience variable by each identity variable, for a total of 16 interaction terms. There were some moderating effects found in regard to the role salience variables, as seen in Tables 12 -14 and Figures 1 – 3 (because Question 4 was exploratory in nature, tables were created only for the significant findings). As shown in Figure 1, career role salience moderated the association between identity commitment and relationship anxiety ( $\Delta R^2$  change =.02). At high levels of career role salience, there was a negative relationship between commitment and anxiety. However, at low levels of career role salience, there did not appear to be a relationship between commitment and anxiety.

Further, career role salience also moderated the link between diffuse/avoidant identity style and relationship anxiety (Figure 2;  $\Delta R^2$  change =.06), such that at high levels of career role salience, there was a positive relationship between diffuse/avoidant style and anxiety. However, at low levels of career role there did not appear to be a relationship between diffuse/avoidant style and anxiety.

Finally, marital life role salience moderated the relationship between normative identity style and relationship avoidance (Figure 3;  $\Delta R^2$  change =.03). Specifically, when marital role

salience was high, there appeared to be a modest negative relationship between normative style and avoidance. In contrast, when marital role salience was low, the relationship between normative style and avoidance appeared positive.

Table 1.  
*Descriptive Statistics (Means, Standard Deviations, Skewness, Standard Error of Skewness)*

Variable	Mean	SD	Skew	SE Skew
Relationship status	.63	.48	-.52	.10
Relationship length (months)	27.22	15.95	1.01	.18
% Likelihood marry partner	71.88	28.20	-1.07	.12
Expected highest level of education	.58	.49	-.33	.10
Mother's employment status	1.71	1.03	-.43	.10
Mother's education attainment	1.32	.85	-.67	.10
Exploration in breadth	4.00	.64	-.26	.10
Commitment making	3.69	.75	-.46	.10
Informational style	4.11	.61	-.67	.10
Normative style	2.78	.67	.05	.10
Diffuse/Avoidant style	2.19	.82	.58	.10
LRS Parental	4.39	.68	-1.85	.10
LRS Marital	4.14	.64	-.81	.10
LRS Career	3.65	.65	-.66	.10
Avoidance	2.17	.69	.38	.10
Anxiety	2.80	.63	.02	.10

*Note:* For all identity variables, life role salience variables, and avoidance and anxiety, the range was 1 – 5.

Table 2.  
*Bivariate Correlations among Primary Study Variables*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. LRS Parental <sup>1</sup>	1									
2. LRS Marital	.51***	1								
3. LRS Career	-.05	-.04	1							
4. Info Style	.16***	.23***	.30***	1						
5. Norm Style	.04	.14***	-.05	-.04	1					
6. Dif/Avd Style	-.28***	-.20***	-.16***	-.28***	.25***	1				
7. Exploration	.20***	.30***	.24***	.33***	.09*	-.26***	1			
8. Commitment	.23***	.24***	.26***	.20***	.08*	-.41***	.55***	1		
9. Avoidance	-.31***	-.33***	.01	-.24***	.09*	.36***	-.18***	-.23***	1	
10. Anxiety	-.04	.12**	.06	.02	.16***	.32***	.04	-.13**	.31***	1

LRS = Life Role Salience

<sup>1</sup>Transformed variable

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 3.  
*Bivariate Correlations with Demographic Variables*

Variable	Relationship status	Relationship Length	% Likelihood marry partner	Expected education	Mother's education	Mother's employment
LRS Marital	.10*	.23**	.11*	-.03	-.01	.01
LRS Parental <sup>1</sup>	.02	.10	.09	.00	-.06	.03
LRS Career	.06	-.11	-.07**	.19**	-.01	.04
Info style	.04	.09	.07	.04	-.01	-.01
Norm style	-.00	-.03	-.02	-.08	-.07	-.07
Dif/Avd style	-.03	-.09	-.21***	-.15**	.03	-.11**
Exploration	-.01	-.02	.08	.09*	.01	.04
Commitment	.03	.00	.08	.11**	-.01	.10*
Avoidance	-.31**	-.11	-.42***	.01	.03	-.08*
Anxiety	-.09*	.06	-.20***	-.07	-.08*	-.01

LRS = Life Role Salience

<sup>1</sup>Transformed variable.

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 4.  
*Bivariate Correlations among Demographic Variables*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Relationship status	1					
2. Relationship length (in months)	.13	1				
3. % Likelihood marry partner	.10*	.25**	1			
4. Expected highest level of education	-.01	.10	-.06	1		
5. Mother's education attainment	-.11**	-.03	.08	.04	1	
6. Mother's employment status	.05	.12	.12*	.05	-.01	1

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 5.

*Regression Analysis for Demographic Variables, Exploration, and Commitment Predicting Relationship Avoidance and Anxiety*

Variable	Avoidance			Anxiety		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$
Relationship status	-1.06	.51	-.16*	-.71	.63	-.09
Relationship length	.00	.00	-.04	.00	.00	.02
% Likelihood marry partner	-.01	.00	-.31***	-.01	.00	-.16*
Expected education	-.10	.08	-.09	-.26	.10	-.20*
Mother's education	-.06	.04	-.12	-.06	.05	-.11
Mother's employment	.04	.05	.06	.14	.06	.17*
Commitment making	-.13	.07	-.17 <sup>1</sup>	-.18	.08	-.19*
Exploration in breadth	-.11	.08	-.12	-.01	.09	-.01
R <sup>2</sup>	.26***			.18***		
<i>F</i> change in R <sup>2</sup>	6.23***			4.02***		

<sup>1</sup> = .05

\* $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 6a.

*Identity Exploration Moderating the Association between Identity Commitment and Avoidance and Anxiety (Model 1)*

Variable	Avoidance			Anxiety		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$
Relationship status	-1.06	.51	-.16*	-.71	.63	-.09
Relationship length	-.00	.00	-.04	.00	.00	.03
% Likelihood marry partner	-.01	.00	-.31***	-.01	.00	-.16*
Expected education	-.10	.08	-.09	-.26	.10	-.20*
Mother's education	-.06	.04	-.12	-.06	.05	-.10
Mother's employment	.04	.05	.06	.14	.06	.17*
Exploration in Breadth	-.11	.08	.07	-.01	.09	-.01
Commitment Making	-.13	.07	-.17	-.18	.08	-.19
R <sup>2</sup>	.21			.14		
<i>F</i> change in R <sup>2</sup>	6.23			4.02		

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

Table 6b.

*Identity Exploration Moderating the Association between Identity Commitment and Avoidance and Anxiety (Model 2)*

Variable	Avoidance			Anxiety		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$
Relationship status	-.97	.52	-.14	-.88	.64	-.11
Relationship length	-.00	.00	-.04	.00	.00	.02
% Likelihood marry partner	-.01	.00	-.31***	-.01	.00	-.16*
Expected education	-.49	.46	-.54	-.25	.10	-.19*
Mother's education	-.06	.04	-.12	-.06	.05	-.10
Mother's employment	.04	.05	.06	.14	.06	.17*
Exploration in Breadth	-.49	.46	-.54	.77	.57	.73
Commitment Making	-.49	.43	.26	.55	.53	.59
Commitment x Exploration	.09	.11	.75	-.18	.13	-1.32
R <sup>2</sup>	.21			.19		
<i>F</i> change in R <sup>2</sup>	.68			1.93		

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

Table 7.

*Regression Analysis for Demographic Variables and Identity Style Predicting Relationship Avoidance and Anxiety*

Variable	Avoidance			Anxiety		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$
Relationship status	-1.52	.49	-.22**	-1.08	.61	-.13
Relationship length	.00	.00	-.01	.00	.00	.05
% Likelihood marry partner	-.01	.00	-.27***	.00	.00	-.13
Expected education	-.07	.08	-.06	-.21	.10	-.16*
Mother's education	-.06	.03	-.12	-.07	.04	-.13
Mother's employment	.04	.05	.06	.16	.06	.20**
Information style	-.15	.08	-.13	.01	.10	.01
Normative style	.02	.06	.03	.07	.08	.07
Dif/Avd style	.24	.05	.34***	.22	.07	.26**
$R^2$	.32***			.22***		
<i>F</i> change in $R^2$	7.78***			4.54***		

\* $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 8.

*Regression Analysis for Demographic Variables and Life Role Salience Variables Predicting Relationship Avoidance and Anxiety*

Variable	Avoidance			Anxiety		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>
Relationship status	-1.25	.50	-.18*	-1.04	.63	-.13
Relationship length	.00	.00	.05	.00	.00	.04
% Likelihood marry partner	-.01	.00	-.36***	-.01	.00	-.19*
Expected education	-.14	.08	-.12	-.32	.10	-.25**
Mother's education	-.08	.04	-.15*	-.08	.05	-.13
Mother's employment	.03	.05	.04	.16	.06	.20*
LRS Marital	-.20	.08	-.21**	.14	.10	.12
LRS Career	.02	.06	.03	.11	.08	.12
LRS Parental <sup>1</sup>	-.39	.21	-.14	-.18	.27	-.05
R <sup>2</sup>	.28**			.17**		
<i>F</i> change in R <sup>2</sup>	6.15**			3.26**		

LRS=Life Role Salience

<sup>1</sup>Transformed variable

\* $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 9.

*Marital Role Salience Moderating the Association between Career Role Salience and Relationship Avoidance*

Variable	Model 1			Model 2		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$
Relationship status	-1.22	.50	-.18*	-1.29	.51	-.19*
Relationship length	.00	.00	.04	.00	.00	.04
% Likelihood marry partner	-.01	.00	-.36***	-.01	.00	-.36***
Expected education	-.13	.08	-.12	-.14	.08	-.13*
Mother's education	-.07	.04	-.15	-.08	.04	-.15*
Mother's employment	.03	.05	.05	.03	.05	.05
LRS Marital	-.25	.07	-.25**	-.72	.42	-.74
LRS Career	.03	.06	.04	-.50	.47	-.61
LRSM x LRSC				-.12	.11	.76
R <sup>2</sup>	.22***			.22***		
<i>F</i> change in R <sup>2</sup>	6.40***			5.85***		

LRSM = LRS Marital

LRSC = LRS Career

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

Table 10.  
*Regression Analysis for Demographic Variables, Commitment, and Exploration Predicting Role Salience*

Variable	LRS Career			LRS Marital			LRS Parental <sup>1</sup>		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$
Relationship status	-.92	.67	-.11	.37	.58	.05	-.04	.21	-.02
Relationship length	-.00	.00	-.08	.01	.00	.23**	.00	.00	.16
% Likelihood marry partner	-.00	.00	-.15	.00	.00	-.06	.00	.00	-.06
Expected education	.28	.11	.21**	.00	.09	.00	-.02	.03	-.06
Mother's education	-.04	.05	-.06	-.02	.04	-.04	-.01	.02	-.05
Mother's employment	-.04	.06	-.04	-.08	.06	-.12	-.03	.02	-.13
Commitment making	.25	.09	.26**	.12	.08	.14	.01	.03	.03
Exploration in breadth	.00	.10	.00	.10	.09	.11	.03	.03	.09
R <sup>2</sup>	.15**			.11*			.05		
<i>F</i> change in R <sup>2</sup>	3.16**			2.34*			.95		

<sup>1</sup>Transformed variable  
 \* $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 11.  
*Regression Analysis for Demographic Variables and Identity Style Predicting Role Salience*

Variable	LRS Career			LRS Marital			LRS Parental <sup>1</sup>		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$
Relationship status	-.41	.65	-.05	.45	.57	.06	-.04	.21	-.01
Relationship length	.00	.00	-.10	.01	.00	.22**	.00	.00	.16
% Likelihood marry partner	.00	.00	-.15	.00	.00	-.06	.00	.00	-.10
Expected education	.26	.11	.19*	.03	.09	.03	-.02	.03	-.04
Mother's education	-.01	.05	-.02	-.01	.04	-.02	-.01	.02	-.05
Mother's employment	-.04	.07	-.05	-.06	.06	-.09	-.02	.02	-.09
Information style	.27	.10	.21**	.05	.09	.05	.03	.03	.01
Normative style	.07	.08	.07	.21	.07	.24**	.04	.03	.12
Dif/Avd style	-.17	.07	-.20*	-.16	.06	-.21*	-.06	.02	-.23**
R <sup>2</sup>	.18**			.15**			.08		
<i>F</i> change in R <sup>2</sup>	3.52**			2.80**			1.50		

LRS=Life Role Salience

<sup>1</sup>Transformed variable

\* $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 12.  
*Career Role Salience Moderating the Association between Identity Commitment and Relationship Anxiety*

Variable	Model 1			Model 2		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$
Relationship status	-.61	.62	-.08	-.39	.63	-.05
Relationship length	.00	.00	.01	-.00	.00	-.03
% Likelihood marry partner	-.00	.00	-.12	-.00	.00	-.13
Expected education	-.32	.10	-.24**	-.30	.10	-.23**
Mother's education	-.05	.04	-.09	-.05	.04	-.08
Mother's employment	.16	.06	.19*	.17	.06	.21*
LRS Marital	.22	.10	.19*	.23	.10	.20*
LRS Career	.20	.08	.20*	1.02	.44	1.06*
LRS Parental	-.14	.26	-.04	-.14	.26	-.04
Commitment Making	-.25	.09	-.27**	.51	.40	.55
Exploration in Breadth	-.02	.09	-.02	.00	.09	.00
LRSC x Commitment				-.21	.11	-1.34 <sup>1</sup>
R <sup>2</sup>	.17***			.19***		
F change in R <sup>2</sup>	3.92***			3.97***		

<sup>1</sup> = .05 LRSC = LRS Career \**p* < .05, \*\**p* < .01, \*\*\**p* < .001

Table 13.

*Career Role Salience Moderating the Association between Diffuse/avoidant Identity Style and Relationship Anxiety*

Variable	Model 1			Model 2		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$
Relationship status	-1.08	.60	-.14	-1.07	.58	-.13
Relationship length	.00	.00	.03	.00	.00	.00
% Likelihood marry partner	-.00	.00	-.08	-.00	.00	-.09
Expected education	-.27	.10	-.20**	-.24	.10	-.18*
Mother's education	-.06	.04	-.11	-.08	.04	-.13
Mother's employment	.19	.06	.23**	.21	.06	.25**
LRS Marital	.20	.09	.18*	.21	.09	.18*
LRS Career	.22	.08	.23**	-.44	.21	-.46*
LRS Parental	.02	.26	.01	.01	.25	.00
Informational Style	-.06	.10	-.05	-.03	.09	-.03
Normative Style	.02	.08	.02	.01	.08	.01
Dif/Avd Style	.30	.07	.35***	-.83	.33	-.97*
LRSC x Dif/Avd Style				.31	.09	1.36**
R <sup>2</sup>	.21***			.27***		
<i>F</i> change in R <sup>2</sup>	4.41***			5.31***		
LRSC = LRS Career	* <i>p</i> < .05, ** <i>p</i> < .01, *** <i>p</i> < .001					

Table 14.

*Marital Role Salience Moderating the Association between Normative Identity Style and Relationship Avoidance*

Variable	Model 1			Model 2		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$
Relationship status	-1.22	.50	-.18*	-1.66	.47	-.24**
Relationship length	.00	.00	.04	.00	.00	.06
% Likelihood marry partner	-.01	.00	-.36***	-.01	.00	-.29***
Expected education	-.13	.08	-.12	-.08	.08	-.07
Mother's education	-.07	.04	-.15	-.06	.03	-.13
Mother's employment	.04	.05	.06*	.03	.05	.05
LRS Marital	-.25	.07	-.25**	.57	.28	.59*
LRS Career	.03	.06	.04	.13	.06	.15*
LRS Parental	-.23	.20	-.08	-.31	.20	-.11
Informational Style	-.16	.08	-.15*	-.18	.07	-.17*
Normative Style	.05	.06	.06	1.13	.41	1.34**
Dif/Avd Style	.22	.06	.30***	.20	.06	.28***
LRSM x Normative Style				-.27	.10	-1.60**
R <sup>2</sup>	.33***			.36***		
<i>F</i> change in R <sup>2</sup>	7.39***			7.66***		

LRSM = LRS Marital \**p* < .05, \*\**p* < .01, \*\*\**p* < .001

Figure 1.  
*Career Role Salience as a Moderator of Commitment and Anxiety*

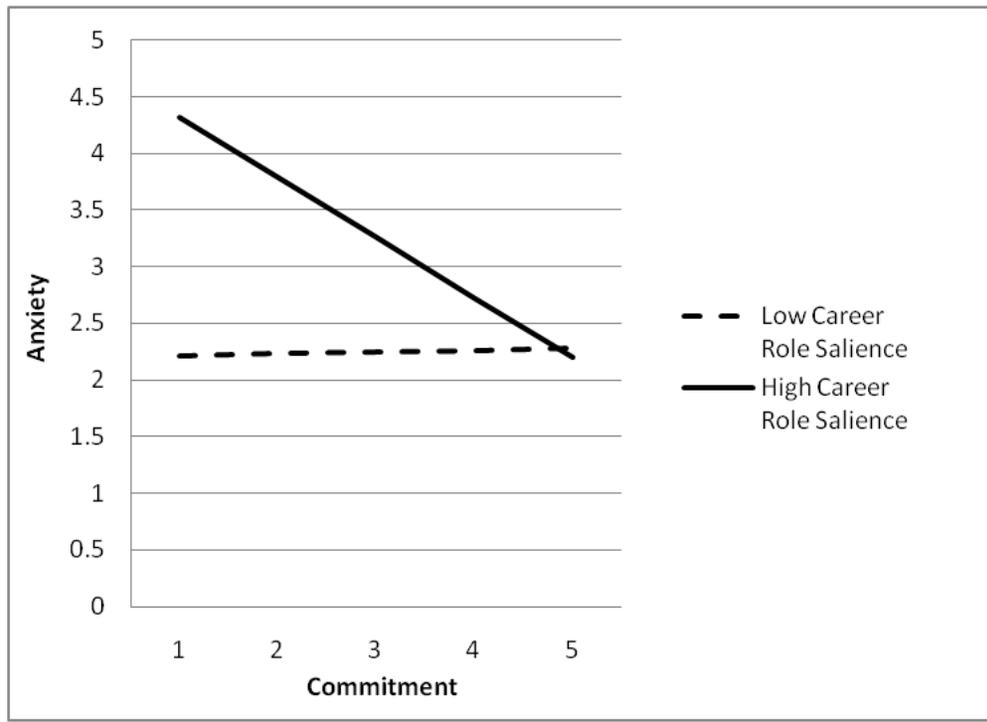


Figure 2.  
*Career Role Salience as a Moderator of Diffuse/avoidant Style and Anxiety*

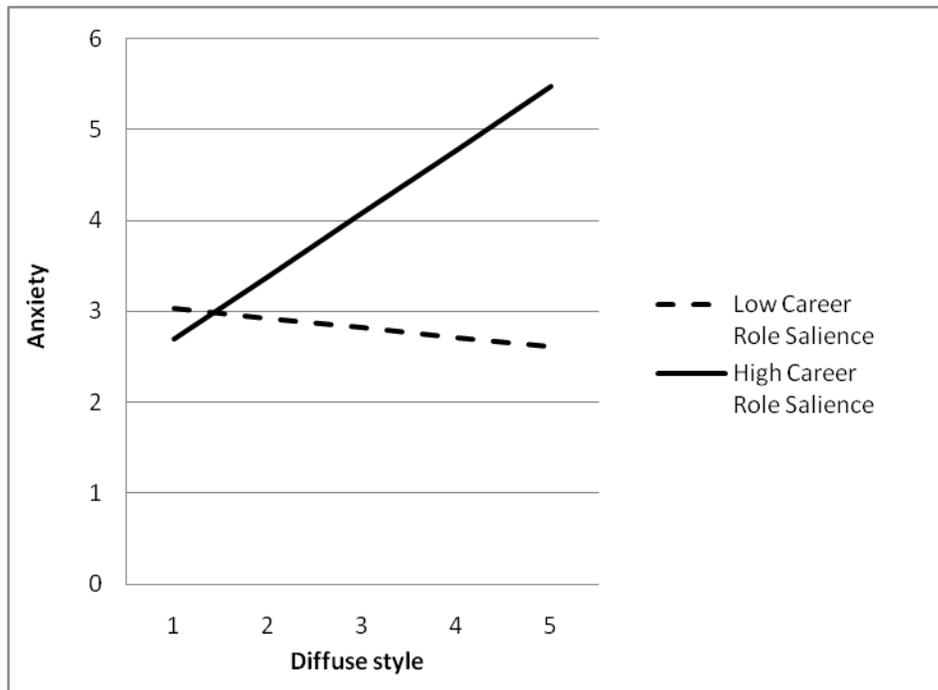
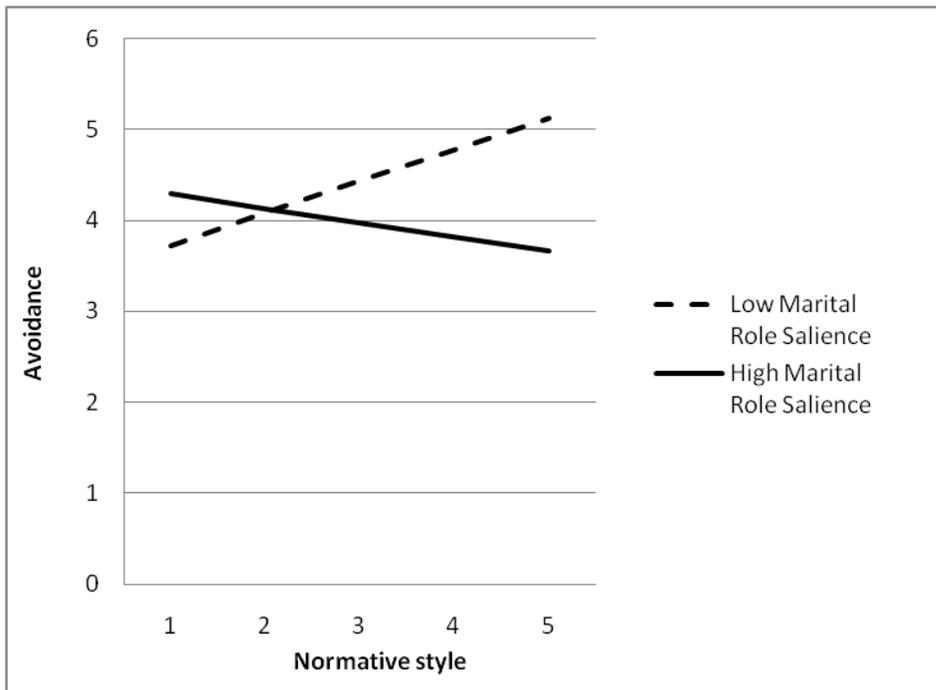


Figure 3.  
*Marital Role Salience as a Moderator of Normative Style and Avoidance*



## DISCUSSION

The primary objective of the current study was to examine the associations among identity development, life role salience, and romantic relationship attachment (as measured by the dimensions of anxiety and avoidance) in order to better understand how these processes may be connected. Interestingly, a common thread among the findings was that diffuse/avoidant identity style was consistently positively associated with avoidance and anxiety. Indeed, a diffuse/avoidant style appears to be linked with more negative outcomes in regard to romantic relationships, which is further exacerbated by the already established negative identity outcomes for those with this particular style (Adams et. al, 2001). This discovery makes an important contribution to the existing literature by establishing that individuals who have a diffuse/avoidant style face unique challenges in multiple domains, compared to those using other identity styles.

Another important finding was that overall, avoidance and anxiety were negatively predicted by identity commitment, indicating that commitment appears to matter more than exploration as a predictor of relationship attachment. Additionally, marital role salience negatively predicted avoidance. Among the general patterns regarding life role salience, information identity style and commitment positively predicted career role salience, whereas normative style positively predicted marital role salience, and diffuse/avoidant style negatively predicted role salience of all three roles. When examining the life role salience variables as potential moderators of identity and attachment, career role salience moderated the association between commitment and anxiety, and between diffuse/avoidant style and anxiety. In addition,

marital life role salience moderated the relationship between normative style and avoidance. The study findings are discussed in greater detail in the sections that follow.

### *Attachment and Identity*

There have been few existing studies examining the relationship between attachment and identity to date. In terms of theoretical frameworks for connecting the realms of attachment and identity, the Bowlby/Ainsworth theory of attachment (Ainsworth, 1978; Bowlby, 1969/1982, 1973, 1990) proposes the idea that a secure attachment (characterized by low levels of avoidance and anxiety) promotes the ability to freely explore one's environment. Exploration is also a critical component of the identity formation process, based on the Eriksonian perspective (Erikson, 1959; 1980).

The current study built upon this theory to hypothesize (1a) that identity exploration and commitment would be negatively associated with both relationship avoidance and anxiety, based on the idea that those who are able to engage in exploration and make commitments in identity domains may also be better able to engage in and commit to romantic relationships (as evidenced by lower anxiety and avoidance). While initial bivariate correlations supported this hypothesis, not all the associations remained in the multivariate environment, with no significant relationship between exploration and avoidance or anxiety. However, commitment was negatively and significantly related to anxiety, and was marginally ( $p = .05$ ) negatively related to avoidance. It may be that a greater sense of knowing oneself, which could be measured in terms of commitments made, is related to less anxiety and avoidance. This supports Erikson's (1969/1980) theory that some degree of identity resolution is necessary for intimacy within a romantic relationship context. In regard to the lack of association found between exploration and

anxiety and avoidance, it may be the case that exploration does not contribute unique variance beyond that shared with commitment.

It was also hypothesized (1b, 1c) that exploration and commitment might moderate the associations between avoidance and anxiety. We hypothesized this based on theory and research suggesting that securely attached individuals would have a greater capacity for exploration and would also be better equipped to make commitments (Arseth et al., 2009; Marcia, 1988; Pittman et al., 2011; Sroufe, 1989; Waters & Cummings, 2000). However, results indicated no such moderating effects. It appears that identity commitment matters most (compared to identity exploration) for understanding variability in romantic relationship avoidance and anxiety, and the strength of association is not qualified by amount of identity exploration.

It was further hypothesized (1d) that a diffuse/avoidant identity style would be positively related to relationship avoidance and anxiety, based on established associations between diffuse status and diffuse/avoidant style (Berman, Schwartz, Kurtines, & Berman, 2001; Berzonsky & Ferrari, 1996; Berzonsky & Kuk, 2000). As expected, results indicated full support for this hypothesis, adding to what is known about linkages between identity and attachment. Thus it can be concluded that individuals who avoid or procrastinate identity decisions may also utilize similar strategies in regard to romantic relationships. Further, avoidance can be a reaction to feelings of anxiety in regard to identity decisions, and this anxiety may also manifest itself within the romantic relationship domain. There is some evidence that those who have a diffuse/avoidant identity status may be concerned about fitting in with others and how others perceive them (Nurmi et. al, 1997), and it may be the case that this concern relates to feelings of anxiety regarding their partners' feelings for them.

Informational identity style was hypothesized (1e) to be negatively associated with both avoidance and anxiety. Although supported at the bivariate level, multiple regression analysis did not indicate a relationship between these variables. The hypothesis was made primarily based on existing theory, as no studies to date had examined these associations. It appears that there is no unique variance explained in romantic relationship avoidance or anxiety by informational identity style after controlling for demographic variables and the other identity styles.

Based on the lack of consistent findings in regard to the associations between normative style and constructs related to avoidance and anxiety, exploratory analyses were conducted with no hypothesis posed. Results indicated no relationship between these variables, suggesting that normative style use (as well as informational style use) may not be as important as the use of a diffuse/avoidant style in understanding associations between identity and romantic attachment.

Overall, in regard to the associations between attachment and identity examined in the current study, there were fewer relationships established between the two domains than was predicted. However, relationship avoidance and anxiety were found to be linked with both identity commitment and with diffuse identity style. Thus, the findings suggest that the more one uses a diffuse/avoidant identity style and the lower one's identity commitment, the more likely one will experience avoidance and/or anxiety in one's romantic relationships. However, the actual direction of association between identity processes and romantic attachment processes remains a question.

#### *Attachment and Life Role Salience*

Due to the lack of research linking the areas of attachment and life role salience, the questions and hypotheses posed in the current study in regard to these associations were exploratory in nature and tentative, based on theory and studies involving similar constructs.

Overall, the present study sought to investigate whether there was a relationship between relationship avoidance and anxiety and the life role salience domains (i.e., marital, parental, and career) exists, and the nature of any such relationship (Question 2).

Interestingly, there were no significant findings between avoidance and anxiety and the life role salience domains except for a negative relationship between marital role salience and avoidance, as was predicted in Hypothesis 2a. This hypothesis was made based on existing theory and literature which clearly indicates that individuals who experience low relationship avoidance have a much stronger tendency towards being in committed relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Holland & Roisman, 2010; Seiffge-Krenke, 2003). Although individuals who experience high levels of relationship avoidance may not be less likely to marry, the present study highlights the fact that these individuals may not place as much importance on the marital role as those who have low relationship avoidance.

It was also hypothesized (2a) that there would be an association between marital role salience and relationship anxiety (with no particular direction predicted); however there was no relationship found. This hypothesis was made based on the Bowlby/Ainsworth attachment theory, which indicates that individuals who have a high degree of relationship anxiety tend to be more preoccupied with their relationships, and are more likely to pursue relationships and to seek a greater degree of commitment (such as marriage) than those who are secure. It was hypothesized accordingly that these individuals would place a great degree of importance on the marital role. The fact that the results of the current investigation did not support this hypothesis may be a reflection on the unmarried status and the youth and gender of the participants. In early adulthood, it is common to view marriage as salient, especially among conservative women who endorse traditional gender roles, regardless of attachment style (Millman, 1971). That is, those

who scored high in anxiety may have indeed been preoccupied with their romantic relationships, but given the timing in the participants' lives when data were collected (i.e., early twenties), it was not possible to distinguish those who were secure versus insecure based on their marital role salience. As Table 1 shows, the majority of participants (72%) did anticipate marrying their current partner. Future studies using a similar sample might more directly examine the extent to which individuals are preoccupied with their romantic relationships and associations among preoccupation, romantic relationship attachment and marital role salience.

Additionally, the tentative hypothesis (2b) that there may be a positive relationship between avoidance and career role salience among young women with low marital role salience was not supported. It was expected that when relationship avoidance was high, marital role salience would be low, and therefore may predict higher career role salience. The fact that the current study did not support this hypothesis may be attributed to the fact that participants were still in school and had not yet actually launched their careers. One study that the hypothesis was drawn from (Hazan & Shaver, 1990) used a sample of individuals who were already employed in full-time work. Had data been collected among a sample of older women or a longitudinal study been conducted, results may have been different.

In summary, the only clear link established between the relationship dimensions of avoidance and anxiety and the domains of life role salience is that high marital role salience is associated with low relationship avoidance, adding further support to existing literature and theory. The lack of association for parental salience and attachment variables could be due to the high correlation between marital and parental role salience, or the lack of variability within the sample on parental role salience (with the vast majority of women scoring high).

### *Identity and Life Role Saliency*

In regard to the linkages between identity formation and life role saliency, the present study provides an important contribution to our current understanding of these processes, as there has been no previous empirical work or theory to date directly examining the relationship between these realms. Research Question 3, which was exploratory in nature, revealed several significant findings in regard to identity formation (exploration, commitment, and style) and marital, parental, and career role saliency.

First, commitment was positively associated with career role saliency. This finding is not unexpected, as career trajectories often require a commitment to a particular field of study for an extended period of time (particularly for those who plan to go on to graduate school or other advanced training in their chosen field). Secondly, information style was also positively related to career role saliency. Again, this finding is not surprising considering that information style is linked with the ability to explore and consider a variety of possibilities and alternatives, ultimately leading to the ability to make firm commitments. Importantly, career is a main domain of exploration; particularly for individuals attending college, as was the case in the current sample. Information style was also positively associated with parental role saliency, which is not surprising given the positive correlation between parental role saliency and exploration. It may be that individuals who have participated in a period of self and environmental exploration feel better prepared for and are better equipped to focus on the role of parenthood. In support of this explanation, the longitudinal study by Johnstone and Lee (2009) found that in the final wave of data collection (when women in the sample were ages 25-30) the “adaptive” women (those aspiring to a combination of motherhood and some form of paid work outside of the home) were actually more likely to have children than the “home-centered” or “work centered” women,

possibly having done more exploration in breadth due to their openness to multiple identity roles.

Thirdly, normative style was positively linked with marital role salience. Because normative style is characterized by a willingness to conform to the values and norms of those in one's immediate social network (particularly parents and other trusted elders), this finding would be expected as traditional societal norms have emphasized the importance of marriage, especially for women during their early adulthood years.

Finally, diffuse/avoidant style was negatively associated with parental, marital, and career role salience. This finding seems to indicate that a diffuse/avoidant identity style is associated with a general lack of direction and/or sense of purpose, and as previously stated, was also linked with negative emotions in terms of higher relationship avoidance and anxiety. Thus, it seems increasingly apparent that this particular identity style is maladaptive for the individual, especially once they reach adulthood, and is associated with many negative outcomes. Subsequent research aimed at further exploring and understanding the negative outcomes associated with a diffuse/avoidant identity style seems appropriate; additionally, intervention work in regard to assisting individuals who tend towards a diffuse/avoidant identity style appears to be an important possible future direction.

In summary, it is clear from the findings of the present study that identity formation and the determination of life role salience are interrelated processes. Further investigation into the nature of the relationship between these processes is warranted.

#### *Life Role Salience as a Moderator*

As a final research question (Q4), the current investigation sought to explore life role salience as a possible moderator of identity and attachment dimensions. Again, no previous literature or theory had addressed the possible connections between the domains of life role

saliency and the formation of identity, although Question 3 of the present study established a relationship between the two realms. Indeed, results of the moderation analyses indicated three main moderating effects. First, at high levels of career role saliency, there was a negative relationship between commitment and anxiety. However, at low levels of career role saliency, there did not appear to be a relationship between commitment and anxiety. Thus, for those individuals that place high importance on career, anxiety is highest when identity commitment is lower. It may be the case that as these individuals place a high value on their career role, their anxiety decreases as they complete the process of taking the necessary steps toward forming a firm sense of identity and experience themselves accomplishing benchmarks for establishing their careers.

Secondly, career role saliency also moderated the link between diffuse/avoidant identity style and relationship anxiety, such that at high levels of career role saliency, there was a positive relationship between diffuse/avoidant style and anxiety. However, at low levels of career role there did not appear to be a significant relationship between diffuse/avoidant style and anxiety. This moderating relationship fits with the previous finding, in that diffuse/avoidant style is characterized by a lack of both exploration and commitment, thus it would be expected that for individuals for whom career saliency is high, anxiety would be the highest in the absence of commitment, and especially high when exploration is also yet to occur. These individuals may have a vague idea of what their career identity would be, but have yet to take the important steps that must precede solid identity formation. Interestingly, diffuse/avoidant identity style again proves to be associated with the negative outcome of anxiety, further indicating the detrimental effects of this identity style.

Thirdly, when marital role salience was high, there was a modest negative relationship between normative style and avoidance. In contrast, when marital role salience was low, the relationship between normative style and avoidance was positive. Again, as previously established, a normative style is characterized by adherence to the established norms and values of trusted others, with marriage traditionally emphasized as a particularly salient life goal. Therefore, it would be expected that the more salient the marital role is, the less likely relationship avoidance would be associated with a normative style. In contrast, for those who place less salience on the marital role, relationship avoidance may be higher and a normative style less likely.

Overall, the present study provides compelling evidence that the processes of identity formation may in fact be interrelated with the determination of life role salience and the romantic relationship domains of avoidance and anxiety, and that the three realms may in fact be mutually influential. Future research and theory should continue to expand on these findings in order to more specifically and narrowly examine these linkages in order to better understand how important processes occurring during the young adulthood period are related.

#### *Limitations and Future Directions*

The current investigation had several limitations. One limitation was that the sample consisted of women only who were enrolled in a culturally conservative university. Additionally, participants' mean scores for parental role salience were high, causing a lack of variability in regard to that variable. This may be attributed to the fact that participants were enrolled in one or more classes in the department of Human Development and Family Studies, and may have had particularly high interest in the areas of marriage and parenthood in comparison to their peers. Furthermore, the study used a secondary dataset and consequently was limited in the variables

that were available to test and the measures used to test them. Finally, because the data collected for the study were cross-sectional we are unable to evaluate change and examine the order of effects. The analyses used for data collected at one time point do not allow for conclusions to be drawn regarding causality.

Despite its limitations, the present study makes a compelling case for the linkages between identity formation, romantic relationship attachment, and life role salience among young adult women and produces some important questions to direct future research. For example, future studies might use a sample of both men and women in order to compare the differences/similarities of women and men in the intersection of the identity, life role, and attachment, and processes. Additionally, future research should test the questions and hypotheses posed in the current study using a more diverse sample in terms of education, SES, geographic location, and ethnicity. Subsequent studies might also utilize different measures in order to better distinguish individuals with high marital role salience from those who are overly preoccupied about their romantic relationships.

Further, future research using longitudinal data, collecting data at different time points beginning in young adulthood into later stages of life (when it is likely participants will have married, had children, and/or launched their careers) would allow an understanding of the order of effects. More specifically, longitudinal data may yield more information as to how predictive role salience in young adulthood is to later outcomes in life, such as whether those who have low marital role salience are less likely to marry than those with high marital role salience; and further, how that may be linked with identity style and relationship avoidance and anxiety. For example, how might later life outcomes (in terms of marital status, parenthood, career, etc.) for someone with a diffuse/avoidant identity style, high relationship avoidance, and high marital role

saliency differ from individuals with an informational style, low relationship avoidance, and high career saliency? Additionally, future studies might examine how relationship avoidance and anxiety moderate the associations between identity style and role saliency over time.

Finally, a particularly important future direction for related research would be to determine how intervention (either through education or psychotherapy) might affect the processes of identity development, life role saliency, and relationship attachment. More specifically, how might an intervention addressing identity development impact attachment processes, and vice versa? It is clear from the present study that a diffuse/avoidant identity style is associated with potentially maladaptive outcomes in early adulthood such as romantic relationship avoidance and anxiety, as well as low saliency for central adult roles. Interventions specifically targeted at helping to reduce the use of a diffuse/avoidant identity style may be beneficial for young adult development and could potentially have a significant impact. It is hoped that the findings from the current investigation will assist future research and continue to make a meaningful contribution to the research community.

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APPENDIX

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

**Demographic Items**

**Please indicate your age**

- <19    19    20    21    22    23    24    25    >25

**Please indicate your race/ethnicity.**

- Black/African American  
 White/Caucasian  
 Hispanic/Latino  
 Asian American  
 Native American  
 Biracial  
 Other

Biracial or Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**Please indicate your gender.**

- Male    Female

**Please indicate your relationship status.**

- Not dating anyone at this time  
 Casually dating one or more people  
 Seriously/exclusively dating one person  
 Engaged  
 Married  
 Other

**If you are in a romantic relationship, how long have you been involved?**

Years \_\_\_\_\_

Months \_\_\_\_\_

**If you are in a dating relationship, what is the likelihood that you will marry your partner? Please indicate a number between 0 and 100, where 0 = completely sure it will not happen, and 100 = completely sure it will happen.**

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**How much education do you plan to have by the time your education is complete?**

- 2 year college degree
- 4 year college degree
- Master's degree
- Ph.D., M.D., J.D.
- Other

**What is the highest level of education that your mother (mother-figure) completed?**

- Don't know
- High school
- High school diploma or GED
- 2 year college degree
- 4 year college degree
- Master's degree
- Ph.D., M.D., J.D.
- Other
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**What is your mother's (mother-figure's) marital status?**

- Don't know
- Married to my father (first marriage)
- Married to my father (second or later marriage)
- Single, never married
- Living with my father but not married
- Separated
- Divorced
- Remarried (to someone other than my father)
- Other

**What is your mother's (mother-figure's) employment status?**

- Don't know
- Unemployed (not looking for work)
- Unemployed (looking for work)
- Employed part-time
- Employed full-time
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**Life Role Saliency Scales  
(LRSS; Amatea, Cross, Clark, & Bobby, 1986)**

*Career Role Saliency Items*

**Please think about your (future) career (what you do or will do in your work life) as you answer the following questions. Indicate how much you agree with each statement.**

	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Disagree nor agree	Somewhat Agree	Agree
Having a career that is interesting and exciting to me is my most important life goal.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I expect my career to give me more real satisfaction than anything else I do.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Building a name and reputation for myself through a career is NOT one of my life goals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is important to me that I have a career in which I can achieve something of importance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is important to me to feel successful in my career.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I want to work, but I do NOT want to have a demanding career.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I expect to make as many sacrifices as are necessary in order to advance in my career.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I value being involved in a career and expect to devote the time and effort needed to develop it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I expect to devote a significant amount of my time to building my career and developing the skills necessary to advance in my career.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I expect to devote whatever time and energy it takes to move up in my job/career field.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*Parental Role Salience Items*

**Now think about your (future) role as a parent as you respond to each item. Please indicate how much you agree with each statement.**

	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Disagree nor agree	Somewhat Agree	Agree
Although parenthood requires many sacrifices, the love and enjoyment of children of one's own are worth it all.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I chose not to have children, I would regret it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is important to me to feel I will be (am) an effective parent.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The whole idea of having children and raising them is not attractive to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My life would be empty if I never had children.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is important to me to have some time for myself and my own development rather than have children and be responsible for their care.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I expect to devote a significant amount of my time and energy to the rearing of children of my own.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I expect to be very involved in the day-to-day matters of rearing children of my own.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Becoming involved in the day-to-day details of rearing children involves costs in other areas of my life which I am unwilling to make.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do not expect to be very involved in childrearing.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*Marital Role Salience Items*

**Please think about your (future) marriage as you respond to the following items. Please indicate how much you agree with each statement.**

	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Disagree nor agree	Somewhat Agree	Agree
My life would seem empty if I never married.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having a successful marriage is the most important thing in life to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I expect marriage to give me more real personal satisfaction than anything else in which I am involved.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being married to a person I love is more important to me than anything else.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I expect the major satisfactions in my life to come from my marriage relationship.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I expect to commit whatever time is necessary to making my marriage partner feel loved, supported, and cared for.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Devoting a significant amount of my time to being with or doing things with a marriage partner is not something I expect to do.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I expect to put a lot of time and effort into building and maintaining a marital relationship.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Really involving myself in a marriage relationship involves costs in other areas of my life which I am unwilling to accept.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I expect to work hard to build a good marriage relationship even if it means limiting my opportunities to pursue other personal goals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Identity Styles Inventory IV**  
(ISI-IV; Smits, 2009)

**You will find a number of statements about beliefs, attitudes, and/or ways of dealing with important life decisions or problems. Read each carefully and use it to describe yourself.**

*Information-oriented Items*

	1. Not at all like me	2.	3.	4.	5. Very much like me
Talking to others helps me explore my personal beliefs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When facing a life decision, I take into account different points of view before making a choice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When facing a life decision, I try to analyze the situation in order to understand it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When making important life decisions, I like to think about my options.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I handle problems in my life by actively reflecting on them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When making important life decisions, I like to have as much information as possible.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is important for me to obtain and evaluate information from a variety of sources before I make important life decisions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*Normative-oriented Items*

	1. Not at all like me	2.	3.	4.	5. Very much like me
I automatically adopt and follow the values I was brought up with.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I strive to achieve the goals that my family and friends hold for me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I never question what I want to do with my life because I tend to follow what	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

important people expect me to do.  
I think it is better to adopt a firm set of beliefs than to be open-minded.                             

I think it's better to hold on to fixed values rather than to consider alternative value systems.                             

I prefer to deal with situations in which I can rely on social norms and standards.                             

When I make a decision about my future, I automatically follow what close friends or relatives expect from me.                             

When others say something that challenges my personal values or beliefs, I automatically disregard what they have to say.                             

*Diffuse/avoidant Items*

1. Not at all like me      2.      3.      4.      5. Very much like me

I'm not sure where I'm heading in my life; I guess things will work themselves out.                             

Many times, by not concerning myself with personal problems, they work themselves out.                             

I am not really thinking about my future now, it is still a long way off.                             

When I have to make an important life decision, I try to wait as long as possible in order to see what will happen.                             

I try not to think about or deal with personal problems as long as I can.                             

I try to avoid personal situations that require me to think a lot and deal with them on my own.                             

Sometimes I refuse to believe a problem will happen, and things



**Experiences in Close Relationships Scales  
(ECRS; Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998)**

**The following statements concern feeling about romantic relationships. Think about all such relationships you have had, not just a current one. If you have never had a relationship that you would like to consider "romantic", please answer the questions for how much you expect you would feel if you were in such a relationship.**

*Anxiety Items*

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I worry about being abandoned by romantic partners.	<input type="radio"/>				
I worry a lot about my relationships.	<input type="radio"/>				
I worry that romantic partners won't care about me as much as I care about them.	<input type="radio"/>				
I worry a fair amount about losing my partner.	<input type="radio"/>				
I often wish that my partners' feelings for me were as strong as my feelings for him/her.	<input type="radio"/>				
I often want to merge completely with romantic partners, and this sometimes scares them away.	<input type="radio"/>				
I worry about being alone.	<input type="radio"/>				
My desire to be very close sometimes scares people away.	<input type="radio"/>				
I need a lot of reassurance that I am loved by my partner.	<input type="radio"/>				
Sometimes I feel that I force my partners to show more feeling, more commitment.	<input type="radio"/>				
If I can't get my romantic partner to show interest in me, I get upset or angry.	<input type="radio"/>				

I find that my romantic partners don't want to get as close as I would like.                             

When I'm not involved in a relationship, I feel somewhat anxious and insecure.                             

I get frustrated when my partner is not around as much as I would like.                             

I get frustrated if romantic partners are not available when I need them.                             

When romantic partners disapprove of me, I feel really bad about myself.                             

I resent it when my partner spends time away from me.                             

I do not often worry about being abandoned.\*                             

*Avoidance Items*

Strongly Agree      Agree      Neutral      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

I get uncomfortable when a romantic partner wants to be very close.                             

I don't feel comfortable opening up to romantic partners.                             

I prefer not to show a partner how I feel deep down.                             

I want to get close to my romantic partner, but I keep pulling back.                             

Just when my partner starts to get close to me, I find myself pulling away.                             

I am nervous when romantic partners get too close to me.                             

I try to avoid getting too close to my partner.

- I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on romantic partners.
- I prefer not to be too close to romantic partners.
- I usually discuss my problems and concerns with my partners.\*
- I am very comfortable being close to romantic partners.\*
- I feel comfortable sharing my private thoughts and feelings with my romantic partners.\*
- I find it relatively easy to get close to my partner.\*
- I feel comfortable depending on romantic partners.\*
- I don't mind asking romantic partners for comfort, advice, or help.\*
- It helps to turn to my romantic partner in times of need.\*
- I turn to my partner for many things, including comfort and reassurance.\*
- I tell my partner just about everything.\*

*\*Reverse scored.*

**Dimensions of Identity Development Scale  
(DIDS; Luyckx, Soenens, Goossens, Beckx, & Wouters, 2008)**

**Please answer the next questions by checking the circle that you believe most accurately reflects you.**

*Commitment Making Items*

	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Disagree nor agree	Somewhat Agree	Agree
I have decided on the direction I want to follow in my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know what I want to do with my future.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a clear view on my future.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have made a choice concerning some of my plans for the future.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know what I want to achieve in my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*Identification with Commitment Items*

My plans for the future match with my true interests and values.	<input type="radio"/>				
My future plans give me self-confidence.	<input type="radio"/>				
Because of the path of life I have mapped out for myself, I feel certain about myself.	<input type="radio"/>				
I sense that the direction I want to take in my life will really suit me.	<input type="radio"/>				
I value my plans for the future very much.	<input type="radio"/>				

*Exploration in Breadth Items*

I think actively about the direction I want to take in my life.	<input type="radio"/>				
I think purposefully about how I see my future.	<input type="radio"/>				
I try to figure out regularly which lifestyle would suit me.	<input type="radio"/>				
Lately, I think about what I am aiming for in	<input type="radio"/>				

my life.

I try to find out which lifestyle would be good for me.                             

*Exploration in Depth Items*

I talk with other people about the plans for the future I have made for myself.                             

I work out for myself if the aims I put forward in life really suit me.                             

I try to find out what other people think about the specific direction I want to take in my life.                             

I actively think about if the future plans I strive for, correspond to what I really want.                             

I regularly dwell upon the future plans I have made.