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Attachment, Marriage Beliefs, and Sense of Identity among Unmarried College Students

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Abstract

Attachment styles often reveal what individuals personally value within themselves and others. In this study, that idea was explored through the attachment styles, restrictiveness of marriage views, and sense of identity through the condition of marital status (whether in a relationship or not) of 106 unmarried undergraduate students from La Salle University. It was hypothesized that marital status would moderate the variance in the restriction of marriage views due to attachment style (secure, preoccupied, dismissing, or fearful), and that marital status would also moderate the differences in attachment styles accounted for by identity. The results showed that the variance in certain marriage views (cohabitation, “love is enough,” “one and only,” were accounted for by attachment style and marital status, but that differences in attachment styles were not accounted for by identity through the moderation of marital status. However, the variance in each of the attachment styles were either accounted for by either marital status or identity.

Attachment, Marriage Beliefs, and Sense of Identity among Unmarried College Students

Attachment styles generally act as the perspective individuals hold on to when it comes to relationships. Bowlby (1988) argued that attachment styles revolve around how individuals see themselves, and how they see others in terms of their relationships with them, and how much social support they believe they can get from them. The different styles of attachment begin to form during childhood (Bowlby, 1988). According to Fraley (2007), the foundation of the attachment theory centers on how responsive the caregivers are to the children they are taking care of as well as on other life events that could later change that sense of attachment. Therefore, attachment style is a long-term phenomenon because relationships developed at a young age play a role in the motivational system everyone has, which works to build emotionally intimate bonds in adulthood (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Both children and adults are similar in this sense since they feel safe when an attachment figure is close by and attentive to them, so they desire proximity and feel like they can depend on the attachment figure (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). In contrast, a sense of insecurity forms when the attachment figure is not available to them (Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

Main, Kaplan, and Cassidy (1985) found in their longitudinal study that one of two attachment styles can form. In this study, an Adult Attachment Interview was conducted to see how participants saw relationships and see if their memories (including ones from childhood) provided evidence for or against those views (Main et al., 1985). One of the attachment styles that some had was secure attachment, which meant they saw the importance of their relationships since they believed their attachment relationships influenced their personalities (Main et al., 1985). In addition, they objectively talked about their attachments (recalled favorable and unfavorable early attachment experiences) (Main et al., 1985). Even though everything may not

always go well in a relationship, those with secure attachment believe that they still have social support and are not afraid to seek it (McBride, Atkinson, Quilty, & Bagby, 2006).

The other attachment style that some had was insecure attachment, which could be further divided into a couple of categories (Main et al., 1985). The first category, preoccupied attachment, is where individuals have a strong sense of attachment to others but also a fear of being rejected, which may lead to poor ways of dealing with their relationships (McBride et al., 2006). This fear could be expressed through behaviors such as being highly dependent on the attachment figure and having an excessive need to please him or her (Main et al., 1985).

The second category of insecure attachment is avoidant, which has a couple of subcategories (Main et al., 1985). The first type of avoidant attachment is dismissive avoidant, where individuals do not value or care about attachment relationships and do not think early attachment relationships influence their personalities (Main et al., 1985). Here, they have a positive view of the self and a negative view of others (Main et al., 1985). Regarding these views, someone with this attachment style may maintain a sense of independence to avoid disappointment in close relationships (Main et al., 1985). The second type of avoidant attachment is fearful avoidant, which is where individuals tend to have a negative view of themselves and of others, so they believe they will be rejected and thus fear trusting others (Shaver & Haven, 1987). Therefore, they may have a fear of being intimate with others, points of emotional highs and lows, as well as feelings of jealousy (Shaver & Haven, 1987).

Similar to the restrictive relationship formation that often comes with insecure attachment, Larson (1992) discussed the issue of the restrictiveness of marriage beliefs, where individuals may be less open to potential marriage partners or when the marriage could take place, may put in too much or too little effort when looking for a marriage partner, and/or may not logically at

the big picture of marriage, particularly the important factors that go into it like financial stability. These types of beliefs could be further categorized into seven different types as mentioned by Cobb, Larson, and Watson (2003). The first restrictive view is the “one and only” view, which is basically waiting for a soul mate to come into one’s life, which can create a sense of uncertainty of whether that person will appear and the individual with this view may be closed off from other good potential marital partners (Cobb et al., 2003; Larson, 1992). The second view is the idealization approach, which is where individuals think there must be a sense of perfection in the qualities of the relationship and/or partner before marriage can occur, which may cause some anxiety in considering marriage since no one is perfect and so this may cause a delay in marrying because of it (Cobb et al., 2003; Larson, 1992).

The third view is the “love is enough” view, which centers on the idea that love is a substantial reason to get married, which may be problematic because it dismisses the qualities of the people in the relationship and the quality of the overall relationship (Cobb et al., 2003; Larson, 1992). The fourth view is ease of effort, in which a person may see mate selection as something that happens by chance and action does not really need to be taken on their part, even though careful reflection and preparation of marriage often needs to be done before getting married in order to help ensure a happy future for the couple (Cobb et al., 2003; Larson, 1992). Cohabitation is the fifth view, for individuals may feel they need to live with their partner before marrying him or her; the issue is not with the actual behavior but the lack of commitment that may come with it since marriage may be delayed due to that fear of committing (Cobb et al., 2003; Larson, 1992). The sixth view is complete assurance, which is where the individual who has this view must feel completely confident that things will work out in the relationship before getting married (Cobb et al., 2003; Larson, 1992). And lastly, the seventh view is opposites

complement, where individuals believe that finding someone completely different from themselves would bring out each other strengths and make up for each other's weaknesses, but in reality, similarities in personality and beliefs are often what make a marriage successful (Cobb et al., 2003; Larson, 1992).

These beliefs play a major part in the lives of those who believe them because it has been the case that beliefs, including ones in regard to relationships, are often expressed through behaviors, which could be negative ones if there is a dissatisfaction with outcomes not matching expectations (Bradbury & Fincham, 1992). For example, Bradbury and Fincham (1992) found in their study that distressed couples who gave negative attributions in regard to their marriages were hostile and rejecting in their behaviors, which is maybe how they coped with their dissatisfaction with their marriage because they had higher expectations, perhaps due to their prior marital beliefs. After all, the beliefs people have during their relationships often connect with how they handle situations that can come up in those relationships and how they truly feel about those relationships (Cobb et al., 2003).

The development of these views also come into play in terms of identity. In his psychosocial development theory, Erikson (1968) described identity as a need for stability, for the individual tries to maintain who they for their own sake as well as when in the presence of others; he also describes identity as a way of finding one's purpose within the world. When looking at identity in reference to one's lifespan, Marcia (2006) argued that identity, which is part of a person's personality, is formed during the final years of adolescence but then it continues to adjust and change as a people go through the rest of their lives. There are four potential phases that Marica (2006) called identity statuses, which are defined by how adolescents may be handling a situation regarding their identity and how it could be classified as at the time. A person's status

may be determined by how much a person is willing to do some exploration and commit in certain areas (like in the case of religion or politics) in their lives (Marcia, 2006).

One of the statuses is achievement, which where the individual went through some exploration but was also to make a commitment, such as when people question their religious beliefs and go through a cycle of whether they believe those belief before settling on that religion (Marcia, 2006). Another status is foreclosure, where there is a lack of exploration but a sense of commitment to ideals derived from childhood (Marcia, 2006). Individuals can reason but are rigid in what they think because they may be unconsciously struggling with self-doubt, so by committing but not exploring, they can have a sense of assurance for themselves even though the ideas that provide that assurance may be unrealistic, and this may prevent them from addressing the failures they may be faced with (Marcia, 2006).

Moratorium is one of the other statuses, and in this one, exploration takes place but commitment is not fully made because there is that constant struggle to figure things out and individuals in this stage are very engaged in that struggle, and because of that, this stage is transitory (Marcia, 2006). Having support and confirmation from loved ones at this stage is particularly important, for while people go through this struggle, they still can be constantly reminded of how important it is to go through this struggle (Marcia, 2006). Diffusion is the other status one could be in, and in this one, there is a lack of exploration and commitment; the ability to change is present due to the lack of commitment, but the issue becomes that they do not have their own set values (Marcia, 2006). Because of this state, individuals with this status could appear as a loner since they may avoid socializing and may engage in activities that could prevent them from experiencing shame or rejection (Marcia, 2006).

Attachment styles, marriage views, and identity seem to share a few qualities. To start, the three variables share the importance of commitment and relationships to others. In each attachment style, there is the question of how much individuals are willing to commit in their relationships, depending on whether they feel they can trust those around them (even if taking that chance of being hurt), so they are able to get support and provide support to others in return to further develop as people (Bowlby, 1988). In the same regard, restrictive marriage views focus on committing depending on whether their future spouse can meet their conditions, and because of that, there may be hindrance in trying to form strong romantic relationships since those beliefs can create boundaries between individuals and their potential partners (Larson, 1992). In the case of identity, the lack of commitment in relationships could potentially hinder the development of the person, for the struggle arises of not being able to form a set of beliefs or values due to the lack of experiences that can help form those belief/values (Marcia, 2006).

While little research has been done in regard to these three variables, there has been research done by Kelly, Zimmer-Gembeck, and Boislard-P (2012), who looked at dating goals (including ones related to intimacy and identity) in relation to goal-consistent behavior among the youth in Australia. They hypothesized that when combining both the goals and the goal-related behavior, there would be greater satisfaction (Kelly et al., 2012). Results showed that dating goals were significantly correlated with related behaviors, including intimacy (how close they felt with others) and identity dating goals (Kelly et al., 2012). This is similar to the earlier point mentioned about how beliefs, including ones about relationships, are often expressed through behaviors in marriages (Bradbury & Fincham, 1992). Though these beliefs seem different from the ones presented in Kelly et al.'s study (2012) when looking at intimacy dating goals and identity goals, they was an underlying similarity, which perhaps allowed that association

between the goals and behavior, and that is the sense of commitment and the importance of relationships, as noted before with attachment, marriage views, and identity (Bowlby, 1988; Larson, 1992; Marcia, 2006).

Because little research has been done on attachment style, restrictiveness of marriage views, and sense of identity, the goal of this study was to look at the relationship among these variables in order to further confirm the similarity of commitment and importance of relationships among them through the condition of marital status among college students. I hypothesized that marital status (whether in a relationship or not) would moderate the variance in the restriction of marriage views due to attachment style (secure, preoccupied, dismissing, and fearful). I also hypothesized that marital status would also moderate the differences in attachment styles accounted for by identity.

Method

Participants

Altogether, 106 undergraduates (with the ages ranging from 18-34, with only 6 participants being above the age of 22) from La Salle University completed the study. In terms of race, it was reported that 2.8% chose not to respond, 2.8% were Asian or Asian American, 17% were Black or African American, 2.8% were Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 76% were Caucasian, and 1.9% were multi-racial. When it came to ethnicity, .9% chose not respond, 12.3% were Hispanic or Latino, and 92% were not Hispanic or Latino. Almost eighteen percent of the participants were male, and 82.1% of them were female. Almost fifty-six percent were single (unmarried) and not in a relationship, and 44.3% were single and in a relationship.

Measures

Relationship Scales Questionnaire (RSQ; Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994). This is a 30-item measure of attachment (secure, preoccupied, dismissive, and fearful). Participants were asked to indicate how well each item described how they viewed their close relationships using a 5-point scale (1=not at all like me, 5=very much like me).

Attitudes about Romance and Mate Selection Scale (ARMSS; Cobb et al., 2003). This is a 32-item measure of restrictiveness of marriage views (“one and only,” idealization, “love is enough,” ease of effort, cohabitation, complete assurance, and opposites complement). Participants were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed with each statement using a 7-point scale (1= very strongly disagree, 7=very strongly agree).

Ego Identity Process Questionnaire (EIPQ; Balistreri, Busch-Rossnagel, & Geisinger, 1995). This is a 32-item measure of identity statuses (achieved, foreclosed, moratorium, and diffused). Participants were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed with each statement using a 7-point scale (1= strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree).

Procedure

Participants were recruited through a mass email directed to the undergraduates at La Salle University about the study, and they were invited to participate if they were age 18 or older, unmarried, and spoke/understood English. The study was completed electronically through Qualtrics. Participants were directed to a link to access the informed consent, demographic documents, and three self-report questionnaires: one to assess attachment style, one to assess marriage views, and one to assess identity. The surveys were completed anonymously and no identifiers were gathered. The design of Qualtrics is such that an SPSS file of the survey data is provided to the researcher for analysis. Once the participants finished taking the surveys, they

were given the opportunity to fill out a form to obtain extra credit for a class (with permission of the professor of the class they chose).

Results

In order to test my two hypotheses, two different statistical procedures had to be done. When looking at whether marital status would moderate the variance in the restriction of marriage views due to attachment style (secure, preoccupied, dismissing, and fearful), a linear regression was done. The results showed there was no statistical significance in the variance of assurance, ease of effort, idealization, and opposites complement marriage views due to attachment style as moderated by marital status, so the hypothesis was not supported in terms of these marriage views. However, the cohabitation, “love is enough,” and “one and only” marriage views were statistically significant in their variance due to attachment style and moderation of marital status, so for these marriage views, the hypothesis was supported.

For cohabitation, $F(5,100)=3.35$, $p=0.008$ ($p<0.05$). Because this was significant, it can be reported that $R^2_{\text{attachment\&marital status,cohabitation}}=0.144$, which means that 14.4% of the variance in the cohabitation marriage view was accounted for by attachment style and marital status, and that we would get a 14.4% reduction in prediction error using attachment style and marital status to predict the cohabitation view score compared to if we just used the mean of the cohabitation views to make the same prediction. Because of this, it can be said that this is an efficient model. When looking specifically at the statistical significance of the contribution of each attachment style in explaining the variance of cohabitation views through the moderation, it was shown that the contribution made by each attachment style was not significant, so the variance was mostly due to role that marital status had played since it was significant ($t_{\text{marital status}} = 3.377$, $p=0.001$).

In terms of the “love is enough” marriage view, $F(5,100)=2.64$, $p=0.028$ ($p<0.05$). Because of this significance, it can be noted that $R^2_{\text{attachment\&marital status,love is enough}}=0.117$, which means that 11.7% of the variance in the “love is enough” marriage view was accounted for by attachment style and marital status, and that we would get a 11.7% reduction in prediction error using attachment style and marital status to predict the “love is enough” view score compared to if we just used the mean of the “love is enough” views to make the same prediction, making this an effective model. When looking at the statistical significance of the contribution marital status and each attachment style made in explaining the variance of the “love is enough” view, it was found that only preoccupied attachment style was statistically significant ($t_{\text{preoccupied}}=2.559$, $p=0.012$) in its contribution to the variance.

When looking at the “one and only” view, $F(5,100)=2.571$, $p=0.031$ ($p<0.05$). Since this was also significant, it can be reported that $R^2_{\text{attachment\&marital status,one and only}}=0.114$, which means that 11.4% of the variance in the “one and only” marriage view is accounted for by attachment style and marital status, and that we would get a 11.4% reduction in prediction error using attachment style and marital status to predict the “one and only” view score compared to if we just used the mean of the “one and only” responses to make the same prediction, making this an effective model. Similar to the cohabitation marriage view, the contribution made by each attachment style was not significant, so the variance was mostly due marital status since it was significant ($t_{\text{marital status}}=1.980$, $p=0.05$). While only three of the seven marriage beliefs showed a strong variance due to attachment style and the use of marital status as a condition, the results showed that the variance was mostly present because of the role of marital status rather than the individual attachment styles, which shows the importance of including marital status as a condition.

As for my other hypothesis, which was that marital status would moderate the differences in attachment style levels accounted for by identity, a univariate analysis of variance was done to test this. Through this analysis, participants were classified with having a specific identity status and were grouped with others who had the same status. As a result, there were 23 participants who were achieved, 21 who were diffused, 31 who were moratorium, and 31 who were foreclosed. A set of means were also created for each of the identity statuses, marital statuses, as well as the interactions between marital status and each of the identity statuses, which will all be included when each attachment style is discussed.

In terms of secure attachment, there was no difference due to marital status. However, there was an overall difference in secure attachment due to identity, for $F(3,98)=3.126$, $P=0.029$ ($p<0.05$). When taking into account the overall difference in secure attachment due to the interaction between marital status and identity, there was no difference, so the overall hypothesis was not supported. When comparisons between identity categories were made (through the LSD Post Hoc test) in reference to the levels of secure attachment, it was found there was only a difference in the diffused-foreclosed grouping ($p=0.005$) as well as the moratorium-foreclosed grouping ($p=0.002$). Because marital status did not have much of an effect on the difference in secure attachment due to identity, having marital status as the condition was not significant in this case. However, there was a difference in attachment styles due identity. This difference seems to only strongly account for only two out of the six pairings of the identity statuses though, so the difference when looking at specific statuses was not that strong.

Table 1.1

Means of Identity Statuses in Relation to Secure Attachment

Identity Status	Mean (z-scores)
Achieved	0.136
Diffused	-0.301
Moratorium	-0.236
Foreclosed	0.398

Table 1.2

Means of Marital Statuses in Relation to Secure Attachment

Marital Status	Mean
Single, NR	-0.161
Single, IR	0.159

Note: NR=not in relationship;
IR=in a relationship

Figure 1.3

Means of Interaction of Marital and Identity Statuses in Relation to Secure Attachment

Marital Status	Identity Status	Mean (z-scores)
Single, NR	Achieved	0.156
	Diffused	-0.374
	Moratorium	-0.542
	Foreclosed	0.116
Single, IR	Achieved	0.116
	Diffused	-0.288
	Moratorium	0.070
	Foreclosed	0.680

Note: NR=not in a relationship;
IR=in a relationship

With preoccupied attachment style, there was an overall difference in preoccupied attachment due to marital status, for $F(1,98)=6.200$, $P=0.014$ ($p<0.05$). However, there was no differences when looking at preoccupied attachment in reference to identity or when looking at the interaction between marital status and identity in reference to it, so the hypothesis was not

supported. When comparing the statuses to each other in reference to preoccupied attachment, there was only a significant difference when comparing achieved to moratorium, for $p=0.033$ ($p<0.05$). In this case, it seems that this was the only difference that could be accounted for in terms of preoccupied attachment under the condition of marital status since identity had little role in the difference (besides the difference in preoccupied levels as shown by the achieved-moratorium comparison).

Unlike the analysis of the preoccupied attachment, there was not an overall difference in dismissing attachment due to marital status, but there was a difference when dismissing attachment was accounted for by identity since $F(3,98)=2.946$, $P=0.037$ ($p<0.05$). There was no difference when looking at the interaction of marital status and identity to account for dismissing attachment, however, so the hypothesis was not supported. When comparing the identity statuses to each other in reference to dismissing attachment style, there were only differences in the achieved-diffused ($p=0.011$, $p<0.05$), achieved-foreclosed ($p=0.013$, $p<0.05$), and diffused-moratorium ($p=0.045$, $p<0.05$) identity comparisons. In this case, only identity could account for the variance in dismissing attachment.

Figure 2.1

Means of Identity Statuses in Relation to Preoccupied Attachment

Identity Status	Mean (z-scores)
Achieved	-0.294
Diffused	0.065
Moratorium	0.174
Foreclosed	-0.028

Figure 2.2.

Means of Marital Statuses in Relation to Preoccupied Attachment

Marital Status	Mean
Single, NR	0.218
Single, IR	-0.260

Note: NR=not in a relationship;
IR=in a relationship

Figure 2.3

Means of Interaction of Marital and Identity Statuses in Relation to Preoccupied Attachment

Marital Status	Identity Status	Mean (z-scores)
Single, NR	Achieved	-0.340
	Diffused	0.185
	Moratorium	0.495
	Foreclosed	0.532
Single, IR	Achieved	-0.249
	Diffused	-0.055
	Moratorium	-0.147
	Foreclosed	-0.589

Note: NR=not in relationship;
IR=in a relationship

Figure 3.1

Means of Identity Statuses in Relation to Dismissing Attachment

Identity Status	Mean (z-scores)
Achieved	0.383
Diffused	-0.325
Moratorium	0.193
Foreclosed	-0.239

Figure 3.2

Means of Marital Statuses in Relation to Dismissing Attachment

Marital Status	Mean
Single, NR	0.401
Single, IR	0.150

Note. NR= not in a relationship;
IR= in a relationship

Figure 3.3

Interaction of Marital and Identity Statuses in Relation to Dismissing Attachment

Marital Status	Identity Status	Mean (z-scores)
Single, NR	Achieved	0.824
	Diffused	-0.390
	Moratorium	0.229
	Foreclosed	-0.68
Single, IR	Achieved	-0.059
	Diffused	-0.260
	Moratorium	0.156
	Foreclosed	-0.410

Note. NR= not in a relationship;
IR= in a relationship

In terms of fearful attachment, there was an overall difference in it due to marital status as shown by $F(1,98)=3.885, P= 0.052 (p<0.05)$. This was not the case though with identity or the interaction between marital status and identity since there was no difference fearful attachment

levels when both were taken into account, and so the hypothesis was not supported. The only differences found between the identity statuses in regard to fearful attachment were the achieved-foreclosed ($p=0.030$, $p<0.05$) and the moratorium-foreclosed ($p=0.01$, $p<0.05$) comparisons.

Figure 4.1

Means of Identity Statuses in Relation to Fearful Attachment

Identity Status	Mean (z-scores)
Achieved	0.179
Diffused	0.099
Moratorium	0.116
Foreclosed	-0.322

Figure 4.2

Means of Marital Statuses in Relation to Fearful Attachment

Marital Status	Mean
Single, NR	0.208
Single, IR	-0.172

Note. NR= not in a relationship;
IR= in a relationship

Figure 4.3

Means of Interaction of Marital and Identity Statuses in Relation to Fearful Attachment

Marital Status	Identity Status	Mean (z-scores)
Single, NR	Achieved	0.265
	Diffused	-0.004
	Moratorium	0.453
	Foreclosed	0.120
Single, IR	Achieved	0.094
	Diffused	0.203
	Moratorium	-0.222
	Foreclosed	-0.764

Note. NR= not in a relationship;
IR= in a relationship

Discussion

There were two hypotheses tested in this study. The first was that marital status (whether someone was in a relationship or not) would moderate the variance in the restriction of marriage views due to attachment style (secure, preoccupied, dismissing, and fearful). Results showed that attachment style as well as marital status could explain the variance in how restricted someone's view was of marriage depending on certain marriage views. There was no statistical significance in variance of Assurance, Ease of Effort, Idealization, and Opposites Complement marriage views due to attachment style as by moderated marital status, so the hypothesis was not supported in terms of these marriage views.

Perhaps the variance could not be significantly accounted for by marital status and attachment in terms of these specific views due to the lack of beliefs regarding them. As mentioned by Bowlby (1988), attachment style describes a person's relationship with others and themselves, and those relationships and how they may carry out may depend on what the person values. Perhaps the participants had not fully developed values or beliefs that were associated with these four views, which is why perhaps attachment did not account for much of the variance in the restrictiveness of marriage views in this sample (Bradbury & Fincham, 1992; Cobb et al., 2003). Similarly, values and beliefs associated with these four beliefs may not have been fully formed even when someone is in a relationship or not. Experiences play a large role in figuring out what someone may value in their future marriages, so if those views do not become much of an issue (when a person is in a relationship or someone is thinking about being in a relationship), then it hard to form beliefs regarding these views (Cobb et al., 2003).

On the other hand, the cohabitation, "love is enough," and "one and only" marriage views were accounted for by attachment style as moderated by marital status. In terms of the

“cohabitation” view, attachment could have helped account for the variance due to the issue of commitment. Stanley, Whitton, and Markmann (2004) found in their study that lower levels of commitment were linked to cohabitation that took place before marriage. These issues of commitment may stem from the attachment style someone may have, for in the case of dismissive and fearful attachment,, commitment may be an issue due to the fear of being hurt (Main et., 1985; Shaver & Haven, 1987). As for marital status and the cohabitation view, being in a relationship or not could definitely stir ideas as to how to improve the likelihood that a marriage would work, and some may think cohabitation could allow the couple to get to know each better (Stanley et al., 2004).

However, while the interaction of attachment style and marital status accounted for the variance in the cohabitation as well as the “one and only” view , variance in those views was mostly present because of the role of marital status rather than the individual attachment styles. This perhaps goes back to the idea of values/beliefs formed partly by experience (in this case, romantic experiences) in the discussion why certain marriage beliefs were not accounted for significantly by attachment and marital status (Cobb et al., 2003). It could be the case that people who have typically lived with their significant others or have plans to outside of marriage may believe living together would be a good experience if the thought of marriage came up, so they may have the view that people should live together before getting married. For the “one and only” view, perhaps a person who has gone through many rough relationships and is currently single may decide that they will not commit to a relationship or think of marriage until the “one” crosses their path to avoid the heartache they had experienced.

Unlike the cohabitation and “one and only” view, the “love is enough” view was primarily accounted for by attachment style, particularly preoccupied. Because this attachment

style centers on showing a strong sense attachment and high willingness to please others, love may be the only thing that needs to present to get married since preoccupied attachment focuses primarily on getting that love (Main et al., 1985; McBride et al., 2006). Perhaps why this view was associated with attachment and the other two did not is because this belief is maybe more in touch with what people need from a relationship itself (in this case love) rather than what needs to be done or the mold that a person needs to fit in order to be happy in a long-term commitment like marriage, and attachment style focuses on those key values (like support) in order to be satisfied with a relationship.

The second hypothesis tested in this study was that marital status would also moderate the differences in attachment styles accounted for by identity. Overall, the hypothesis was not supported because when the interaction between marital status and identity was assessed for each attachment style, none of them were statistically significant. However, depending on the attachment style, either marital status or identity would account for the difference in the attachment levels.

Differences in secure attachment were due to identity. Having a secure attachment means having an open-mind, because it is understood that despite difficulties, things can work out sometimes when keeping mind one's own potential and using the support of others (Bowlby, 1988). When looking at identity, it is all about trying to figure out one's interests and values, which also requires an open-mind since a lot of exploring needs to be done before committing, but hopefully one would be able to find satisfaction in the commitment after carefully trying to figure things out (Marcia, 2006). By having that open-mind and wanting to discover oneself and grow through the relationships, secure attachment and identity tie together. Therefore, it makes sense why the comparison between the moratorium and foreclosed identity statuses accounted

for the differences in secure attachment, for those two statuses are vastly different (for moratorium is high in exploration and foreclosure is not) in putting aside what people know and being open to learn and discover about themselves and taking those risks (including those that come with relationships), which nicely ties with what secure attachment is all about (Marcia, 2006). The status comparison between more diffused and foreclosed in terms of secure attachment is a little more complicated because there is that lack of exploration, which is something that is often found in those who are secure. However, someone could be satisfied with settling with the ideals they grew up with and not straying away from that and have good relationships, so it could be the case that those with foreclosure would have higher levels of secure attachment compared to those with diffusion, who have trouble committing and so may have weaker relationships (Marcia, 2006).

Differences in preoccupied attachment were only accounted for by the condition of marital status. This could be explained through a study, which focused on how participants presented themselves depending on condition they were given (such as they were describing their level of intimacy in their romantic relationship to another couple or to two people who were unacquainted) as a way to achieve their goals associated with each of their attachment style (VanderDrift, Tyler, & Linglu Ma, 2015). When attachment style was taken into consideration, the researchers found that those with preoccupied attachment expressed higher levels of intimacy when talking to a couple compared to if they were talking to two people who were acquainted with one another (VanderDrift et al., 2015). This is perhaps the case because people with preoccupied attachment desperately want to be loved, so they may try to convince themselves of this anyway they can by either showing clingy behavior or talking to others how happy they are

in their relationship, like in this case, which shows how levels of preoccupied attachment can be explained by marital status (Main et al., 1985).

In terms of dismissing attachment, the differences heavily relied on identity, especially because 3 pairs of statuses (achieved-diffused, achieved-foreclosed, and diffused-moratorium) that were compared to each other were statistically significant. Those who have high levels of dismissing attachment have trouble committing in relationships since they have a negative view of others (out of fear of being hurt) and positive view of themselves (Bowlby, 1988). Therefore it makes sense there is distinct difference in dismissing levels when it comparing statuses like achieved and diffused since those who are achieved have got through the exploration process, figured out their values, and have a great sense of commitment in certain areas of their lives unlike those who are diffused, who do not try to explore and commit to something they enjoy, so they are in a “lost” state (Marcia, 2006). Therefore, it makes sense if those who were diffused had higher levels of dismissive attachment compared to those who achieved or moratorium (since at least those in moratorium at least are trying to figure out their interests, so they are able to commit later). When it comes to the foreclosed group, there is a high level of commitment and a low level of exploration (Marcia, 2006). Those who may be in that group may possibly have higher dismissive attachment compared to the achieved group only because there is that lack of openness in both foreclosure and dismissive attachment due to that lack of exploration (including in making friendships and in relationships perhaps) (Marcia, 2006).

As for fearful attachment, differences were mostly accounted for by marital status. Since fearful attachment centers on a negative view of self as well as a negative view of others, it is likely that those who are in relationships (or at least have been in ones before) may have lower levels of fearful attachment since they are willing to open themselves up to their partners and be

able to trust them despite the chance that conflicts may arise within the relationships, which is what those with fearful attachment are wary of (Shaver & Haven, 1987). This was shown to be the case in a study done by Kerpeleman et al. (2012), who looked at romantic attachment and identity in high school and college students. They found that adolescents who were in relationships compared to those who were never in a relationship had lower attachment avoidance (Kerpeleman et al., 2012). While this finding was did not explicitly mention fearful attachment (for fearful is a type of avoidant attachment), this definitely could still apply to fearful attachment since there is that reluctance to get involved in romantic relationships out of fear of being hurt (Shaver & Haven, 1987).

In this study, much was found in describing the relationship among attachment style, marriage views, and identity through the use of marital status as the condition. While each variable had its unique characteristics, they all had qualities that were similar (such as willingness to commit and be openness in relationships) to each other that were explored through this research. By identifying these qualities, there is more of an awareness of what people may struggle with in terms of maintaining or seeking a romantic relationship that is healthy for them as well just understanding themselves and their values and beliefs.

There are some limitations that come with this study. Only 106 participants in this study, all of them were recruited through convenience sampling since they were all undergraduates at La Salle university, and most of them (almost 82%) were women. Because this sample size is not great, not everyone is an undergraduate, and there was not an equal distribution between women and men participants, the results mentioned here may not necessarily apply to the whole general population. Also, not much research has been done which looked at the three variables included in this study, so it was a challenge to compare the results with what has been previously been

discovered. Nonetheless, the ideas discussed here are definitely something can be furthered investigated through future studies since it is a very much relevant to everyone since all three variables revolve around beliefs and values in regard to relationships, which are things that are constantly questioned in everyday life.

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