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**The general working models of individuals from divorced and conflict-ridden families:  
Risk factors in intimate bonds?**

by

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presented to the University of Waterloo

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## **Abstract**

### **The working models of individuals from divorced and conflict ridden families: Risk factors in intimate bonds?**

The current study had three main goals: First, to contrast the general working models of young adults of divorced parents (Divorce Adults) with those of individuals from intact families in which a) parents were happily married (Intact Adults), and b) parents had troubled relationships (Conflict Adults). Consistent with predictions, results suggested that Divorce Females had more negative models of self than Intact participants, but comparable models of others, a pattern consistent with a more preoccupied attachment style. Conflict Adults, in contrast, had more negative models of both self and others relative to Intact Adults. That is, they were more fearful in their attachment orientations.

The second goal of the present study was to conduct a preliminary test of a model that outlined the way in which these general schemata would influence individuals' perceptions of their ongoing close relationships. As expected, participants appeared to import their general issues into their current bonds. Whereas, those with more negative models of self (i.e., Divorce Females) had stronger abandonment concerns, individuals with more negative models of others (i.e., Conflict Adults) had stronger concerns about becoming close with their current partners.

These perceptions of vulnerability were not expected to influence participants' evaluations of their ongoing involvements. They were expected to compartmentalize their concerns from their feelings about their relationships to maintain a sense of "felt security." The predicted pattern was found only for Divorce Adults. The mechanisms responsible for these findings are discussed.

The final goal of the study was to assess the impact of individuals' concerns (i.e.,

vulnerabilities) over time. Vulnerabilities were expected to have an insidious negative effect on their bonds, increasing their risk of break-up. This prediction was, again, supported only for Divorce participants. The clinical and theoretical implications of these findings are discussed.

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## **Introduction**

**Judith Wallerstein challenged the popular view that divorce was often in children's best interests by suggesting that it had long-term effects on their functioning, more specifically, that it compromised their ability to have healthy romantic relationships (e.g., Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). Her speculations were based on interviews with a sample of young adults who had experienced parental divorce as children (Divorce Adults).**

**According to Wallerstein, Divorce Adults had negative expectations for relationships; that is, they had negative "relational schemata" (Baldwin, 1992). They doubted that their future marriages would last. Stated one participant, "you [could] hope that a relationship [was] going to be permanent but you [couldn't] expect it" (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, p. 60). They also perceived themselves as being at risk of being hurt by their partners. Women in particular anticipated being betrayed and/or abandoned by the men with whom they were involved:**

**I'm always afraid that if my boyfriend is thirty minutes late, he is with another woman. He works with a female employee. I wonder all the time whether sex would be better with her, and whether he'll fall in love with her, and whether they'll fall in love with each other. I never feel sure of him (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989, p. 62).**

**Were the expectations of Divorce Adults atypical -- more negative than those of their peers? Had they been shaped by the divorce experience? Or, had Wallerstein identified issues with which all young adults struggled, regardless of family history?**

**These questions have yet to be answered by social scientists. The relational schemata of Divorce Adults have been explored by very few researchers. This is surprising in light of the strong theoretical rationale for studying these cognitive structures. (The rationale will be summarized briefly here and elaborated upon later in the paper).**

**According to attachment theory -- an important conceptual framework in the study of**

close relationships -- relational schemata develop in response to childhood experiences with significant attachments (Bowlby, 1973, 1979, 1980). Their content would thus be expected to be shaped by the divorce experience. These schemata, in turn, would be expected to affect the ongoing close relationships of Divorce Adults. Relational schemata are hypothesized to shape perceptions and interpersonal response patterns (Berscheid & Reis, 1998).

An exploration of these cognitive structures might thus make sense of critical aspects of Divorce Adults' relationship functioning. For example, it might identify some of the mechanisms responsible for the elevation in their divorce rate relative to that of their peers (e.g., Amato, 1996; Amato & Keith, 1991; Keith & Finlay, 1988; Kulka & Weingarten, 1979; Pope & Mueller, 1976).

Overview of the constructs to be explored. The purpose of the present study is to explore the relational schemata of Divorce Adults, more specifically, those concerned with self-worth, the dependability of significant others, and the sense of felt security (i.e., trust). These constructs, more commonly referred to as "working models" (Bowlby, 1973, 1979, 1980), are central to the framework on which many of the study's predictions are based: attachment theory (Berscheid & Reis, 1998).

The study focuses on the content of both general and specific schemata -- beliefs about what can be expected from a) one's relationships generally (e.g., "I usually expect partners to abandon me"), and b) specific attachment figures (e.g., "I worry that my current partner will leave") (Collins & Read, 1994). The impact of these models on Divorce Adults' ongoing close relationships is also assessed. The study examines the extent to which their schemata affect their perceptions of the quality of their involvements, and increase their risk of break-up.

Overview of the study's design. Divorce Adults are compared with a) individuals from intact families in which parents were happily married (Intact Adults) and b) individuals from intact

families in which parents' marriages were troubled (Conflict Adults). The latter group was included to address a critical gap in the literature.

The child's best interests. A debate has long raged over whether parents should separate when their marital relationships are troubled. It resurged in the 1990's with the suggestion that divorce had long-term effects on children's functioning (see Amato & Keith, 1991 for a review). The media featured articles advocating that parents stay together for the sake of their children (e.g., Driedger, 1998; Gleick, 1995; Philp, 1995; Whitehead, 1993):

The research all seemed to point to that conclusion ....The child would probably be better off if the family remained together even if the long-term relationship between the parents was less than perfect (taken from the Toronto Globe and Mail, July 15, 1995).

In contrast, many social scientists argued that divorce remained in children's best interests.

Break-up was hypothesized to result in fewer long-term difficulties in functioning than ongoing exposure to a distressed marriage (e.g., Jekielek, 1988; Booth, Brinkeroff & White, 1984; Enos & Handal, 1986; Emery, 1982). There is little evidence to support either position at present.

Despite the importance of the issue, few researchers have studied Conflict Adults. Instead, Divorce Adults have been compared with heterogeneous groups of "adults of married parents."

The current study addresses this gap in the literature by contrasting the functioning of Divorce and Conflict Adults, testing the broad hypothesis that the issues with which the latter group struggle in their ongoing close relationships are more serious than those with which the former group have to contend. Specific predictions are outlined in subsequent sections. Those concerning the groups' general working models are discussed first. The focus then shifts to the impact of these schemata on the groups' ongoing close relationships.

## **Group Differences: General Working Models**

**Overview.** General working models are specialized knowledge structures that contain beliefs and expectations about attachment bonds (Collins & Read, 1994). They provide individuals with information about what they can expect from relationships in general (e.g., “I can expect my future marriage to end in divorce”). Their developmental origins make them critical constructs to explore in studies of both Divorce and Conflict Adults.

According to attachment theory, general working models develop in response to a) childhood experiences in significant relationships (Collins & Read, 1994; Bowlby, 1973), and b) observations of salient attachments, for example, parents’ marital bonds (Henry & Holmes, 1998; Davies & Cummings, 1994; Wallerstein, 1991). Thus, they are variables that should discriminate between Intact Adults and Divorce/Conflict Individuals: Both Divorce and Conflict Adults are exposed to more distressed relationships during their formative years.

Specific hypotheses regarding the impact of the groups’ family of origin experiences on the content of their schemata are developed in the following sections. Consistent with Baldwin’s (1992) recommendations, the subsections focus on their models of self and others -- constructs central to attachment theory -- and their beliefs about relationships in general.

**Models of self.** Models of self contain beliefs about individuals’ worthiness of being loved (Bartholomew, 1990; Bowlby, 1973). Individuals vary from having positive models of self -- strong beliefs that they are worthy of ongoing love and support -- to negative models of self -- strong beliefs that they are not worthy.

The content of these schemata is thought to depend, in part, on the nature of parent-child interactions. According to attachment theory, children infer their worthiness from the availability and responsiveness of their caregivers (Bowlby, 1973). However, a recent study suggests a more



specific source of influence. Children's relationship with their cross-gender parent may play the most critical role in shaping the aspects of self models that are relevant to adult intimate involvements. Collins and Read (1990) found aspects of adults' heterosexual dating relationships to be predicted more strongly by the quality of their opposite-sex parent-child attachments than by their same-sex parent-child bonds.

If this were the case, Divorce Females would be expected to have more negative models of self than Divorce Males and Intact Adults. Relative to these groups, Divorce Females have poorer relationships with their opposite-sex parent. Studies have found that, when mothers retain custody of the children, the quality of their attachment remains comparable to that of mother-child relationships in intact families. In contrast, father-child relationships deteriorate. Children experience a decrease in both the quality and quantity of contact with fathers after the marital separation (Booth & Amato, 1994; Aquilino, 1994; Amato, 1987b; Furstenberg & Nord, 1987; White, Brinkeroff & Booth, 1985).

Boys and girls are likely to react similarly to the shifts at first, experiencing the decrease in contact as an ongoing rejection of them (Kalter, 1987). Children infer themselves to be unworthy of their fathers' love and attention (e.g., "If I was smarter, prettier, or better behaved, he'd want to see me more often"). However, according to the cross-gender hypothesis, the experience would affect only females' models of self in relationships. Their fathers' behaviour would form the basis for the way in they viewed themselves in subsequent male-female attachment bonds.

Conflict Males and Females are also expected to have more negative models of self in adult intimate involvements than Intact Individuals. They have been found to have compromised relationships with both their mothers and fathers (see Erel & Burman, 1995 for a review). However, their models may differ from those of Divorce Females in the pervasiveness of negative

self-feelings. That is, their negative self-views may extend beyond the realm of relationships. Prolonged exposure to parental conflict has been linked empirically with lower global self-evaluations (Cooper, Holman & Braithwaite, 1983).

Models of others. Models of others contain beliefs and expectations about the responsiveness and dependability of potential partners. Whereas, individuals with positive models of others regard intimates as being caring and responsive to others' needs, those with negative models expect partners to have negative interpersonal qualities.

Parent-child interactions are, again, hypothesized to shape the content of these schemata. Children abstract models of others from the way that they are treated by their caregivers (Bowlby, 1973). In addition, their observations of salient attachments -- in particular, parents' marital bonds -- are likely to influence the development of these general working models (Henry & Holmes, 1998; Belsky, Steinberg & Draper, 1991). Children who observe their parents being caring and responsive towards one another are likely to expect partners to behave similarly.

Conflict Adults are thus expected to have more negative models of others than Intact Adults (Belsky, Steinberg & Draper, 1991; Bartholomew, 1990). Their parents were less likely than those of Intact Individuals to be available to meet their needs (Erel & Burman, 1995). In addition, Conflict Adults were more likely than Intact Adults to observe their parents disappointing one another.

Though Divorce Adults, too, were exposed to distressed relationships as children, their models of others are not expected to be as negative as those of Conflict Adults. Divorce Adults' expectations for romantic partners are hypothesized to have been buffered by their positive mother-child relationships. Their schemata may also have been protected by the divorce itself, for though stressful, the marital separation ended their daily exposure to a troubled adult bond.

**Summary.** Relative to Intact Adults, then, Divorce Females are expected to have more negative models of self, but comparable models of others. This pattern is consistent with a more preoccupied attachment style (Bartholomew, 1990) -- an orientation characterized by perceptions of unworthiness and concerns about abandonment. Divorce Males, in contrast, are not expected to differ from Intact Adults on either of these general model variables. Conflict Adults are expected to have more negative models of self and others; that is, they are expected to be more fearful in their attachment style (Bartholomew, 1990). The main feature of this prototypical orientation is an ambivalence about closeness and intimacy.

**Models of self and others combined: Implications for felt security.** "Fearfulness" is synonymous with a prominent psychological construct: general distrust (i.e., insecurity) (Berscheid & Reis, 1998). Felt security (i.e., general trust) is determined by the valence of models of both self and others (Bartholomew, 1990). When these models are negative, high levels of distrust (i.e., insecurity/fearfulness) are apparent.

Predictions for Conflict Adults may thus be tested by examining their level of general distrust (i.e., insecurity). This construct should capture the combined effects of their negative models of self and others. There is preliminary evidence to support this prediction. Conflict Adults have been found to be less secure (i.e., less trusting) than individuals with happily married parents (Sprecher, Cate & Levin, 1998; Brennan & Shaver, 1993).

Divorce Females, in contrast, are not expected to be less trusting than Intact Adults. They are hypothesized to differ from Intact Individuals on only one of the component dimensions (i.e., models of self). Researchers have, indeed, failed to find differences between females from divorced and intact families on measures of general trust (Southworth & Schwarz, 1987) and security (Hayashi & Strickland, 1998; Olivas & Stoltenberg, 1997; Brennan & Shaver, 1993;

Carnelley & Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

**General relationship beliefs.** In addition to assessing the models most central to attachment theory (i.e., models of self and others), the current study explores other types of general relationship beliefs (Baldwin, 1992). The troubled nature of parents' marital bonds is expected to result in a more pessimistic set of expectations about the fate of intimate involvements (Henry & Holmes, 1998; Wallerstein, 1991; Franklin, Janoff-Bulman & Roberts, 1990).

There is preliminary evidence to support this prediction. Consistent with the models provided by their parents' marital outcomes, Divorce Adults have been found to be less likely than individuals from intact families to expect their future marriages to last (Henry & Holmes, 1994; Carnelley & Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Franklin, Janoff-Bulman & Roberts, 1990; Kalter, Riember, Brickman & Woo Chen, 1985). These results are expected to be replicated in the current investigation. Further, Conflict Adults are expected to share Divorce Adults' pessimism. Though their parents did not divorce, they were less likely than the parents of Intact Adults to provide them with a model of a satisfying relationship.

In addition to exploring their general marital pessimism, the study assesses individuals' beliefs regarding couples' control over their relationships' fate. Are they perceived as being helpless when difficulties arise? Or, are couples regarded as having the capabilities to work through contentious issues in their relationships? This "conflict efficacy" construct, though prominent in earlier theories of interpersonal adjustment (e.g., Fincham & Bradbury, 1987), has received little attention in the research literature. However, it seems particularly relevant to the experiences of the groups of interest. Divorce Adults are expected to have a reduced sense of efficacy relative to Intact Adults. After all, their parents were unable to resolve their difficulties in a way that rejuvenated their marital bonds. Conflict Adults, too, are expected to differ on this

variable, given the ongoing nature of their parents' marital problems.

**Summary.** In general, then, the family of origin experiences of both Divorce and Conflict Adults are hypothesized to have tarnished their general working models. Divorce Females are expected to have more negative models of self than Divorce Males and Intact Adults (i.e., they are expected to be more preoccupied in their attachment style). In contrast, Conflict Adults are expected to have more negative models of self and others relative to Intact Individuals. That is, they are expected to be more fearful (i.e., less trusting) in their general attachment style. The models of others of Conflict Adults are expected to be more negative than those of Divorce Individuals as well, given the differences in their family of origin experiences.

Divorce and Conflict Adults are also hypothesized to have a more pessimistic set of expectations for intimate bonds. Relative to Intact Adults, both groups are expected to doubt that they will have successful marital relationships, and to perceive couples as having less control over their relationships' fate. Their observations of their parents' marriages are expected to leave them with a reduced sense of conflict efficacy relative to Intact Adults.

**Process Issues: The Impact of General Working Models on Ongoing Close Relationships**

Attachment theory would predict that the negative general models of Divorce and Conflict Adults would affect their relationships adversely. The models abstracted from earlier experiences are presumed to shape interpersonal response patterns in adulthood, influencing the way in which current relationships are construed (Bowlby, 1973).

However, there is little empirical support for this position. For instance, Baldwin and his colleagues (1996) found virtually no association between the content of general working models and individuals' orientations towards particular relationships (i.e., specific working models). Even when participants had negative general schemata (i.e., insecure attachment styles), they were

apparently securely attached to their specific partners.

A similar pattern emerged in two studies of Divorce Adults. Participants were asked to make abstract (i.e., general) predictions about their chances of having a successful marital relationship. As was noted previously, Divorce Adults were less optimistic than their peers that their future marriages would last. However, when the focus shifted to their current romantic attachments, Divorce Adults' doubts "disappeared." They were as optimistic as their peers that their ongoing relationships would endure (Henry & Holmes, 1994; Franklin et al., 1990).

There are a number of ways to account for the incongruencies in the content of their general and specific schemata (i.e., working models). One possibility is that the former simply do not affect the way in which current attachments are construed (Baldwin, Keelan, Fehr, Enns & Koh-Rangarajoo, 1996). Individuals may enter new relationships as "tabula rasa." That is, their specific schemata may evolve solely out of their experiences with new partners.

The current study evaluates the viability of a second explanation for the seemingly contradictory pattern of results. Specifically, it explores the possibility that general working models, indeed, affect individuals' models of their ongoing close relationships, but in very specific ways: They engender cognitive/affective and behavioural vulnerabilities that may or may not affect their confidence in their relationships at any particular point in time. Figure 1 depicts a descriptive model of the associations among constructs that is elaborated upon below.

**Path a: General models and cognitive/affective vulnerabilities (i.e., current relationship concerns).** The content of general working models is expected to determine both the nature and intensity of the concerns with which individuals struggle in their ongoing close relationships. Negative models of self are expected to engender strong worries about being abandoned by current relationship partners (Brennan & Shaver, 1995). Individuals who question their

worthiness in general are expected to doubt their ability to maintain valued ongoing bonds.

Negative models of others are expected to lead individuals to worry about being close with their present mates (Bartholomew, 1990). Those who doubt others' responsiveness are expected to anticipate being hurt in intimate interactions and to feel ambivalent about closeness.

Negative models of self/others are also expected to lead individuals to worry about conflictual interactions with their current partners. Conflict is likely to trigger the concerns engendered by both categories of working models (i.e., abandonment and/or closeness concerns). To individuals with negative models of self, conflict may signal partners' disengagement from the valued bond (Murray, Holmes & Griffin, 1996a). In contrast, to those with negative models of others, arguments may confirm that their needs will not be met by their current mates.

Negative general models have long been assumed to shape the particular issues with which individuals struggle in their ongoing close relationships (Collins & Read, 1994). However, the current study is one of the first to actually test the hypothesized link by indexing the association between general and specific relational schemata (i.e., concerns or perceptions of vulnerability in ongoing close relationships). Previous research has tended to focus only on general working models, presuming that the results were relevant to individuals' current romantic relationships (Collins & Read, 1994). Alternatively, studies confounded the two categories of schemata. Particular measures would include items that tapped both general (e.g., "I expect to be abandoned by romantic partners") and specific representations of relationships (e.g., "I expect to be abandoned by my current romantic partner") (e.g., Brennan & Shaver, 1995).

**Group differences: Cognitive/affective vulnerabilities.** Predictions regarding the concerns (i.e., cognitive/affective vulnerabilities) engendered by general working models have implications for hypotheses regarding group differences on these variables. Divorce Females are expected to

have stronger abandonment concerns in their ongoing relationships than individuals with more positive models of self, more specifically, Divorce Males and Intact Adults. As was noted above, the negativity of self models is expected to determine the intensity of one's worries about being left by a current partner. Conflict Adults, too, might worry more intensely about being abandoned. Their models of self are hypothesized to be more negative than those of Intact Individuals. However, this prediction is more tentative, for the fears engendered by their negative models of others might "override" these specific concerns, or at least make them less salient.

Conflict Adults are expected to worry more intensely than individuals with more positive models of others (i.e., Intact Adults) about being close with, and depending upon their current partners. That is, they are more likely to anticipate being hurt in daily intimate interactions and not having their needs met. These concerns may diminish the significance of worries about being left. Closeness concerns may foster in individuals a strong sense of ambivalence about their relationships, lowering their investment in having their attachments continue.

Divorce Females and Conflict Individuals are also predicted to worry more about conflictual interactions with their partners than Intact Adults. As was noted above, the intensity of conflict concerns is expected to be determined by the negativity of models of either self or others.

**Summary.** This portion of the model thus predicts strong associations between a) models of self and abandonment concerns, b) models of others and closeness concerns, and c) models of self/others and conflict concerns. It also predicts group differences on cognitive/affective vulnerability variables -- differences that parallel those obtained on "parent" general model variables. For example, whereas Divorce Females are expected to have stronger abandonment concerns than Intact Adults given their models of self, Conflict Adults are hypothesized to



struggle primarily with concerns about closeness in light of their models of others.

**Path a: General models and conflict (i.e., behavioural vulnerabilities).** In addition to exploring the cognitive/affective vulnerabilities (i.e., current relationship concerns) engendered by general model variables, the current study examines the behavioural response patterns that may result from negative relational schemata, more specifically, conflictual interactions.

Previous research suggests that models of self may play a role in determining the level of conflict in individuals' close relationships. Strong concurrent associations have been found between the two variables (Downey, Freitas, Michaelis & Khouri, 1998; Murray, Holmes & Griffin, 1996a). Further, the negativity of self models has been demonstrated to predict increases in the severity of couple conflict over the course of one year (Murray, Holmes & Griffin, 1996b). Individuals with negative models of self are, apparently, more likely to interpret negative behaviour by a partner as a sign of personal rejection. These findings are expected to be replicated in the current study.

Models of others may also affect interaction patterns. Negative models of others have been found to be associated with behavioural responses that might trigger couple conflict. For example, males with more negative "other" perceptions are less likely to comfort and support partners who are emotionally distressed (Simpson, Rholes & Nelligan, 1992). They have also been rated as being less warm and supportive during discussions of relationship problems (Simpson, Rholes & Phillips, 1996). Indeed, it has been speculated that they minimize their involvement in the interaction, a behaviour that would leave them vulnerable to falling into destructive demand-withdraw patterns (Heavey, Layne & Christensen, 1993). However, at the present time, there is no direct evidence of a relationship between models of others and conflict. A correlational link between the two variables is expected to be established in the present study.

**Group differences: Behavioural vulnerabilities.** Predictions regarding the behavioural vulnerabilities engendered by general working models, again, have implications for hypotheses regarding group differences. The relationships of Divorce Females are expected to be more conflictual than those of individuals with more positive self models, more specifically, Divorce Males and Intact Adults. Higher levels of conflict may also be found in the relationships of Conflict Adults relative to those of Intact Individuals, given their negative models of self and others.

**Summary.** The model thus predicts strong associations between conflict severity and models of both self and others. It also predicts group differences on behavioural vulnerability variables. Both Divorce Females and Conflict Adults are expected to have more conflictual relationships than individuals with more positive general working models (i.e., Divorce Males and Intact Adults).

**Path b: Vulnerabilities and relationship evaluations.** The vulnerabilities hypothesized to be shaped by negative general working models are not expected to affect individuals' evaluations of their relationships (i.e., their levels of satisfaction and optimism). Those with intense concerns (i.e., cognitive/affective vulnerabilities) and/or highly conflictual attachments are expected to be as likely as those with "few" vulnerabilities to evaluate their relationships positively.

This prediction may seem counterintuitive. After all, how could one possibly feel optimistic about a highly conflictual bond that one expected one's partner to leave? However, the hypothesis is consistent with one of the main tenets of attachment theory.

**A compartmentalization hypothesis.** Intense vulnerabilities (i.e., concerns/conflicts) would be expected to pose chronic threats to the sense of "felt security" that individuals are presumed to be motivated to maintain in their ongoing relationships (Murray, Holmes,

MacDonald & Ellsworth, 1998; Collins & Read, 1994; Bowlby, 1973). For example, abandonment and/or closeness concerns would make salient the possibility of being hurt by one's current romantic partner. According to the theory, the attachment system would develop ways of defending against these threats, implementing strategies to restore "felt security" (Bowlby, 1973, 1979). The current study focuses on one possible defence mechanism: compartmentalization.

The attachment system may attempt to segregate intense concerns/conflicts with partners (i.e., cognitive/affective and behavioural vulnerabilities) from individuals' perceptions of their relationships' quality. This would enable individuals to evaluate their attachments independently of the vulnerabilities engendered by their negative general models. It is hypothesized that this is the only way in which they would be able to feel safe (i.e., secure) and content in their ongoing bonds.

Such an ongoing defensive process is not expected to be triggered by mild to moderate vulnerabilities. High levels of anxiety may be necessary to motivate the compartmentalization of relational schemata. At lower levels of intensity, vulnerabilities might influence individuals' relationship evaluations, at least to a certain extent. For example, individuals with moderate fears of abandonment might be expected to be less optimistic about their relationships' future than those with more confidence about their partners' commitment to the ongoing bond.

Divorce Females and Conflict Adults are thus expected to be more likely to compartmentalize than Intact Adults, given the hypothesized elevation in the intensity of their vulnerabilities. Divorce Females are expected to isolate their abandonment concerns, Conflict Adults their closeness concerns, and both groups their concerns about the level of conflict in their relationships. Preliminary support for these hypotheses will be obtained if weaker associations are found between vulnerability and relationship evaluation variables for Divorce Females/Conflict

Adults than are found for Intact Adults. According to the theory, the “b” path should not be significant for the former two groups.

**Implications for group differences.** The compartmentalization hypothesis has implications for predictions regarding group differences on relationship evaluation variables. Despite their vulnerabilities, Divorce Females and Conflict Adults are expected to evaluate their involvements as positively as Intact Adults.

There is evidence to support this prediction -- evidence that, until now, has been regarded as somewhat puzzling in light of the negative general models of these groups. As was noted previously, despite their general pessimism, Divorce Adults have been found to be as optimistic about the future of their ongoing relationships as Intact Individuals. They have also been found to be as satisfied with their involvements as their peers (Olivas & Stoltenberg, 1997; Dunlop & Burns, 1995; Brennan & Shaver, 1993; Gabardi & Rosen, 1992; Amato & Booth, 1991; Booth & Edwards, 1989; Glenn & Kramer, 1987; Kalter et al., 1985; Booth, Brinkeroff & White, 1984; Greenberg & Nay, 1982; Kulka & Weingarten, 1979).

**Path c: General models and relationship evaluations.** General models are not expected to affect individuals’ relationship evaluations directly. They are hypothesized to exert their influence through the vulnerabilities that they shape. Thus, for all family of origin groups, any association between general model and evaluation variables is expected to be mediated by vulnerability variables. This mediational model is consistent with the hypotheses of Collins and Read (1994). In their discussion of the attachment network, they predict proximal schemata (i.e., those specific to the relationship of interest) to be more active than distal (i.e., general) working models in guiding interpersonal perceptions in ongoing attachments.

**Model summary.** Ordinarily, then, general models are hypothesized to influence

relationship functioning by shaping the vulnerabilities that colour individuals' evaluations of their involvements. However, if concerns/conflicts are intense enough, the causal chain is expected to be interrupted at the level of vulnerabilities. Powerful defensive processes (i.e., compartmentalization) are hypothesized to keep them segregated from Divorce Females/Conflict Adults' evaluative relationship schemata.<sup>1</sup>

Are their vulnerabilities expected to be compartmentalized indefinitely? The next section outlines the study's predictions regarding their effects on an ongoing bond over time.

**Longitudinal predictions.** The vulnerabilities of Divorce Females and Conflict Adults are expected to have an insidious negative impact on the quality of their relationships with their partners. The defensive process that protects their concurrent feelings about their attachments (i.e., compartmentalization) is hypothesized to break down when vulnerabilities are primed by specific features of the relationship (e.g., partners' emotional withdrawal and negative interactions). When vulnerabilities are highly salient, destructive interaction patterns are likely to ensue (e.g., emotional distancing, conflicts, and jealous behaviours). While "defences" may be re-mobilized following the stressor, the occasional intrusions are expected to gradually erode the couple's bond, increasing their risk of break-up.

If this were the case, the involvements of Divorce Females and Conflict Adults would be expected to be more vulnerable to break-up than those of Intact Individuals. Further, a type of

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<sup>1</sup> The relationships among variables are likely more complex than the path model suggests. Individuals' present relationship experiences are likely to have the potential to alter the content of the models engendered by family of origin events (Collins & Read, 1990). However, the specific to general model path is regarded as being less relevant for the groups under study. Participants were young adults, many of whom were involved in their first serious dating relationship. They are unlikely to have had time to accumulate the evidence that they would need to alter fundamental assumptions about the self/other/relationships. General models are not as malleable in adulthood as they are during childhood and adolescence. They become increasingly stable across the lifespan (Simpson et al., 1996). For example, they perpetuate themselves by engendering schema-confirming experiences (Bowlby, 1973).

“sleeper effect” would be found, where the vulnerabilities that were unrelated to their concurrent evaluations predicted their relationship status over time. Indeed, vulnerabilities would be expected to emerge as stronger predictors of break-up than relationship evaluations (e.g., satisfaction) for Divorce Females/Conflict Adults, a result that would contradict the typical finding in the literature. Satisfaction is usually the most powerful predictor of couples’ relationship outcomes. In fact, it tends to mediate the association between other variables and break-up (Berscheid & Reis, 1998).

**Summary.** The purpose of the present investigation is thus 1) to test predictions regarding group differences in general models, vulnerabilities, and relationship evaluations, 2) to test hypotheses regarding the concurrent associations among these constructs, and 3) to assess the impact of vulnerabilities on ongoing involvements over time. (The study’s predictions are summarized in Table 1).

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Participants were recruited from Introductory Psychology classes at the University of Waterloo. Students enrolled in the course were asked to fill out a family of origin questionnaire at the beginning of the academic term as part of a larger package of measures that they completed for course credit. Those who met the selection criteria for inclusion in one of the three groups of interest and were involved in a serious dating relationship were invited to participate in the present study.

The criterion for inclusion in the Divorce group was straightforward. Students had to have parents who divorced during their childhood or adolescence ( $M = 8.29$  years of age,  $SD = 5.00$ ). Sixteen percent of the sample were eligible for recruitment into this group.

Arriving at a criterion for the Conflict group was more complicated, for there were no objective markers of their parents' marital functioning. Students' perceptions regarding the severity of conflict in their parents' relationship was used to index the quality of their attachments (Booth et al., 1984). Participants rated the frequency and intensity of parental conflict in their childhood homes on seven-point scales (see Appendix Q). Their scores on these items were summed to form an index of conflict severity. (Total scores could range from two to fourteen on this two-item measure). The index had excellent internal consistency and test-retest reliability over a period of four weeks ( $\alpha = .94$  and  $r = .95$  respectively).

Students were assigned to the Conflict group if their total score on the index was greater than or equal to ten ( $M = 10.72$ ). This cutoff was selected because it indicated that participants had exceeded the midpoint of the overall scale, averaging a score of at least five on each item. That is, they had rated their parents as fighting more frequently and intensely than most couples.

Fourteen percent of students in the larger subject pool met the criterion for inclusion in this group. (Fortuitously, Divorce Adults reported comparable levels of conflict in their parents' marital relationships,  $M = 10.21$ ). Students were assigned to the Intact group if their total score on the conflict severity index was less than or equal to six ( $M = 3.12$ ) -- that is, if they scored below the midpoint of the overall scale, averaging a score of three or less on each item.<sup>2</sup> Thirty-nine percent of individuals in the subject pool met the criterion for inclusion in this group.

Participants were recruited over four consecutive academic terms. In total, 98 Intact (62 females and 36 males), 101 Divorce (62 females, 40 males), and 65 Conflict Adults (47 females, 18 males) took part in the study. The average age of participants was 19.7 years ( $SD = 1.68$ ), and the average length of their relationships was 19.7 months.

### Procedure

Participants were contacted by telephone and invited to take part in a study on dating relationships. They were told that they would be required to complete a package of questionnaires that tapped their thoughts and feelings about close involvements. Upon arrival at the laboratory, participants were given brief instructions regarding the response format of the scales. They were also asked whether they would be willing to be contacted in the future as part of a follow-up to the present study. All participants gave their consent. The package of measures took approximately 90 minutes to complete. Subjects received course credit for their participation in this part of the project.

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<sup>2</sup> There was a risk that these criteria would lead to the formation of heterogeneous groups -- that the conflict severity index would select "high conflict" individuals whose parents were happy with one another, or "low conflict" individuals whose parents were miserable. However, participants' scores on this measure were strongly correlated with their ratings of parents' marital quality ( $r = -.90$ ). They were also correlated with their perceptions of the constructiveness of parental conflicts ( $r = -.53$ ), a critical factor in predicting children's responses to their parents' arguments (see Davies & Cummings, 1994).



Participants were contacted by telephone six months after the initial session. Of the original sample, 12 (5%) could not be reached. Participants were asked whether they were still dating the same person. (Additional information was sought at this point as part of a broader study). Participants who had remained with their partners over the first half of the study period (N = 178) were re-contacted six months after the first follow-up (i.e., one year after the initial session). Fifteen (i.e., 8%) of these individuals could not be reached. Participants were, again, asked whether they were still dating the same person.

### Measures: Overview

The questionnaires administered during the initial session (Time 1) assessed participants' general working models, cognitive/affective and behavioural vulnerabilities, and evaluations of their relationships. Family of origin information was also obtained at the end of the package of measures. Measures are described in detail below and summarized in Table 2.

Unless otherwise specified, participants responded to items on seven-point scales (1 = not at all true, 7 = completely true). Scores for each index were averages -- that is, they were computed by summing the items and dividing by the total number of items for the scale. (Participants' scores could thus range from one to seven on the majority of the study's indices).<sup>3</sup>

### General Working Models

Attachment orientations: Models of self and others. Participants completed a 21-item dimensional scale that required them to indicate their feelings toward romantic partners in general. Items were taken from established attachment indices (e.g., Simpson et al., 1992; Griffin &

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<sup>3</sup> The scales were not presented separately to participants. Items from indices with the same instructional set (see Appendices A through S) were presented in randomized order. For example, items from the anxiety, avoidance and general distrust scales were combined into one large index in the package of measures, as were those from the approach avoidance, conflict concerns, satisfaction and commitment scales.

Bartholomew, 1994; Carnelley, Pietromonaco & Jaffe, 1994; Brennan & Shaver, 1993; Collins & Read, 1990). Items were combined from different scales because sufficient levels of reliability had not been attained in previous studies, particularly on the “anxiety” dimension (e.g., Simpson et al., 1996).

Confirming previous results (see Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994; Simpson et al., 1996), a principal components analysis of these 21 items revealed two factors. The first factor assessed the “anxiety” dimension (Simpson et al., 1996), an index of the degree to which individuals doubted their worthiness of ongoing love and support.<sup>4</sup> Individuals scoring highly on this scale endorsed statements such as “I often worry that partners will not want to stay with me” and “I sometimes worry that partners do not value me as much as I value them.” This 8-item index had high internal consistency ( $\alpha = .88$ ). The anxiety dimension has been shown to be a valid index of one’s model of self in relationships (see Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994). For example, it correlates strongly with the ‘self’ index of the Relationship Questionnaire (RQ; Bartholomew, 1990), but only weakly with the RQ’s measure of models of others. Simpson and his colleagues (1996) reported correlations of  $-.52$  and  $-.06$ , with the self and other index respectively, while Henry & Holmes (1996) obtained coefficients of  $-.65$  and  $-.13$  using the current sample. (This index is presented in Appendix A).

The second factor yielded by the principal components analysis assessed the “avoidance” dimension (Simpson et al., 1996), an index of the degree to which individuals doubted partners’ responsiveness, and avoided interpersonal closeness in romantic relationships. Participants

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<sup>4</sup> This factor has been labelled “anxiety” by attachment researchers to highlight its overlap with the anxious-ambivalent attachment style (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Though the label is somewhat confusing given its clinical connotations, it will be retained to maintain consistency with previous research.

scoring highly on this 12-item scale endorsed statements such as “I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on romantic partners,” and “Often, love partners want me to be more intimate/close than I feel comfortable being.” This factor was also internally consistent ( $\alpha = .81$ ). The avoidance dimension has been shown to be a valid index of individuals’ attachment models of others (see Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994). For example, it has been found to correlate strongly with the RQ’s models of others index, but only weakly with its self dimension. Simpson and his colleagues (1996) reported correlations of  $-.63$  and  $-.29$  with the other and self index respectively, while Henry & Holmes (1996) obtained coefficients of  $-.66$  and  $-.22$ . (This scale is presented in Appendix B).

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE). Rosenberg’s (1965) 10-item measure was developed to assess individuals’ global self-evaluations (e.g., “All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure”). Participants respond to items on four-point scales (1 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree). The scale has been shown to be a reliable index of self-esteem. Alpha reliabilities ranging from  $.83$  to  $.88$  have been reported in studies of university students (Wylie, 1989) ( $\alpha = .88$  in the present study). With respect to validity, the RSE has been found to correlate with other self-esteem measures ( $r = .72$  with the Lerner Self-Esteem Scale,  $r = .24$  with beeper self-reports, and  $r = .27$  with peer ratings), as well as with theoretically relevant variables (e.g.,  $r = -.64$  with anxiety,  $r = -.59$  with depression, and  $r = .51$  with social confidence) (see Wylie, 1989; Byrne, 1996 for reviews) (This scale is presented in Appendix C).

General distrust (i.e., insecurity): Models of self and others combined. Developed for the present study, this 3-item scale was comprised of items that were found to be related to both models of self (i.e., anxiety) and others (i.e., avoidance). Based on theory (e.g., Holmes, 1998;

Berscheid & Reis, 1998; Bowlby, 1973), such items were regarded as reflecting participants' level of general distrust (i.e., insecurity). Items had excellent face validity (e.g., "I find it difficult to trust partners completely; Partners are never there when you need them"). However, internal consistency reliability was low ( $\alpha = .58$ ). Results pertaining to this scale should, thus, be interpreted cautiously.<sup>5</sup> (This scale is presented in Appendix D).

**General relationship beliefs: Marital optimism.** This two-item scale (Franklin, Janoff-Bulman & Roberts, 1990) was designed to assess participants' optimism about their future marriages. Individuals rate their chances of having a successful marital relationship. Items are phrased hypothetically (e.g., "If I were to get married, I am very confident that my marriage would last -- i.e., that it would not end in separation/divorce"). Franklin and her colleagues (1990) found this index to discriminate between individuals from divorced and intact families. They reported an alpha reliability of .82 for the scale. In the present study, the alpha reliability was .81. (This scale is presented in Appendix E).

**General relationship beliefs: Conflict efficacy.** Murray, Holmes and Griffin's (1996a) scale ( $\alpha = .84$ ) assessed participants' beliefs regarding couples' ability to control the fate of their relationships (e.g., "Through their joint efforts, partners can resolve any problem they encounter in their relationship; Partners can successfully work through any incompatibilities in their needs"). Items were based on empirical and theoretical work by Fincham and Bradbury (1987).

Little information is available about the psychometric properties of the 6-item scale. The

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<sup>5</sup> A second general distrust measure was constructed out of existing scales, given concerns about the validity of conclusions drawn from the unreliable measure. Participants' scores on anxiety (models of self) and avoidance (models of others) indices were standardized and summed. The result was an overall index of insecurity (i.e., general distrust). This scale was conceptually similar to the first measure, as it took both models into account. It was also strongly correlated with the original measure of general distrust ( $r = .70$ ). However, the new scale was much more reliable ( $\alpha = .82$ ). Both general distrust measures were used in subsequent analyses and they yielded similar results. These findings increase confidence in the conclusions drawn from the original general model index.

construct of conflict efficacy has not been studied extensively by relationship researchers. It was thus important to clarify its relationship with other general model variables. Did it tap something unique, or did the construct overlap considerably with established attachment dimensions?

Pearson correlation coefficients supported the former possibility. Conflict efficacy was, at best, weakly correlated with anxiety (i.e., models of self) ( $r = -.12$ ), avoidance (i.e., models of others) ( $r = -.18$ ), general distrust ( $r = -.21$ ) and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale ( $r = .09$ ). (This scale is presented in Appendix F).

### Cognitive/Affective Vulnerabilities

**Abandonment concerns.** Developed for the current study, this 6-item scale ( $\alpha = .88$ ) was designed to tap the intensity of participants' fears that they would one day be left by their current partners (e.g., "It is sometimes difficult for me to be absolutely certain that my current partner will always care for me. There is always the possibility that s/he will meet someone who can make him/her happier than I can; I often worry that, at some point in the future, my current partner may want to start a relationship with someone else"). Items were similar in content to a subset of those on the Faith dimension of Rempel, Holmes & Zanna's (1985) Trust Scale and Brennan & Shaver's (1995) Fear of Abandonment index. The reader may also note their similarity with items on the anxiety (i.e., model of self) scale. Statements on the abandonment concern index are distinguishable by their specific focus on current relationship partners versus partners in general. (The scale is presented in Appendix G).

**Closeness concerns: Approach-avoidance conflicts.** An abridged version of Brennan & Shaver's (1995) Ambivalence scale indexed participants' tendency to fluctuate between desiring and shying away from being close with their current partners (e.g., "I miss my partner intensely when we are apart, but sometimes when we're together I feel like escaping"). Items were

modified to make them specific to the current relationship. Brennan & Shaver (1995) included both general and specific statements in their original measure (e.g., “Sometimes when I get what I want in a relationship, I’m not sure I want it anymore” versus “Sometimes I love my partner passionately, but at other times I feel myself pulling back”).

Brennan and Shaver (1995) reported an alpha reliability of .87 for the original scale ( $\alpha = .71$  for the present 4-item index). They also presented validity coefficients. For example, ambivalence correlated strongly with their avoidant attachment index (i.e., their measure of models of others) ( $r = .53$ ). However, their item pool made these findings difficult to interpret. The two scales were, essentially, contaminated. (The revised version of Brennan & Shaver’s index is presented in Appendix H).

**Closeness concerns: Intimacy-demand concerns.** Developed for the present study, this 5-item scale ( $\alpha = .78$ ) was developed to assess the intensity of participants’ anxiety about behaviours that increased the level of closeness in their present relationships. This scale, compared to the approach-avoidance conflict index, focused specifically on their reactions to partners’ efforts/requests to be intimate. Participants read descriptions of five hypothetical situations (e.g., “Your partner requests that you be more emotionally expressive -- that you show your affection more often, that you tell your partner that you love him/her, etc.”). They then rated the extent to which these scenarios would make them feel anxious (1 = not at all anxious, 7 = extremely anxious). (This scale is presented in Appendix I).

**Conflict concerns.** Developed for the present study, this 3-item scale ( $\alpha = .73$ ) assessed the degree to which participants become anxious during conflictual interactions with their current partners (e.g., “I become extremely anxious/uneasy when my partner is angry with me”). (This

scale is presented in Appendix J).

### **Behavioural Vulnerabilities**

**Conflict Severity Index (CSI): Current relationship.** Developed for the present study, this 2-item scale ( $\alpha = .81$ ) assessed the severity of conflict in participants' present relationships. Individuals rated the frequency and intensity of conflict between themselves and their partners (e.g., "My partner and I fight significantly more often than most couples do"). (This scale is presented in Appendix K).

**Destructive conflict style.** Murray, Holmes and Griffin's (1996a) 23-item scale was designed to assess couples' tendency to deal with problems in ways that characterize distressed couples. Items were tailored to tap patterns of a) avoidance (e.g., "My partner and I agree that some issues in our relationship are better left untouched"), b) reciprocal cycles of criticism and blame (e.g., "When my partner and I try to discuss a difficult issue, we sometimes end up criticizing or blaming one another for problems that are not related to the issue at hand"), and c) constructive engagement [reverse-scored] (e.g., "My partner and I always strive to take one another's points of view into consideration when we deal with difficult issues in our relationship"). Principal components analysis replicated the unidimensional factor structure reported by Murray and her colleagues (1996a). The authors reported an alpha reliability of .91. In the present study, a reliability of .93 was obtained. (This scale is presented in Appendix L).

### **Relationship Evaluations**

**Satisfaction.** Murray, Holmes and Griffin's (1996a) 4-item scale required participants to make global evaluations regarding the quality of their relationships (e.g., "I am extremely happy with my current relationship; I have a very strong relationship with my current partner"). The scale was based on items from Norton (1983) who argued for a face-valid outcome scale

uncontaminated by “process” items, such as good communication.

Murray et al. (1996a) reported an alpha reliability of .87 for this index. In the present study, internal consistency reliability was .91. In previous research, this measure has been found to correlate with optimism ( $r = .62, p < .01$ ) and perceptions of one’s partner ( $r = .55, p < .01$ ) (Murray, Holmes and Griffin, 1996a) as well as with feelings of ambivalence about one’s relationship ( $r = -.52, p < .01$ ) (Murray, Holmes & Griffin, 1995). (This scale is presented in Appendix M).

**Commitment.** The 2-item subscale ( $\alpha = .72$ ) assessed participants’ commitment to their present relationship (e.g., “I have made a firm promise to myself to do everything in my power to make my relationship work”). Items were selected from Rusbult’s (1983) commitment scale, an index that has established validity in predicting a variety of relationship outcomes (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993). (This scale is presented in Appendix N).

**Optimism.** An abridged, 6-item version of Murray, Holmes and Griffin’s (1996a) scale assessed participants’ optimism about the future of their relationships with their current partners. They were asked to rate the probability that a number of events would occur (e.g., “My partner and I never tiring of one another’s company no matter how much time we spend together; The love my partner and I share continuing to grow”). Predictions were made on seven-point scales (1 = not at all likely, 7 = extremely likely).

A principal components analysis replicated the unidimensional factor structure reported by Murray and her colleagues (1996a). Further, the scale had high internal consistency. Murray et al. reported an alpha reliability of .89 ( $\alpha = .92$  in the present study). In terms of validity, the optimism scale was found to predict changes in satisfaction over time (in contrast, the cross



lagged correlations for the opposite direction of influence were not significant) (e.g., Murray et al., 1996b). (This scale is presented in Appendix O).

### **Family of Origin Measures**

**Parents' relationship quality.** Developed for the present study, this 6-item scale ( $\alpha = .95$ ) assessed participants' perceptions regarding the quality of their parents' marriages during childhood (e.g., "When I was growing up, my parents had an excellent marital relationship"). Items were similar in content to those used in previous studies of Divorce Adults (e.g., White, Brinkeroff & Booth, 1985; Franklin et al., 1990). (This scale is presented in Appendix P).

**Parental conflict severity.** The two-item Conflict Severity Index (CSI) was used to assess participants' perceptions regarding the severity of parental conflict during childhood and adolescence ( $\alpha = .90$ ). The wording of the items was altered so that participants rated the frequency and intensity of interparental strife rather than their own conflictual interactions (e.g., "My parents fought significantly more than most couples"). (The reader will note that this is the same index that was used at the outset of the study to assign participants to the Conflict and Intact groups. It was included in the package of measures, in part, to assess the test-retest reliability of the parental conflict severity scale).

In order to allow for appropriate comparisons between Divorce and Intact/Conflict Adults, Divorce Individuals were instructed to rate the severity of conflict that occurred prior to the marital separation ( $\alpha = .91$ ). In a separate section, they were asked to rate the severity of post-divorce conflict ( $\alpha = .92$ ). (This scale is presented in Appendix Q).

**Quality of relationship with mother.** Developed for the present study, this 3-item scale ( $\alpha = .85$ ) provided a global index of the quality of participants' relationships with their mothers (e.g.,

“During childhood, I had a very good relationship with my mother”). (This scale is presented in Appendix R).

Quality of relationship with father. Developed for the present study, this 3-item scale ( $\alpha = .87$ ) provided a global index of the quality of participants’ relationships with their fathers (e.g., “During childhood, I had a very good relationship with my father”). (This scale is presented in Appendix S).

## **Results**

### **Concurrent Findings: Group Differences**

**Preliminary analyses.** Gender (male versus female) by family of origin group (Intact versus Divorce versus Conflict) ANOVAs of the dependent measures yielded no significant interaction terms. Gender categories were thus collapsed in the majority of subsequent analyses.

**Analytic strategy.** One-way (family of origin category) ANOVAs of the dependent measures were conducted. A priori hypotheses regarding specific differences between groups were tested with planned contrasts. All other mean differences were evaluated using Scheffé post hoc tests.

Planned contrasts typically involved making pairwise comparisons between means (e.g., Intact versus Divorce Adults, or Intact versus Conflict Adults). However, when gender differences were predicted within the divorce sample, the mean of one subgroup (i.e., Divorce Females) was contrasted with that of three others (Divorce Males, Intact Males and Intact Females). The means of the comparison group (i.e., those of Divorce Males, Intact Males and Intact Females) were first compared with a one-way analysis of variance. If they were equivalent, the three versus one (Divorce Females) mean contrast was conducted to test the prediction that divorce affected females but not males adversely. This strategy was consistent with Bobko's (1986) recommendations for evaluating the significance of ordinal interactions. According to this author, traditional analyses of variance result in decreased power to detect such effects. The three versus one mean contrasts ensure that trends consistent with the study's hypothesis are not missed.

The significance level for each planned contrast was set at  $p < .05$ . Though not a

conservative criterion given the number of comparisons conducted, it was selected because of the nature of the constructs being studied. The probability of making Type II errors was considered to be relatively high for general model and vulnerability variables. Differences between secure and insecure groups are likely to be subtle in a study such as this where measures are completed under benign conditions. Attachment schemata are most active in guiding response patterns when one's relationship is threatened (Bowlby, 1973; Sroufe & Waters, 1977; Simpson et al., 1996). Fears and negative beliefs are likely to be less salient to individuals when they were not distressed about their involvements.

**Overview.** Findings within each category of measures are described in the following sections. Results for family of origin variables are presented first to establish that the groups' perceptions regarding their early experiences actually differed from one another. The focus then shifts to the constructs of interest: general models, cognitive/affective and behavioural vulnerabilities and evaluations of current relationships.

**Family of origin experiences.** The groups differed from one another on all family of origin measures. Means, standard deviations and overall F statistics are presented in Table 3 (separate means for males and females are displayed for the interested reader). Superscripts summarize the results of Scheffé post hoc tests. As one would expect, both Divorce and Conflict Adults perceived their parents as having poorer marital relationships than Intact participants. They also rated their parents as fighting more frequently and intensely with one another.

Participants' perceptions regarding their relationships with their parents were also assessed. Based on the literature, specific predictions were made for Conflict and Divorce Adults. Hypotheses for the former group were supported: Relative to Intact participants, Conflict Adults had poorer relationships with their fathers,  $t(104) = 7.50, p < .001$  as well as their mothers,  $t$

(114) = 5.38,  $p < .001$ .

Divorce Adults also rated **both** parent-child relationships more negatively,  $t(149) = 7.93$ ,  $p < .001$  for fathers, and  $t(184) = 2.51$ ,  $p < .05$  for mothers. This result had not been anticipated. While they had been expected to differ from Intact Adults in terms of the quality of their relationships with their fathers, their mother-child bonds had been expected to be comparable. Though the difference was unexpected, Divorce Adults maintained their expected rank ordering relative to individuals in the Conflict group. Their relationships with their mothers were more positive than those of Conflict Adults,  $t(133) = 3.02$ ,  $p < .01$ .<sup>6</sup>

General working models. Divorce and Conflict Adults were expected to have more negative general working models than Intact participants. Means, standard deviations and F statistics for these variables are presented in Table 4 (separate means for males and females are also displayed). Superscripts summarize the results of Scheffé post hoc tests.

Models of self. There was no main effect for family of origin category on the anxiety (i.e., model of self) measure. Planned contrasts were conducted, however, to test specific a priori hypotheses. Consistent with predictions, Conflict Adults had more negative models of self than did Intact Individuals: That is, they scored higher on the anxiety variable than Intact participants,  $t(161) = 2.24$ ,  $p < .05$ .

Divorce Females were also expected to have more negative models of self than members of the Intact group. Divorce Males, in contrast, were expected to score comparably to Intact

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<sup>6</sup> Though the means of Divorce and Conflict participants differed from those of Intact Adults, their scores were also more variable. There was a greater range in the quality of their parents' marital relationships,  $Levine(2, 251) = 59.26$ ,  $p < .001$ , and parent-child bonds,  $Levine(2, 252) = 4.72$ ,  $p < .05$  for the quality of their relationships with mothers, and  $Levine(2, 252) = 20.71$ ,  $p < .001$  for the quality of their relationships with fathers. Divorce Adults' scores on the parental conflict severity measure were also more variable than those of Intact and Conflict participants,  $Levine(2, 252) = 17.55$ ,  $p < .001$ .

Adults on this variable. This prediction was tested by comparing Divorce Females' mean with that of individuals in the other three groups: Divorce Males, Intact Males and Intact Females. (The separate variance estimate was used in the analysis, given that Divorce Adults' scores were more variable on the anxiety measure,  $F(3, 195) = 2.82, p < .05$ ).

A one-way analysis of variance indicated that the means of the subgroups that comprised the comparison group were, indeed, equivalent to one another. Divorce Males, Intact Males and Intact Females had comparable models of self. Further, consistent with predictions, Divorce Females scored higher on anxiety than these individuals (i.e., they had more negative models of self),  $t(100) = 2.60, p < .01$ .

In addition to examining participants' self perceptions in relationships, global self-esteem was assessed with the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE). The global self-evaluations of Conflict Adults were expected to be lower than those of Intact participants. Conflict Adults, indeed, scored lower than Intact Individuals on the RSE,  $t(250) = 4.26, p < .001$ . In fact, a Scheffé test revealed them to feel more negatively about themselves in general than individuals in the Divorce group.

Models of others. Relative to Intact Adults, Conflict Adults were found to have more negative models of others as well as more negative models of self. As predicted, they scored higher on avoidance (i.e., models of others) than Intact Individuals,  $t(260) = 2.53, p < .01$ . Conflict Adults had also been expected to differ from Divorce Adults on this variable. However, this prediction was not supported. Divorce Adults did not differ from either Intact or Conflict participants on the avoidance (i.e., models of others) scale.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> In addition to comparing group means on dimensional attachment indices (i.e., anxiety and avoidance), it was possible to contrast participants' attachment styles. Scores on anxiety and avoidance could be combined to form Bartholomew's (1990) attachment categories. Participants with low scores on both axes (i.e., with positive models of

**General distrust: Models of self and others combined.** Consistent with predictions,

Conflict Adults exhibited higher levels of general distrust than Intact Adults,  $t(261) = 4.20, p < .001$ . A Scheffé test revealed that they were also less trusting than Divorce participants. (Divorce Adults did not differ from members of the Intact group on this general model variable.<sup>8</sup>

**General relationship beliefs.** As expected, both Divorce,  $t(260) = 3.88, p < .001$  and Conflict  $t(260) = 3.39, p < .01$  Adults exhibited lower levels of optimism about their future marital relationships than members of the Intact group. Contrary to expectations, however, the groups did not differ on the conflict efficacy measure. Relative to Intact Adults, neither Divorce nor Conflict Adults perceived couples as being less capable of resolving contentious issues in their relationships.<sup>9</sup>

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self and others) were categorized as being secure in their orientations; in contrast, those high on both axes (i.e., those who had negative models of self and other) were classified as fearful-avoidant. Those low on anxiety (positive self) but high on avoidance (negative other) were categorized as dismissing-avoidant. And, those high on anxiety (negative self) but low on avoidance (positive other) were classified as preoccupied (see Bartholomew, 1990). The 60th percentile was used to dichotomize the continuous variables. A survey of studies on attachment had indicated that approximately 60 percent of participants fell into positive self (i.e., secure or dismissing-avoidant) and positive other (i.e., secure or preoccupied) categories.

This system generated findings that were consistent with the pattern of means on dimensional indices. Divorce and Conflict Adults were more likely than Intact participants to fall into insecure (i.e., preoccupied, fearful or dismissive) versus secure categories,  $\chi^2(6) = 12.64, p < .05$  (see Appendix T). The groups also differed in terms of the kinds of insecurities exhibited. Relative to Intact (33%) and Divorce (36%) participants, a higher percentage of Conflict Adults (52%) appeared to cluster within categories that were characterized by negative models of others (fearful + dismissing-avoidant): Conflict Adults were, indeed, more likely than Intact participants to be fearful in orientation,  $\chi^2(1) = 5.08, p < .05$ . They were not, however, significantly more likely to be dismissing-avoidant. Divorce Females, in contrast, fell into negative self model categories. That is, they were more likely than Intact Adults to be preoccupied (i.e., to have more negative models of self relative to Intact participants, but comparable models of others),  $\chi^2(1) = 5.47, p < .05$ .

<sup>8</sup> A one (Divorce Females) versus three (Divorce Males, Intact Males and Intact Females) mean contrast was conducted on the general distrust measure, given that predictions had been directed towards Divorce Females. However, the results were not significant.

<sup>9</sup> A one (Divorce Females) versus three (Intact Males, Intact Females and Divorce Males) mean contrast was conducted, given the pattern that emerged on the anxiety variable. This analysis tested the hypothesis that only females' perceptions of efficacy were affected by the divorce. A one-way analysis of variance revealed that the subgroups within the comparison group (i.e., Intact Males, Intact Females and Divorce Males) had comparable means. Further, Divorce Females appeared to exhibit lower levels of conflict efficacy than these individuals; however, the contrast was not quite significant,  $t(195) = 1.86, p = .07$ .

**Summary of general model findings.** Divorce Females thus had more negative models of self than Divorce Males and Intact Adults. As predicted, however, their models of others were comparable, a pattern consistent with a more preoccupied attachment style. Conflict Adults, in contrast, had more negative models of both self and others than Intact Adults. That is, they were more fearful in their attachment orientations (i.e., less trusting of relationships in general). (The analysis of attachment categories supported these conclusions about the groups' general attachment styles). As expected, the global self-evaluations of Conflict Adults were also more negative than those of Intact Individuals.

Divorce and Conflict Adults scored similarly on measures that assessed their beliefs about relationships. Consistent with predictions, both groups were less optimistic than members of the Intact group about their future marital relationships. However, contrary to expectations, they did not exhibit lower levels of conflict efficacy.

**Cognitive/affective vulnerabilities.** Divorce Females and Conflict Adults were expected to have specific areas of vulnerability in their ongoing relationships, given their negative general models. There was some evidence to support this prediction. Means, standard deviations and F statistics are presented in Table 5 (separate means for males and females are also displayed). Superscripts summarize the results of Scheffé post hoc tests.

There was no main effect for family of origin category on the abandonment concern variable. Nevertheless, a planned contrast was conducted to test predictions regarding the divorce sample. Divorce Females (but not Males) were expected to worry more about being left by their current partners than Intact Adults.

The prediction was tested by comparing Divorce Females' mean with that of individuals in the other three subgroups: Divorce Males, Intact Males and Intact Females. The separate



variance estimate was, again, used given that Divorce Adults' scores were more variable on the scale,  $F(3, 195) = 2.93, p < .05$ . A one-way analysis of variance revealed the subgroups that made up the comparison group (i.e., Divorce Males, Intact Males and Intact Females) to have comparable means. Further, consistent with the study's hypothesis, Divorce Females had stronger abandonment concerns than these individuals,  $t(101) = 2.15, p < .05$ . (Conflict Adults did not differ from either Divorce or Intact participants on this measure).

Rather than worrying about abandonment, Conflict Adults "struggled" with concerns about closeness and intimacy in their ongoing relationships. Consistent with the study's predictions, they differed significantly from Intact Adults on closeness concern variables. Conflict Adults had stronger approach-avoidance conflicts than Intact participants,  $t(261) = 3.22, p < .01$  (i.e., they were more likely to fluctuate between desiring and shying away from being close with their current partners). They also had stronger intimacy-demand concerns,  $t(261) = 2.50, p < .05$ . That is, they became more anxious than Intact Adults when asked to engage in "intimacy-building" behaviours (e.g., support-giving).

Divorce Females and Conflict Adults were expected to have one worry in common: a concern about conflict. Consistent with this prediction, Conflict Adults scored higher than Intact Individuals on the conflict concern index,  $t(261) = 2.11, p < .05$ .<sup>10</sup> Divorce Females, too, worried more about conflictual interactions with their partners than did members of their comparison group (i.e., Divorce Males, Intact Males and Intact Females),  $t(196) = 3.30, p < .01$ . (The subgroups that comprised the comparison group for Divorce Females did not differ from one

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<sup>10</sup> Conflict and Intact Adults did not differ significantly on the conflict concern variable when more conservative tests were conducted (i.e., Scheffé tests). The message in the text thus differs from that conveyed by the superscripts in Table 5.

another on this variable).

**Behavioural vulnerabilities.** Divorce Females and Conflict Adults were also expected to share specific behavioural vulnerabilities, given their negative models of self and/or others. The results of planned contrasts revealed that Divorce Adults in general (i.e., not just females) scored similarly to Conflict Adults on these indices.<sup>11</sup> Both groups fought more frequently and intensely with their relationship partners than Intact participants (i.e., they scored higher on the conflict severity index). In addition, they exhibited more destructive conflict styles. That is, they were more likely than members of the Intact group to deal with problems in ways that have been shown to characterize distressed couples.

**Summary of vulnerability findings.** Consistent with the study's predictions, then, Divorce Females/Conflict Adults were more likely than Intact participants to experience their relationships as anxiety-provoking. Divorce Females had stronger abandonment concerns than members of their comparison group, while Conflict Adults had stronger concerns about closeness than Intact participants. Further, both groups worried more intensely than Intact Individuals about conflictual interactions with their partners. The groups also differed from Intact Adults on behavioural vulnerability indices. Divorce Adults in general (i.e., both males and females) as well as Conflict Adults fought more frequently and destructively with their partners.

Did these groups, then, evaluate their relationships less positively? Were they less satisfied with their involvements than Intact participants?

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<sup>11</sup> The results of the one (Divorce Females) versus three (Divorce Males, Intact Males and Intact Females) mean contrasts were actually significant,  $t(195) = 2.44, p < .05$ , and  $t(194) = 2.46, p < .05$  for the conflict severity and destructive conflict style indices respectively. However, these findings were quite misleading. Rather than reflecting a true one versus three group pattern, they were attributable to the strong main effect for family of origin category (see Table 3). Like Divorce Females, Divorce Males differed from Intact participants on the conflict measures,  $t(134) = 3.37, p < .001$  and  $t(133) = 2.06, p < .05$  for conflict severity and destructive conflict style indices respectively.

Evaluations of current relationships (i.e., relationship evaluations). Perhaps surprisingly, they were not expected to differ from individuals in the Intact group on measures that assessed their perceptions of their relationship's quality. Findings were consistent with this hypothesis (see Table 5). The groups' global evaluations of their relationships' current state were comparable to one another: Neither Divorce nor Conflict Adults differed from Intact participants on the satisfaction index. Further, the groups scored similarly on commitment and optimism measures.

Summary of group difference findings. Overall, then, the predicted pattern of means was obtained. Divorce Females and Conflict Adults had more negative general models than Intact participants, and stronger vulnerabilities in their ongoing close relationships. Yet, they evaluated their relationships as positively as did members of the Intact group. In the next section, hypotheses regarding the dynamics responsible for the pattern are tested through path analyses of the concurrent dependent measures.

### Concurrent Findings: Correlational Results

Overview. The relationships among general model, vulnerability and relationship evaluation variables were examined to test the viability of the causal model outlined earlier in the paper (see Figure 1).<sup>12</sup> The predictors of participants' cognitive/affective and behavioural vulnerabilities were explored (path a). General models were expected to be associated with these variables for all family of origin groups. Path analyses were then conducted to index the association between vulnerability and relationship evaluation variables (path b). Group

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<sup>12</sup> It would have been possible to include an additional path in the model: one from family of origin variables to general models. These correlations were, in fact, examined. Unlike the mean scores for the groups, however, they were not at all informative. The magnitude of the associations was, at best, weak. On average, the quantitative indices accounted for only 4% of the variance in participants' general models. These surprising findings may speak to the difficulty of "decomposing gestalts" into quantitative rating scales. It is, perhaps, difficult to reduce the experience of divorce and conflict to indices of parents' marital satisfaction or parent-child relationship quality. Doing so in the present study led one to lose the reality of the overall psychological experience.

differences were anticipated, with much weaker correlations expected for Divorce Females and Conflict Adults. Finally, direct paths between general model and relationship quality variables were examined (path c). These relationships were not expected to be significant. General models were hypothesized to exert their influence on perceptions of relationship quality via areas of vulnerability.

Preliminary analyses. Prior to examining family of origin group differences on these paths, product terms (gender x family of origin category) were created to determine whether gender interacted with group status to produce the obtained coefficients. Less conservative analyses were also conducted to ensure that no trends were missed: Males' coefficients were compared to those of their female counterparts within family of origin categories. Only one significant gender difference emerged. This finding will be discussed in the appropriate section of the text. Gender categories were collapsed in all other analyses, including those involving Divorce Adults. (Contrary to predictions, the patterns obtained applied equally to males and females in this group).

Path a. Hypotheses regarding path a were tested by examining the zero-order correlations between general model and vulnerability variables. Group differences were assessed using Fisher's z tests. Table 6 displays the coefficients for each family of origin group as well as the combined sample.

Abandonment concerns were expected to be predicted primarily by participants' models of self (i.e., anxiety). The more anxious their orientations, the more they were expected to worry that their current partners would leave. A strong association was, indeed, found between these two variables for all family of origin groups. Anxiety accounted for 36% of the variance in the specific vulnerability measure, significantly more than that which was accounted for by avoidance (i.e., models of others),  $t(260) = 5.29, p < .001$ . (The difference in dependent correlations was

assessed using the formula recommended by Steiger, 1980). Anxiety (i.e., models of self) also predicted unique variance in the criterion when entered into a regression simultaneously with avoidance (i.e., models of others) ( $\beta = .58$ ),  $t = 11.59$ ,  $p < .001$ . (The relationship between these general models and abandonment concerns is depicted in Figure 2. Unlike the text, the figure presents findings separately for each family of origin group).

Closeness concerns were expected to be predicted by participants' attachment models of others (i.e., avoidance). The more avoidant their general orientations, the more ambivalent they were expected to feel about being close with their present partners. Avoidance (i.e., models of others) was, indeed, associated with the closeness concern variable, accounting for 17% of its variance. Further, it was a stronger predictor of the criterion than one's model of self (i.e., anxiety),  $t(260) = 1.99$ ,  $p < .05$ . Avoidance predicted unique variance in the criterion when entered simultaneously into a regression with anxiety (i.e., models of self), ( $\beta = .39$ ),  $t = 6.90$ ,  $p < .001$ . (The relationship between these general models and closeness concerns is depicted in Figure 3. Unlike the text, the figure presents findings separately for each family of origin group).<sup>13</sup>

Conflict concerns were expected to be predicted by models of both self and others. However, it was found to be related only to the former general model variable ( $r = .33$ ). Contrary to predictions, worries about conflict were not at all associated with avoidance (i.e., models of others) ( $r = .06$ ).

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<sup>13</sup> General distrust was moderately associated with abandonment and closeness concerns (i.e., with vulnerabilities related to models of self and models of others respectively). These findings were consistent with the theoretical notion that general distrust captures both critical attachment dimensions. The correlations were not highlighted, however, for when one of the factors emerged as a dominant predictor, whether it was anxiety (i.e., models of self) or avoidance (i.e., models of others), general distrust did not predict unique variance in the vulnerability.

Models of both self and others (i.e., anxiety and avoidance) were also expected to predict the severity of conflict in participants' relationships. However, this hypothesis was not supported. Though anxiety (i.e., models of self) was significantly associated with this specific vulnerability measure, it accounted for only 4% of its variance.

**Summary of path a results.** Hypotheses regarding path a were thus supported for the abandonment and closeness concern variables. Whereas, worries about being left were predicted by participants' models of self (i.e., anxiety), concerns about closeness were predicted by their models of others (i.e., avoidance). These findings increased the plausibility of the notion that these cognitive/affective vulnerabilities were shaped by the content of participants' general models.

**Path b.** Hypotheses regarding path b were tested through path analysis. Three simultaneous predictors (general models of self and others -- anxiety and avoidance -- and a specific vulnerability variable) were regressed onto satisfaction (i.e., the relationship evaluation measure). The beta associated with the specific vulnerability was the index of path b. These analyses were conducted for each family of origin group.

Group differences in these coefficients were evaluated with moderated multiple regression. Product terms were created by multiplying vulnerability and family of origin category variables. These terms were entered simultaneously with general model (i.e., anxiety and avoidance) and main effect variables (i.e., the specific vulnerability measure and family of origin category). Those that predicted a unique proportion of the criterion's variance highlighted a significant family of origin group difference in path b coefficients.

Group differences were also evaluated using less complicated analyses. Zero-order correlations between specific vulnerabilities and relationship quality indices were contrasted with

Fisher's z tests (see Table 7). The two approaches yielded consistent results. Accordingly, only path analyses are described in the text.

Path b coefficients were examined to evaluate the viability of the compartmentalization hypothesis. The hypothesis predicted stronger betas for Intact than Divorce Females and Conflict participants. The predicted pattern emerged for the abandonment concern vulnerability, though it applied to both Divorce Males and Females. Abandonment concerns strongly predicted satisfaction for Intact Adults ( $\beta = -.52$ ). The stronger their worries about being left, the less positively they evaluated their relationships. But, the vulnerability was unrelated to Divorce Adults' level of satisfaction ( $\beta = -.13$ ),  $\beta = .50$ ,  $t = 2.08$ ,  $p < .05$  for the interaction term (see Figure 2).

The predicted pattern appeared to emerge for Conflict participants as well ( $\beta = -.21$ ),  $\beta = .58$ ,  $t = 2.07$ ,  $p < .05$  for the interaction term (see Figure 2). However, their path b coefficient was misleading. Betas differed significantly, with opposite signs for Conflict Males ( $\beta = .31$ ) and Conflict Females ( $\beta = -.28$ ),  $\beta = 1.31$ ,  $t = 2.19$ ,  $p < .05$ . In order to evaluate the compartmentalization hypothesis for this group, separate gender analyses were needed.

The predicted pattern was not obtained for either Conflict Males or Females. Conflict Females' beta did not differ significantly from that of Intact Females ( $\beta = -.67$ ). (This finding was consistent with the pattern of zero-order correlations. Abandonment concerns were strongly related to satisfaction for both Conflict ( $r = -.40$ ) and Intact Females ( $r = -.56$ )). Further, though Conflict Males' coefficient ( $\beta = .31$ ) differed significantly from that of Intact Males ( $\beta = -.30$ ),  $\beta = 1.48$ ,  $t = 2.30$ ,  $p < .05$ , the group difference was attributable to the difference in signs rather than the magnitude of the effect. That is, it was not consistent with the pattern predicted by the

compartmentalization hypothesis.

The expected pattern did not emerge for either Divorce or Conflict participants on other vulnerability measures. Closeness concerns predicted satisfaction equally well for all family of origin groups (see Figure 3). The more ambivalent participants were about being close with their partners, the less satisfied they were with their relationships ( $\beta$ 's = -.24, -.27 and -.40 for Intact, Divorce and Conflict participants). The groups' coefficients were also similar to one another on the conflict concern variable ( $\beta$ 's = -.35, -.12 and -.26 for Intact, Divorce and Conflict Adults). Conflict severity (i.e., behavioural vulnerabilities) predicted the criterion comparably for all participants as well (see Figure 4). The more couples fought, the less positively they evaluated their involvements ( $\beta$ 's = -.40, -.27, -.31 for Intact, Divorce and Conflict participants).

Summary of path b findings. The compartmentalization hypothesis was, thus, supported only for the abandonment concern variable -- the vulnerability hypothesized to characterize Divorce Females. Abandonment concerns predicted satisfaction for Intact Adults. The more they worried about being left, the less positively they evaluated their relationships. However, Divorce Adults' satisfaction with their ongoing close involvements was unrelated to the intensity of their abandonment concerns.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> In addition to satisfaction, there were two other related measures of perceived relationship quality: commitment and optimism. Path b coefficients tended to be similar when these indices were used as the criterion variables. For example, patterns consistent with the compartmentalization hypothesis emerged when abandonment concerns' association with commitment was examined ( $\beta$ 's = -.54, .02, and -.07 for Intact, Divorce and Conflict Participants). Whereas, the variables were strongly related for Intact Adults, they were less strongly related to one another for Divorce,  $\beta = .69$ ,  $t = 2.80$ ,  $p < .01$ , and Conflict participants,  $\beta = .84$ ,  $t = 2.96$ ,  $p < .01$ .

The predicted pattern was not found when abandonment concerns was regressed onto optimism. However, a trend was evident for Divorce Females. Gender (male versus female) and family of origin category (Intact versus Divorce) variables showed a marginal interaction pattern,  $\beta = .65$ ,  $t = 1.82$ ,  $p < .10$ . Path coefficients were comparable for males ( $\beta$ 's = -.21 and -.22 for Intact and Divorce Males), but differed somewhat for females ( $\beta$ 's = -.23 and -.45 for Divorce and Intact Daughters),  $\beta = .58$ ,  $t = 1.89$ ,  $p < .10$ .

No significant compartmentalization effects were found for the other specific vulnerability measures, though a trend was, again, evident for Divorce Females. When conflict severity was regressed onto optimism, a marginal gender (males versus females) by family of origin category (Intact versus Divorce) interaction emerged,  $\beta = .60$ ,  $t = 1.83$ ,  $p <$



**Path c.** Predictions for the model's final path focused on the relationship between general model variables and relationship quality indices. Vulnerabilities were expected to mediate the association between distal (i.e., general models) and proximal (relationship evaluation) variables. In order to test this prediction, models of self and others had to, first, be shown to be associated with evaluation variables. Correlations are displayed in Table 8. The reader will note that the coefficients were, indeed, significant.

The next step was to determine whether the associations "disappeared" when shared variance with vulnerability (i.e., mediator) variables was removed -- that is, whether general models continued to predict a significant proportion of the variance in satisfaction when entered simultaneously with vulnerability indices (Baron & Kenny, 1986). There was, indeed, no significant direct path between individuals' level of anxiety (i.e., models of self) and their evaluations of their relationships when their abandonment concerns were "controlled for" in this manner. Consistent with the study's predictions, abandonment concerns appeared to mediate the relationship between distal (i.e., models of self) and proximal (i.e., relationship evaluation) variables ( $\beta = -.02$  and  $\beta = -.03$  for satisfaction and optimism). However, contrary to predictions, models of others (i.e., avoidance) continued to be associated with the criterion measures when shared variance with its vulnerability (i.e., closeness concerns) was removed. The average path c beta was .24. The mediational hypothesis was thus not supported for this general model measure.

#### **Longitudinal Findings: Break-up Percentages**

**Six-month break-up rates.** The mechanisms that were hypothesized to have evolved to

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.10. Whereas male coefficients were comparable ( $\beta$ 's =  $-.42$  and  $-.45$  for Intact and Divorce Males), females' betas differed significantly from one another ( $\beta$ 's =  $-.61$ , and  $-.23$  for Intact and Divorce Females),  $\beta = .58$ ,  $t = 2.21$ ,  $p < .05$ .

prevent the relationship evaluations of Divorce Females and Conflict Adults from being contaminated by family of origin-related concerns were not expected to protect them over time. It was predicted that their vulnerabilities would, gradually, erode their bonds with partners, increasing their risk of break-up. Consistent with this hypothesis, Divorce Adults (39.6%) (i.e., both males and females) were more likely than Intact participants (23.2%) to have their relationships dissolve during the initial follow-up period,  $\chi^2(1) = 5.98, p < .05$ . Indeed, they had higher break-up rates than individuals from conflict-ridden families (24.2%),  $\chi^2(1) = 4.00, p < .05$  at six months. Contrary to predictions, the relationships of Conflict Adults were as stable as those of Intact participants.

One-year break-up rates. However, the pattern shifted dramatically between the six and twelve month marks. The rate of break-up for Divorce participants dropped unexpectedly from 40% (Time 1 to Time 2) to 10% (Time 2 to Time 3). During the second follow-up period, Divorce Adults (both males and females) were almost less likely than Intact Adults (21.4%) to break-up with their partners ( $p < .10$ ). As a result of this decrease, the group differences that had existed at six months were not evident when the percentages for the entire 12-month period were examined. By one year, Divorce Adults (48.9%) were as likely as both Intact (40.2%) and Conflict (43.1%) participants to have had their relationships end.

#### Longitudinal Findings: Predictors of Break-up

Overview. Additional analyses were conducted to explore the factors that precipitated break-ups for each group. Correlations were computed between possible predictors (i.e., relationship evaluation indices, cognitive/affective and behavioural vulnerabilities and general model variables), and participants' relationship status (i.e., apart versus together). Predictors were

identified for the break-ups that occurred over the course of the year, as well as the first six months. Given the consistency of the findings yielded by the two sets of analyses, this section focuses on the former group of predictors. The one-year criterion maximized the probability of detecting reliable group differences. Break-up rates were higher at one year versus six months for all family of origin groups. Group differences in the strength of the associations between predictors and break-up were evaluated using Fisher's z tests.

**Preliminary analyses.** Prior to examining family of origin group differences in the predictors of break-up, product terms (gender x family of origin category) were created to determine whether gender interacted with group status to produce the obtained coefficients. Less conservative analyses were also conducted to ensure that no trends were missed: Males' coefficients were compared to those of their female counterparts within each family of origin category. Only one significant gender difference emerged. This finding will be discussed in the appropriate section of the text. Gender categories were collapsed in all other analyses.

**Satisfaction.** Consistent with the findings of previous researchers (see Berscheid & Reis, 1998) as well as the study's predictions, satisfaction ( $r = -.53$ ) emerged as the strongest predictor of Intact participants' break-ups (see Table 9) (all  $t$ 's  $> 1.98$ ,  $p$ 's  $< .05$ ). The less positively their relationships were evaluated, the less likely they were to endure. Satisfaction was a powerful precipitant of outcome for this group. It remained strongly associated with the criterion when all other predictors were controlled for,  $\beta = -.53$ ,  $t = -4.21$ ,  $p < .001$ . It also appeared to mediate the relationships between other predictors and break-up. Abandonment concerns, conflict severity, general distrust, marital optimism and conflict efficacy were significantly associated with the relationship status of Intact participants at one year (see Table 9). However, when each variable was entered simultaneously with satisfaction, the vulnerability/general model predictor no longer

accounted for a significant proportion of the criterion's variance ( $\beta$ 's = .02, -.06, .09, -.14 and -.11 respectively). Satisfaction, in contrast, remained strongly associated with break-up in each regression analysis ( $\beta$ 's ranged from -.48 to -.56, all  $p$ 's < .001).

Contrary to predictions, the results for Conflict Participants were also in line with the research literature. Satisfaction predicted their break-ups as strongly as it did for Intact Adults ( $r = -.43$ ).

These findings were not expected to be replicated for Divorce Females. Vulnerabilities were expected to be more critical predictors of outcome for this family of origin group. Consistent with this prediction, satisfaction was a weaker predictor of break-up for Divorce (both males and females) ( $r = -.24$ ) than Intact Adults,  $z = 2.75$ ,  $p < .01$ . Divorce Adults' outcomes were only weakly related to this relationship quality index.

Vulnerabilities in ongoing bonds. However, contrary to expectations, the areas of vulnerability of Divorce Adults accounted for no more variance in the criterion than their level of satisfaction (R Squared ranged from 0% to 5%). The cognitive/affective and behavioural vulnerabilities that they struggled with in their ongoing involvements were not more predictive of outcome than the relationship evaluation variable. For example, though abandonment concerns predicted break-up for all family of origin groups, the association was relatively weak ( $r = .23$ ).

The possibility that general model (rather than vulnerability) variables were the most critical predictors of break-up for Divorce Adults was explored in a post hoc fashion.

General models. Of the general model (i.e., distal) variables included in the present study, none accounted for significantly more variance in the break-ups of Divorce Adults than their level of satisfaction. The only correlation to exceed a magnitude of .30 was that between break-up and

conflict efficacy ( $r$ 's =  $-.35$  and  $.38$  for Divorce Females and Males respectively).

This variable was intriguing, for it was the only predictor for which gender differences emerged,  $\beta = 1.97$ ,  $t = 3.49$ ,  $p < .01$  for Divorce Females versus Divorce Males. Separate gender analyses revealed the break-ups of both Divorce ( $r = -.35$ ) and Intact ( $r = -.21$ ) Females to be predicted by a lack of perceived efficacy. The less capable of resolving difficulties they regarded couples as being, the more vulnerable they were to break-up.<sup>15</sup> In contrast, the break-ups of Divorce Males were predicted by heightened perceptions of efficacy ( $r = .38$ ). This was not the case for either Intact ( $r = -.33$ ),  $z = 2.97$ ,  $p < .01$  or Conflict Males ( $r = -.24$ ),  $z = 1.97$ ,  $p < .05$ .<sup>16</sup>

The longitudinal findings for Divorce and Intact Adults thus differed in critical ways. The break-ups of Divorce participants were predicted weakly by a small subset of variables, rather than strongly by satisfaction. However, taken together, these predictors accounted for percentages of variance in the criterion for males (33%) and females (18%) that were statistically comparable to those accounted for in Intact participants' break-ups (R Squared = 39% for both men and women from intact families).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Interestingly, at six months, conflict efficacy was a stronger predictor for Divorce Females ( $r = -.36$ ) than it was for women from intact families ( $r = .07$ ),  $z = 2.20$ ,  $p < .05$ .

<sup>16</sup> Also interesting about conflict efficacy (i.e., the general model predictor) was the fact that it accounted for variance in the criterion above and beyond that which was accounted for by satisfaction,  $\beta = -.29$ ,  $t = 2.04$ ,  $p < .05$  for Divorce Females, and  $\beta = .41$ ,  $t = 2.63$ ,  $p < .05$  for Divorce Males. This was not the case for Intact participants. The direct path from the general model variable to the criterion was not significant ( $\beta = -.04$  and  $\beta = -.22$  for women and men respectively). As was highlighted above, satisfaction appeared to mediate the associations between other constructs and break-up for Intact Adults. These findings suggested that, at one year, beliefs about efficacy appeared to exert a stronger direct influence on the outcomes of Divorce than Intact participants.

<sup>17</sup> While the groups did not differ significantly from one another in terms of the "percentage of variance accounted for", the break-ups of Divorce Females were somewhat more difficult to predict (R Squared = 18% versus 39% for Intact Adults). Exploratory analyses were conducted to determine whether subgroups within the sample were obscuring key patterns. In identifying variables that might moderate the association between predictors and break-up, family of origin experiences that had been identified as influencing functioning in previous studies were focused on. The severity of post-divorce conflict had been found to be associated with the content of individuals' general working models (Franklin et al., 1990). Accordingly, product terms were created to evaluate whether it interacted with general model, vulnerability, or evaluation predictors.

Turning to the general model predictors for Conflict participants, efficacy was not associated with break-up ( $r = -.09$ ). However, their outcomes were affected by their level of general distrust ( $r = .31$ ). The more they doubted that others would be responsive to their needs, the more vulnerable they were to break-up. At one year, the same was true of Intact participants ( $r = .22$ ).

Overall, then, the dynamics of Conflict and Intact Adults appeared similar. Lower levels of general trust and satisfaction predicted their break-ups. Moreover, their vulnerabilities helped to account for their dissatisfaction with their relationships. But, were the groups as similar as these analyses suggested? Exploratory, post-hoc analyses of means for critical variables highlighted potential differences in the processes responsible for the break-ups of Conflict participants.

Integrating means and correlations. General distrust predicted the break-ups of both Intact and Conflict Adults at the one year mark. However, mean scores set Conflict participants apart from Intact Individuals. Table 10 displays the means of participants who broke up and remained with their partners. Conflict Individuals who continued to date were significantly less trusting than Intact Adults who stayed with their partners,  $t(85) = 3.38, p < .01$ . In fact, they had as much difficulty with trust as Intact and Divorce Participants who had their relationships end (all  $t's < 1$ ). Apparently, Conflict Adults had more tolerance for feelings of insecurity in relationships.

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The results of regression analyses indicated that the severity of post-divorce interparental conflict, indeed, moderated the critical association between conflict efficacy and break-up,  $\beta = -1.58, t = -2.25, p < .05$ . A lack of perceived efficacy predicted outcome only for females from high conflict families. When the severity of post-divorce conflict was low, efficacy was unrelated to break-up. This finding was best illustrated by examining the associations between efficacy and the criterion for "high" ( $r = -.75$ ) and "low" ( $r = -.09$ ) post-divorce conflict females,  $z = 2.76, p < .01$ . The general model variable accounted for fully 56% of the variance in the break-ups of Divorce Females whose parents continued to fight frequently and intensely with one another following the divorce. Similar analyses were conducted for Divorce Males, given the impressiveness of these findings. However, no moderator effects were found.

Consistent with this hypothesis, it took higher levels of distrust to precipitate their break-ups. Conflict participants who broke up were less trusting than individuals in the other two groups,  $t(60) = 2.94, p < .01$  versus Intact Adults whose relationships dissolved, and  $t(66) = 2.60, p < .05$  versus Divorce Participants whose relationships dissolved.

A similar pattern emerged when conflict severity was examined. For both Intact and Conflict Adults, severity was associated with outcome, albeit indirectly. The more they fought, the less satisfied they felt, and the more vulnerable they were to break-up. Again, however, different thresholds were apparent (see Table 10). Conflict Adults who continued to date fought as much with their partners as Intact participants whose relationships dissolved. The same was true of Divorce participants. Both group appeared to tolerate higher levels of dissension in their ongoing relationships than Intact participants.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> The findings presented in this section are quite tentative. Family of origin category (Intact versus Conflict Adults) by relationship status (apart versus together) ANOVAs of the dependent measures (i.e., conflict severity and general distrust) failed to yield significant interaction terms. (Moderated multiple regression analyses also revealed that group membership failed to interact with the continuous predictors of interest). The levels of distrust/conflict of Conflict versus Intact Adults who remained with versus broke up with their partners were, nevertheless, contrasted given the intriguing pattern apparent upon examination of group means.

## **Discussion**

The current study explored the general working models of Divorce and Conflict Adults, clarifying their content as well as their impact on the groups' ongoing close relationships. This section reviews the findings for each family of origin group, and discusses their broader theoretical and clinical implications. The reader should note that many hypotheses will be generated about the dynamics responsible for the intriguing patterns obtained, given the paucity of data on Divorce/Conflict Adults' functioning in their ongoing relationships. Their validity will, of course, need to be explored in future studies of their involvements.

### **Conflict Adults**

**General working models.** Conflict Adults differed from Intact participants on all but one of the general model/belief indices included in the current study. As predicted, they had more pessimistic beliefs about relationships than members of the Intact group. That is, they were less likely to expect their future marriages to last.

Further, Conflict Adults had more negative models of self -- that is, stronger doubts about their worthiness of being loved -- as well as more negative models of others. They expected partners to be less caring and supportive than did their peers. This pattern was consistent with a more fearful (i.e., insecure) attachment style. Indeed, it was best summarized by the groups' level of general distrust (i.e., insecurity). Relative to both Intact and Divorce participants, Conflict Adults were more skeptical that others could be depended upon to meet their needs.

**Vulnerabilities.** The content of their general schemata appeared to shape both the nature and intensity of their concerns in their ongoing involvements (i.e., their cognitive/affective vulnerabilities). Relative to individuals with more positive models of others (i.e., Intact Adults), Conflict Individuals felt more ambivalent about becoming close with their current partners. That



is, they were more likely to report fluctuating between desiring and shying away from intimate interactions. They were also more anxious about the prospect of having to engage in intimacy-building behaviours (e.g., support-giving).

Interestingly, they were not more worried than Intact Adults about being left by their current partners. Though their models of self were more negative, Conflict Adults struggled only with the concerns presumed to have been engendered by their models of others. This pattern made sense in light of the nature of these vulnerabilities. Worries about abandonment imply a strong investment in one's ongoing close relationship. In order to be concerned about being left, individuals must be motivated to have their attachments endure. Individuals with closeness concerns (e.g., Conflict Adults) may lack these "prerequisites," feeling uncertain about the strength of their feelings for partners. After all, they fluctuate between missing them intensely when they are apart, but wanting to escape when they manage to spend time with one another. They may not know whether they really want their relationships to continue. Alternatively, they may defend against acknowledging their "dependence" on their relationships. Closeness concerns may prompt individuals to remain distanced, emotionally, from their partners to minimize the impact of potential disappointment on their overall well-being.

In addition to having stronger closeness concerns, Conflict participants more frequently, intensely, and destructively with their partners than members of the Intact group. However, as predicted, they did not evaluate their relationships less positively. Despite their conflicts/anxieties Conflict Adults were as satisfied with their involvements as their peers.

The compartmentalization hypothesis. Their satisfaction was expected to be attributable to an ongoing defensive process (i.e., compartmentalization). Fears and conflicts were hypothesized to be prevented from contaminating their feelings about their relationships.

However, there was little evidence to support this prediction. Closeness concerns and conflicts were at least moderately related to satisfaction for all family of origin groups. To what, then, might one attribute the pattern in means?

Essential equivalence in relationship rewards. Conflict Adults, perhaps, felt as satisfied as their peers because their relationships were not less rewarding. Their involvements were not considerably more anxiety-provoking than those of Intact Adults -- at least, not according to group means. There may not have been substantive differences in their interpersonal response patterns. For example, though somewhat more anxious about the prospect of being close, Conflict Adults may not have been more avoidant of intimate interactions than Intact participants.

Findings from previous studies decrease the plausibility of this hypothesis. As has been found with self-esteem and satisfaction indices, scores on attachment scales tend to fall within a relatively restricted range. Yet, differences along this truncated continuum can be highly predictive of outcome. For instance, Simpson and his colleagues (e.g., Simpson et al., 1996; Simpson et al., 1992) found even small increments in the negativity of models of others to be associated with meaningful differences in behaviour, for example, decreases in the amount of comfort and support provided to partners in emotional distress, and increases in the level of distance maintained during conflictual interactions.

Behavioural avoidance. Conflict Adults were thus likely to have been at least somewhat more avoidant of closeness than Intact participants. Indeed, their behaviour may have deviated substantially from that of individuals with more positive models of others (i.e., Intact Adults).

The full extent of Conflict Adults' vulnerabilities was likely to have been underestimated by the measurement process. The cognitive and affective features of specific attachment styles are thought to be less salient when conditions are not "threatening" (Simpson et al., 1996). The

vulnerabilities associated with fearfulness, for example, are hypothesized to be most apparent when partners make intimacy demands (e.g., requests for emotional support).

If this were the case, Conflict Adults' closeness concerns may have been quite intense in the context of their ongoing involvements, despite the absolute value of group means. The elevation in their anxiety level relative to that of their peers might have led to substantive differences in their approach to their current relationships. Conflict Adults may have maintained greater distance from their partners to protect themselves from being hurt. For example, they may have been much more avoidant of intimate interactions, and more likely to withdraw when they needed support.

Not only then, would their relationships have been more anxiety-provoking and conflictual than those of their peers, but they may have been associated with fewer "rewarding" exchanges. Why, then, were they evaluated as positively as those of Intact Adults? Possibilities are suggested in the following sections.

A threshold model. Conflict Adults may have had greater tolerance for negativity in their ongoing bonds. They had, perhaps, habituated to conflict and/or anxiety in intimate involvements. Their family of origin experiences may have desensitized them -- at least to a certain extent. They, indeed, seemed willing to remain in relationships that Intact participants might leave. Those who stayed with their partners fought as much at Time one as Intact Adults whose attachments disintegrated. They also struggled with comparable levels of distrust. Higher levels of negativity seemed necessary to precipitate their break-ups.

Conflict Adults may also have had different standards for evaluating the seriousness of vulnerabilities. Conflicts might have needed to approximate those of their parents in order to be considered threatening.

As good as it gets. Their satisfaction might also have been attributable to their criteria for judging relationship success. Conflict Adults expected less from their intimate bonds than their peers: for example, fewer benefits from closeness and lower levels of support. As a result, they might have been able to feel satisfied with “less” (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). From their perspective, perhaps, they “did well” not to get hurt.

Were their standards likely to shift? That is, were they likely to discover that their involvement was not “as good as it gets?” This is an empirical question. Presumably, shifts in their criteria would require them to have schema-disconfirming experiences -- experiences that highlighted the rewards of being close. These were, perhaps, unlikely, given the hypothesized tendency of Conflict Adults to avoid intimacy-building situations. Conflict Adults may have no reason to deviate from their strategy. Their behaviour would alleviate the anxiety about closeness presumed to have been engendered by their family of origin experiences. That is, their avoidance would be negatively reinforced. Further, their strategy would not be perceived as costly. They would not consider themselves to be depriving themselves of more powerful rewards by avoiding closeness.

The stability of Conflict Adults’ relationships: The partner’s perspective. The dynamics discussed above would account for Conflict Adults’ tendency to remain involved with their partners. They were as likely to maintain their relationships as their peers. However, the factors that enabled them to feel satisfied would not fully account for their relationships’ stability. For example, they would not explain why Conflict Adults’ partners remained with them. Their partners might have been expected to react negatively to the hypothesized level of distance maintained in these ongoing bonds, seeking out other relationships. But, they were no more likely to do so than Intact Adults’ mates.

There are a number of ways to account for this finding. One possibility is that the partners of Conflict Adults also feared intimacy -- that they were as avoidant as Conflict Adults.

According to the attachment literature, however, this is unlikely. Individuals tend not to be matched in terms of their general models of others (Baldwin et al., 1996). More probable is that they were preoccupied (i.e., that they had negative models of self, but positive models of others). Such pairings have been reported in a number of studies (e.g., Baldwin et al., 1996; Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Preoccupied individuals have "issues" of their own that might motivate a tolerance of negativity -- for example, strong needs to be involved with someone.

Conflict Adults may also have prevented their partners from feeling "slighted" (i.e., avoided) by distancing in "sanctioned" ways. For example, they may have minimized close contact by maintaining busy lifestyles (e.g., full course loads, part-time employment, and extracurricular activities). They might also be more likely to involve themselves in long-distance romantic relationships. These strategies might be expected to work best in early adulthood. Partners may become less tolerant of the level of distance maintained when their peer group begins to cohabit and/or marry (i.e., establish highly intimate relationships). These possibilities will need to be explored in future research.

### Divorce Adults

Males and females from divorced families seemed to differ in critical ways. Divorce Females appeared to struggle with unique issues in their ongoing close relationships.

### Divorce Females

General models. Divorce Females had more negative models of self than Divorce Males and Intact participants. Though they felt as felt positively about themselves generally, they were more doubting of their worthiness of love and support. Unlike Conflict Adults, they did not have

more negative models of others than individuals in the Intact group. That is, they were not more avoidant of closeness and intimacy. Whereas, Conflict Adults had been “fearful”, the results of the current study suggested that Divorce Females were more preoccupied in their general attachment style (see Bartholomew, 1990).

Vulnerabilities. Perhaps as a result of their more negative self schemata, Divorce Females had stronger abandonment concerns than their peers (i.e., Divorce Males/Intact Adults). They found it more difficult to trust that their partners would want to stay with them.

Divorce Females were also more anxious about conflictual interactions with their mates. These situations, perhaps, triggered their worries about being left. Conflict was likely to be regarded as being associated with the break-up of intimate relationships, given their parents’ marital outcomes.

The abandonment concerns of Divorce Females had little apparent effect on the way that they evaluated their relationships. Not only were they as satisfied with their involvements as Intact participants, but the vulnerability was unrelated to their feelings about their attachments. This was not the case for either Intact or Conflict participants. The intensity of their fears strongly predicted the negativity of their evaluations. The more they worried about being left, the less satisfied they were with their relationships.

The compartmentalization hypothesis. This pattern was consistent with the compartmentalization hypothesis. Individuals with relatively intense concerns (e.g., Divorce Females) were expected to have to segregate them in order to maintain a sense of “felt security” in their ongoing bonds. They, presumably, considered the threat of abandonment to be real. That is, they believed that their partners might actually leave to seek out better alternatives. However, to focus on this possibility placed them at risk of being flooded with anxiety. (So overwhelmed

might they become that it would be difficult to remain in the relationship). Their attachment systems, thus, mobilized an ongoing defensive process that “split off” their concerns from their perceptions of their involvements.

But, was this hypothesis plausible in light of the overall pattern?

Evaluating the viability of the compartmentalization hypothesis. The compartmentalization hypothesis was dependent upon the viability of the “intensity” assumption -- the idea that only high levels of anxiety would trigger the ongoing defensive process. However, this assumption did not seem plausible in light of Divorce Males’ results. Their abandonment concerns were not stronger than those of Intact/Conflict participants (i.e., of the groups that did not isolate their fears from their relationship evaluations). However, they were segregated from their feelings about their involvements. What might have enabled Divorce, but not Intact/Conflict Adults to compartmentalize such concerns? An explanation is proposed in the following section.

Conscious compartmentalization: An adaptive coping mechanism. The negative features of the divorce experience might have provided Divorce Adults with salient explanations for any worries they might have had about being abandoned by their partners. They, perhaps, attributed their concerns to the past (e.g., to their parents’ marital outcomes and/or the experience of being left). Anecdotal evidence supported this hypothesis. Out of thirty women interviewed prior to this study, 75% of them spontaneously connected their worries about being left to their parents’ divorce.

Such connections would enable those with intense concerns to compartmentalize their fears from their experience of their relationships. Their understanding of the origins of their insecurities would function as a cognitive boundary that prevented their worries from contaminating their perceptions of their attachments. Divorce Adults would know not to attend

to their feelings of anxiety. Their abandonment concerns could be considered by-products of the divorce -- not negative prognostic indicators.

Presumably, Conflict/Intact Adults would view their concerns quite differently. They were less likely to have experienced an event that would "explain away" their anxieties. They would not have anything to which to attribute their concerns but their relationships themselves. Worries might be considered diagnostic of their relationships' quality. Strong fears of being left, for example, might tend to be interpreted as evidence that partners were not trustworthy and/or satisfied with their involvements.

That they would take their fears seriously would be adaptive in cases where there were reasons to feel anxious (e.g., if partners really were not trustworthy and/or committed to the attachment). Intact/Conflict participants might address their concerns with their partners and/or elect to seek out better relationships. However, it is not clear to what percentage of individuals this would apply. Individuals with negative self models tend to underestimate the positivity of their partners' feelings for them (Murray et al., 1996a). They project their insecurities onto their mates' evaluations, worrying needlessly about being left. They also misinterpret others' behaviour in schema-confirming ways (Murray et al., 1996b).

"Low self-esteem" Intact/Conflict Adults might thus feel dissatisfied and uncertain -- not because their relationships were actually troubled -- but because of their own "neurotic" issues. Their divorce counterparts, in contrast, would be expected to enjoy their attachments, despite their concerns, given their "understanding" of their fears' origins.

This is not to suggest that the abandonment concerns of Divorce Females would never "intrude" into their ongoing bonds. On the contrary, it seems likely that they would affect their interpersonal response patterns on occasion. Indeed, it might be speculated that their fears



accounted, in part, for the level of conflict in their relationships (Downey et al., 1998).

Like Intact/Conflict participants with abandonment concerns, Divorce Females would be vulnerable to misinterpreting innocuous cues (e.g., partners' moodiness and/or interactions with attractive others) as evidence that their partners were not satisfied with the relationship (e.g., Downey et al., 1998; Murray, et al., 1998). These misunderstanding might, in turn, trigger negative interactions. For example, Divorce Females may press their mates to "confess" to being unhappy. This behaviour might annoy partners and/or place them on the defensive, given the aversiveness of being doubted. According to the hypothesis, however, Divorce Females would be able to regain at least some perspective by attributing their reaction to their histories, dismissing their worries as "invalid."

Ironically, then, the same experiences that left Divorce Females vulnerable to worrying about being left perhaps helped them to prevent these insecurities from affecting their relationships adversely -- at least, in the short term. But, what about over time? Did their vulnerabilities erode their bonds with partners, despite their coping mechanisms, or did they have little to do with the stability of Divorce Females' relationships?

Longitudinal findings. The involvements of Divorce Females were much more likely than those of their peers to have dissolved over the first follow-up period. Further, though their break-ups were somewhat mysterious, their outcomes were predicted by their level of vulnerability. In general, individuals with stronger worries about being left were more likely to have had their relationships end.

It was thus plausible that their concerns played a role in increasing their risk of break-up. However, it is not clear from the results why these fears might have left couples vulnerable. Possible explanations are explored in the following section.

Abandonment concerns and conflict: Difficulties in adjustment. Participants were likely to have been at a stage in their involvements where their abandonment concerns were salient. Couples had been dating an average of 19 months. Most would have passed through the initial euphoric period -- the romantic phase in an attachment when forces (e.g., self presentational concerns, the restriction of interactions to enjoyable contexts, and the projection of one's ideals) "conspire" to convince intimates of their partners "perfection" (see Murray, Holmes & Griffin, 1996a). Presumably, they would now be struggling to accommodate to their mates' actual qualities.

As couples grow closer -- interacting across broader domains -- the potential for discovering "negative" traits and/or conflicting needs increases. Conflict becomes more frequent and intense (Braiker & Kelley, 1979). Divorce Females would not be expected to have managed these interactions as well as their peers, given their heightened abandonment concerns. Conflicts would have primed their worries about being left (Downey et al., 1998), triggering schema-driven perceptions of their partners' behaviour (Baldwin, 1992). This, in turn, might have increased the probability of destructive patterns of interaction: for example, demand-withdraw cycles.

Females' heightened focus on the possibility of being left may have increased their reluctance to "lay conflicts to rest." In the heat of the moment -- that is, when their anxiety level was high and more automatic processes "kicked in" -- they might have had difficulty believing that an issue had been resolved -- that partners were not still angry or dissatisfied with the relationship. Rather than accepting that mates were happy, they might continue to press for an admission that confirmed their worst fears: that partners did not really value them. The finding that Divorce Females were more anxious about conflict is consistent with this pattern, as are their reports of more destructive conflict styles. Demand-withdraw patterns were more likely in the relationships

of Divorce than Intact Females.

How might their behaviour have precipitated their break-ups? Their response patterns may have prompted their partners to leave. Divorce Females' insecurities were likely to have been salient quite frequently during the initial follow-up period, given the increase in conflict that accompanies the "accommodation" phase (Braiker & Kelley, 1979). Partners might very well have tired of being doubted.

Summary. The abandonment concerns of Divorce Females are thus hypothesized to have made it more difficult for them to "manage" the main by-product of increased interdependence: conflict. The response patterns engendered by their fears may have increased the probability that their partners would terminate their ongoing involvements.

Conflict efficacy beliefs: Alternative routes to break-up. There is a second way in which the increase in conflict might have precipitated Divorce Females' break-ups. Exploratory analyses revealed that the outcomes of those who happened to have been exposed to high levels of post-divorce conflict ("Highs") depended very heavily upon their beliefs about conflict efficacy. The less capable they perceived couples as being of resolving difficulties in their relationships, the more vulnerable they were to break-up.

That this variable would be associated with outcome made sense -- at least in retrospect. Without faith in couples' efficacy, it would be difficult to persevere (i.e., to remain in one's relationship) when problems arose with one's partner. Contentious issues would not be expected to be "worked through."

The survivors: Stability over the second six months. Though more vulnerable than those of Intact participants, many of Divorce Females' relationships survived the "accommodation" period (Braiker & Kelley, 1979). Approximately 60% were ongoing at the six month mark.

Perhaps surprisingly, these “remaining” attachments were as stable as those of their peers. Why did their break-up rate not remain elevated over the second follow-up period?

One possibility is that the factors hypothesized to have placed their relationships at risk became less of an “issue” the longer they remained with their partners. Divorce Females, perhaps, became less reactive to conflict. Through daily interactions with their mates, Divorce Females may have learned that problems could be worked through -- that conflict could be a constructive force in a relationship, rather than a sign of impending doom.

The shift in the samples’ composition may have also played a role in the shift in the break-up pattern. Those Divorce Females who struggled with the most intense abandonment concerns and/or had the least faith in couples’ efficacy may have had their relationships end, either because a) their partners tired of being doubted, or b) the females, themselves, saw no point in continuing the conflictual bond. Those remaining may not have differed significantly from Intact participants on vulnerability or general model variables. Post hoc analyses, indeed, revealed no differences between Divorce Females and the Intact group on these variables.

Implications for marital relationships. The break-up pattern obtained in this study of dating relationships paralleled that which has been found for married couples. Divorce Adults have long been recognized to have higher divorce rates than their peers. However, a recent epidemiological study revealed this to be the case only during the first five years of marriage (Amato, 1996).

One might speculate that the same factors hypothesized to precipitate the break-ups of their dating relationships place them at risk as “newlyweds.” The early years of marriage bring with them substantial increases in interdependence, increasing the probability that couples will uncover new sources of conflict (e.g., Braiker & Kelley, 1979). Such discoveries would,

presumably, trigger Divorce Females' insecurities, making destructive interaction patterns more likely. Their marital stability has, indeed, been found to be predicted most strongly by the negativity of their interpersonal response styles (Amato, 1996). Further, satisfaction and stability in the early years is best predicted by a lack of negativity in couples' bonds (Huston & Chorost, 1993).

Over time, however, the experience of working through difficult issues might be expected to engender changes in their schemata, reducing the intensity of their abandonment concerns and/or increasing their faith in couples' ability to resolve problems in their relationships.

Alternative explanations for the break-up pattern. The break-up models discussed in the preceding sections assigned a central role to the insecurities of Divorce Females. They were assumed to make it difficult for them to manage the by-product of increased interdependence: conflict. However, there are other possible explanations for the break-up pattern.

Divorce Females may, simply, be quicker to abandon a partner who does not meet their needs. Their parents' outcomes may render break-up a more accessible and "attractive" solution to ongoing relationship difficulties, particularly if offspring perceive it as having been "constructive" for their caregivers.

Alternatively, their standards for evaluating the relationships established in young adulthood may differ from those of their peers. Divorce Females may focus more intensely than Intact Adults on their long-term compatibility with their ongoing partners. That is, they may be less likely to date someone for "fun" -- to remain with a mate to whom they would not want to commit seriously. Their parents' experience may highlight both the importance and the difficulty of finding partners with whom they could be satisfied over an extended period of time, prompting them to search earnestly for such individuals at an earlier age than their peers.

## Divorce Males

Summary of findings. As predicted, Divorce Males' general models were comparable to those of Intact Adults. Neither their models of self nor others differed. Further, as one would expect given these findings, they had no cognitive/affective vulnerabilities. Divorce Males did not worry more intensely than their peers about abandonment, conflict or closeness. How was one to understand these findings?

The protected subgroup. One possibility is that Divorce Males' schemata simply were not affected adversely by the "parental divorce experience." Their general models had, perhaps, been protected by their relatively positive relationships with their mothers. As was speculated earlier in the paper, mother-child bonds might buffer the models of others of both males and females. Despite the way in which parents treated one another, their relationships with their female caregivers provided them with evidence that others could be caring and responsive.

They may also protect males' models of self in attachments. Opposite-sex parent-child bonds might shape offsprings' self-views in subsequent heterosexual bonds, placing Divorce Females, but not Males at risk of developing perceptions of themselves as unworthy. Consistent with previous findings, Divorce Males' relationships with their fathers were more compromised than those of their peers. However, their mother-child bonds were comparable.

Vulnerabilities underestimated. However, it is also possible that the effects of divorce were underestimated for Divorce Males -- that their schemata, indeed, differed significantly from those of their peers, despite the way in which they responded to attachment/vulnerability indices.

There is one attachment orientation that is particularly difficult to assess with self-report measures: dismissing-avoidance (an orientation characterized by positive models of self, but negative models of others; Bartholomew, 1990). These individuals appear capable of defending

against the thoughts and feelings that they have about the prospect of being hurt (i.e., disappointed and/or abandoned) by significant attachment figures (Fraley, Davis & Shaver, 1998). They have intense fears, but manage to block them from conscious awareness.

Divorce Males might be more likely than their peers to have developed this general attachment style. Their observations of the negative consequences of closeness (e.g., conflict, dissatisfaction, and the hurt associated with loss) may have left them with residual concerns about becoming involved in intimate relationships. They may have coped with these fears by devaluing close attachments -- denying their dependency needs, and striving for self-reliance (Fraley et al., 1998; Bartholomew, 1990). This may be easier for males to do than females, given the differences in the way they are socialized (Berscheid & Reis, 1998). Girls continue to be rewarded to a greater extent than boys for nurturing close relationships (Brehm, 1992).

There is anecdotal evidence to support this speculation. The Divorce Males in Wallerstein's sample were similar in critical ways to dismissing-avoidant adults (e.g., Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). They had only dim memories of childhood, and rarely elaborated upon the stress associated with the divorce experience. Further, they were more interested in work or school than in dating relationships.

The current investigation also obtained findings that were consistent with this hypothesis. The relationships of Divorce Males were much more conflictual than those of their peers. This would be expected in the relationships of dismissing-avoidant adults. Their partners would tend to be either preoccupied or secure in their attachment orientations (Baldwin et al., 1996). Thus, their needs for closeness would conflict. This would increase the probability of demand-withdraw interaction patterns (Heavey et al., 1993). Presumably, if they were "dismissing-avoidant," Divorce Males would strive for distance when their partners pressed heavily for intimacy in their

ongoing bonds.

Their relationships were also more vulnerable to break-up during the initial follow-up period. This, too, would be expected of dismissing-avoidant adults. As the demands for interdependence increased, they might search actively for reasons to terminate their bonds (e.g., “she is not right for me, she is too demanding, and/or I want to spend more time with friends”). They would, presumably, be unaware that their anxiety was motivating them to flee.

There are, of course, other ways to account for these findings. For example, the level of conflict might have reflected heightened levels of intimacy (Braiker & Kelley, 1979), their break-ups, a healthy tendency to experiment with close relationships. Further research is needed to make sense of the pattern.

Obtaining partners’ perspectives might help to clarify Divorce Males’ dynamics. In addition, it may be useful to assess them at later stages in development. Were they to be avoidant, their style might be more salient as their peers’ relationships progress, becoming increasingly interdependent. Divorce Males might be expected to lag behind -- that is, to continue to “date around” in search of the “right partner” -- while their friends marry and/or establish common-law relationships.

### Clinical Implications

For the sake of the children. One of the goals of the present study was to contribute to the resolution of an ongoing debate: Was divorce in children’s best interests, or was it better for parents to maintain a dissatisfying/conflictual marital bond?

The results suggested divorce to be less “damaging” than ongoing exposure to a troubled relationship to general relational schemata. Both Divorce Females and Conflict Adults had more negative models of self than their peers. (Divorce Males will not be discussed, given the



uncertainty about their dynamics). But, Conflict Adults also had lower global self-esteem. That is, their “negative” self-perceptions permeated broader areas of their functioning. In addition, they had more negative models of others than members of the Intact group.

As a result, they had to contend with issues that had the potential to be more “debilitating.” Divorce Females feared losing their intimate bond. Conflict Adults, in contrast, feared becoming close with their partners -- at least to a greater extent than their peers. These vulnerabilities, perhaps, prevented them from reaping the benefits of closeness and intimacy.

The fears of Conflict Adults were also more likely to be self-perpetuating. Divorce Females’ anxieties might be expected to subside the longer their partners remained with them. However, the purported tendency of Conflict Adults to remain distanced -- to keep partners at arm’s length -- might preclude them from having experiences that disconfirmed their negative schemata. That is, they would not become desensitized to the situations that they had, perhaps, been “conditioned” to fear.

Clearly, however, it would be premature to conclude that the “conflict” experience is more detrimental than divorce to children’s functioning. Both groups’ issues had the potential to affect their relationships adversely. For example, their vulnerabilities may have accounted for the striking elevation in the level of conflict in their involvements. Abandonment and closeness concerns were at least moderately associated with conflict severity for all family of origin groups. Given that conflict is a negative prognostic indicator for both dating and early marital relationships (Huston & Chorost, 1993), the involvements of both groups are worthy of follow-up.

### Theoretical Implications

The current study thus contributes to the empirical knowledge base on the long-term

effects of divorce on children. It also has broader theoretical implications. More specifically, it extends the attachment literature by exploring the impact of general models on individuals' ongoing close relationships.

The impact of general models on current relationship thinking. General models have long been presumed to affect the way in which individuals construe their ongoing bonds. Yet, a review of the literature revealed little direct empirical support for this position. The link between general and specific schemata had been explored by very few researchers. The current study addressed this gap by indexing the magnitude of several critical associations.

Consistent with Bowlby's (1973) theorizing, strong correlations were found between general model variables and indices of current relationship schemata (i.e., cognitive/affective vulnerabilities). This increases the plausibility of the hypothesis that vulnerabilities are shaped by general models of attachment.

Individuals appeared to import their general issues into their ongoing close relationships. Those with negative models of self (i.e., strong doubts about their worthiness of love) worried intensely about being left by the people with whom they were involved; while, those with negative models of others (i.e., doubts about others' responsiveness) were concerned about becoming close with their ongoing relationship partners.

These findings were not consistent with those of Baldwin and his colleagues (1996). They obtained much weaker associations between general and specific schemata. According to their data, individuals' general attachment styles tended to be unrelated to the orientation manifested in an ongoing bond. For example, those who were, generally, insecure were likely to be securely attached to specific relationship partners.

Artifacts of measurement. One possible explanation for the differences across studies was

that the current findings were not valid -- that they were artifacts of measurement, a function of participants, essentially, completing the general scales in reference to their current relationship partner. However, there was little evidence to support this position. The scales were not redundant with one another. Though the content (but not the referent) of general and specific items overlapped (e.g., "I worry about being abandoned by romantic partners" versus "I worry that my current partner will leave"), there was evidence of discriminant validity.

Cognitive/affective vulnerability variables (e.g., abandonment concerns) predicted substantial proportions of variance in individuals' evaluations of their relationships when general models (e.g., anxiety/models of self) were "controlled for."

More plausible was the idea that the impact of general schemata had been underestimated by Baldwin and his colleagues. There were a number of problems with the measures that they used to assess general and specific schemata. Attachment styles were identified by Hazan & Shaver's (1987) three-category index. This scale combines individuals with very different prototypic features. Rather than distinguishing between fearful- and dismissing-avoidant adults, they are collapsed into one category (avoidance). In addition, the scale is relatively unreliable. Individuals self-categorize based on single items (i.e., brief paragraphs). Also problematic were the measures utilized to assess trust (i.e., insecurity) in particular bonds. They were, perhaps, too generic to capture the specific issues with which different "types" (e.g., fearful versus preoccupied) struggle in their ongoing close relationships. Divorce Females (i.e., individuals with preoccupied attachment styles) were more likely than their peers to worry about a) not being valued by their partners and b) being abandoned for better alternatives. In contrast, Conflict Adults (i.e., fearfuls) were more likely to worry about being hurt if they allowed themselves to become intimate with their mates. Further research is needed to clarify this issue.

The impact of vulnerabilities on ongoing bonds. In addition to exploring the link between general models and cognitive/affective vulnerabilities, the current study examined the association between the issues with which individuals struggled in their ongoing close relationships and their perceptions of their relationships' quality. Again, significant relationships were found. In general, the stronger one's vulnerabilities, the less positively one evaluated one's relationship. Interestingly, general models, more specifically, models of others, also appeared to affect one's perceptions directly. Their influence was not fully mediated by the vulnerabilities that they engendered (i.e., closeness concerns).

There are a number of causal schemes that would explain such correlations. As has been speculated throughout the paper, the thoughts made accessible by cognitive/affective vulnerabilities (e.g., negative expectations and fears) and/or general models may be utilized to judge one's relationship quality. When individuals feel ambivalent about closeness, they may infer that they are uncertain about their feelings for their partners. Essentially, they may have difficulty separating the intrapersonal and interpersonal sources of their distress.

The associations may also reflect the operation of defensive response patterns. Those with strong concerns about being left might minimize the impact of anticipated negative outcomes by devaluing their ongoing bonds (e.g., "it does not matter if s/he leaves, I'm not that happy anyway"). Rather than compartmentalizing, they may protect themselves from being hurt by decreasing their investment in their relationships (Murray et al., 1998).

This explanation might also account for the association between the level of conflict in participants' relationships (i.e., their behavioural vulnerabilities) and their evaluations of their involvements. Individuals may interpret conflictual interactions as signs that their relationships are "in trouble." They may respond by devaluing (i.e., distancing defensively from) their ongoing

bonds (Murray et al., 1998).

There were critical exceptions to the overall pattern. As was discussed earlier, vulnerabilities were not always associated with individuals' feelings about their relationships. Divorce Adults' abandonment concerns were not related to their level of satisfaction. This finding was not consistent with the broader literature on individuals' schemata. Powerful knowledge structures (e.g., the abandonment concerns of Divorce Females) tend to exert a strong impact on interpersonal response patterns.

The deviation was argued to be attributable to the availability of salient explanations for Divorce Adults' concerns (i.e., the parental divorce experience). Divorce Adults were argued to trace the source of their fears to their intrapersonal dynamics, overriding the "automatic" process that links abandonment concerns with a lack of commitment on the part of one's partner. Their ability to compartmentalize was, perhaps, adaptive. A goal in therapy is often to prevent individuals from projecting their insecurities onto their ongoing close relationships (McCullough Vaillant, 1997).

The origins of general models. The current study also explored the viability of one of the most basic assumptions of attachment theory: the idea that general models are shaped by family of origin experiences (Bowlby, 1973). The schemata of adults known to have been exposed to distressed familial relationships as children (i.e., Divorce and Conflict Adults) were examined. Perhaps surprisingly, this strategy has seldom been used by researchers.

The results were consistent with the theory's main tenet. The general models of individuals who had compromised parent-child bonds, as well as exposure to a dysfunctional marital relationship, had more negative general models than their peers.

There is a chance that these correlations were "spurious." The genetic endowment of

Divorce/Conflict Adults, rather than their actual experiences with close relationships, may have accounted for the overall pattern. Their parents may have had traits that made it difficult for them to sustain positive attachments (Erel & Burman, 1995) -- traits that they "passed on" to their offspring.

Judith Harris (1998) raises this possibility in a recent book. Indeed, she uses it to explain many of the findings in the developmental literature. Harris rejects the nurture assumption -- the idea that personality is influenced by family of origin experiences. Not only does she argue that it has not been supported by behavioural genetics research, but she contends that it does not make sense from an evolutionary perspective.

According to Harris, it would be maladaptive for children to presume that relationships in their broader environment work similarly to those in their families of origin. In order to survive, they would need to be able to adapt to a wide range of situations. Other theorists disagree. For example, Belsky, Steinberg and Draper (1991) argue that evolution has primed children to tune into the characteristics of family of origin relationships:

A principal evolutionary function of early experience is to induce in the child an understanding of the availability and predictability of resources in the environment, trustworthiness of others and enduringness of close relationships (p. 256).

Historically, this would have enabled them to maximize reproductive success. For example, if resources (i.e., mates) were "ever available," energy would be invested into establishing and maintaining enduring pair bonds, given the advantages that this afforded their offspring.

Further research is needed to clarify whether family of origin experiences, indeed, shape the content of general schemata, or whether parental influence is confined to the genetic transmission of attributes. The current findings, perhaps, favour the former hypothesis. Were

“nature” to be solely responsible, gender differences would not be expected within the divorce sample. Both males and females would be expected to have “inherited” more negative self models than their peers (i.e., both would have tended to be more “neurotic” than Intact participants).

### Generalizeability

The current study explored the dynamics of Divorce and Conflict Adults involved in serious dating relationships. Whether similar findings would have been obtained had they been assessed later in their development (e.g., during their post-university years) is unclear. Though relatively stable in adulthood, general working model have the potential to shift as individuals gain experience with intimate involvements (Bowlby, 1973).

Future research will also need to clarify the applicability of these findings to married couples and individuals in broader community samples. The current study, perhaps, focused on a group of relatively high functioning Divorce/Conflict Adults. They had the cognitive, emotional and financial resources to make it to university. Further, they were able to risk involvement in a serious dating relationship. It was possible that their outcomes reflected a kind of “best-case” scenario.

### Conclusions and Caveats

The current study was, in many ways, exploratory given the paucity of data on Divorce/Conflict Adults functioning in ongoing close relationships. Thus, a variety of hypotheses were generated about the dynamics responsible for the intriguing patterns obtained. As was noted earlier in the paper, their validity will need to be explored in future studies of adults of divorce and intact/unhappily married parents.

Table 1: Summary of the study's predictions

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**Group Differences: General Working Models**

**Models of Self**

Divorce Females are expected to have more negative models of self than Divorce Males and Intact Adults.

Conflict Adults are expected to have more negative models of self than Intact Adults.

**Global Self-Esteem**

Conflict Adults are expected to have lower global self-esteem than Intact Adults.

**Models of Others**

Conflict Adults are expected to have more negative models of others than Intact Adults. (Divorce Females are not expected to differ from Intact Adults on this variable).

**General Distrust (i.e., Insecurity)**

Conflict Adults are expected to be less trusting of relationships in general than Intact Adults.

**Marital Optimism**

Divorce and Conflict Adults are expected to be less optimistic about their future marriages than Intact Adults.

**Conflict Efficacy**

Divorce and Conflict Adults are expected to have a reduced sense of conflict efficacy relative to Intact Adults.

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Table 1 is continued on the next page.



Table 1 continued

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**Group Differences: Vulnerabilities**

**Abandonment Concerns**

Divorce Females are expected to have stronger abandonment concerns in their ongoing relationships than Divorce Males and Intact Adults.

Conflict Adults may also have stronger abandonment concerns than Intact Adults; however, this prediction is more tentative, given their other vulnerabilities.

**Closeness Concerns**

Conflict Adults are expected to have stronger closeness concerns in their ongoing relationships than Intact Adults.

**Conflict Concerns**

Divorce Females and Conflict Adults are expected to have stronger concerns about their conflictual interactions with partners than Intact Adults.

**Conflict**

Divorce Females and Conflict Adults are expected to have more conflictual relationships than Intact Adults.

**Group Differences: Relationship evaluations**

Divorce Females and Conflict Adults are expected to evaluate their relationships as positively as Intact Adults. That is, they are expected to be as  
a) satisfied with, and b) optimistic about their involvements as their peers.

**Process Issues: General models and vulnerabilities (path a)**

Models of self are expected to be strongly associated with the intensity of individuals' abandonment concerns.

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Table 1 is continued on the next page.

Table 1 continued

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***Process Issues: General models and vulnerabilities (path a)***

Models of others are expected to be strongly associated with the intensity of individuals' closeness concerns.

Models of both self and others are expected to be associated with the intensity of individuals' concerns about conflict in their ongoing bonds.

Models of both self and others are expected to predict the level of conflict in individuals' ongoing close relationships.

***Process Issues: Vulnerabilities and relationship evaluations (path b)***

Vulnerabilities are expected to be more weakly associated with the relationship evaluations of Divorce Females/Conflict Adults than Intact Adults, given their hypothesized tendency to compartmentalize.

***Process Issues: General models and relationship evaluations (path c)***

Vulnerabilities are expected to mediate the association between general model and relationship evaluation variables. For example, abandonment concerns are expected to mediate the relationship between models of self and relationship evaluations.

***Longitudinal Predictions***

Divorce Females and Conflict Adults are expected to have higher break-up rates than Intact Adults.

The vulnerabilities of Divorce Females/Conflict Adults are expected to predict their relationship status over time.

The vulnerabilities of Divorce Females/Conflict Adults are expected to be stronger predictors of their break-ups than satisfaction. (Consistent with the research literature, satisfaction is expected to be the most powerful break-up predictor for Intact Adults).

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Table 2: Summary of measures

<u>General Working Models</u>	<u>Current relationship schemata</u>	<u>Family of origin indices</u>
<u>Models of Self</u>	<u>Cognitive/Affective Vulnerabilities</u>	Parents' relationship quality Parental conflict severity
Anxiety (Models of self in relationships) Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale	Abandonment concerns	Quality of relationship with mother Quality of relationship with father
<u>Models of Others</u>	Closeness concerns: Approach-avoidance conflicts Intimacy-demand concerns	
Avoidance	Conflict concerns	
<u>Models of Self and Others</u>	<u>Behavioural Vulnerabilities</u>	
General distrust (i.e., insecurity)	Conflict Severity Index (CSI) Destructive conflict style	
<u>General Relationship Beliefs</u>	<u>Relationship Evaluations</u>	
Marital optimism Conflict efficacy	Satisfaction Commitment Optimism	

Table 3: Participants' perceptions of family of origin relationships

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Sample</i>	<u>Family of origin group</u>			<i>F</i>
		<u>Intact</u> (n = 98)	<u>Divorce</u> (n = 101)	<u>Conflict</u> (n = 65)	
<i>Parents' relationship quality</i>	Females	6.65	2.99	3.45	304.13***
	Males	6.79	3.62	4.23	
	Combined	6.70 <sup>a</sup> (.35)	3.23 <sup>b</sup> (1.34)	3.65 <sup>c</sup> (1.21)	
<i>Parental conflict severity</i>	Females	3.90	10.42	11.09	221.14***
	Males	4.25	10.54	10.78	
	Combined	4.03 <sup>a</sup> (1.92)	10.47 <sup>b</sup> (3.21)	11.00 <sup>b</sup> (1.91)	
<i>Quality of relationship with mother</i>	Females	6.03	5.42	4.62	14.90***
	Males	6.03	5.74	5.26	
	Combined	6.03 <sup>a</sup> (1.22)	5.54 <sup>b</sup> (1.48)	4.80 <sup>c</sup> (1.55)	
<i>Quality of relationship with father</i>	Females	5.86	4.06	4.46	37.89***
	Males	5.98	4.45	3.93	
	Combined	5.90 <sup>a</sup> (1.03)	4.21 <sup>b</sup> (1.83)	4.31 <sup>b</sup> (1.49)	

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

Pairs of group means for the combined gender sample were tested using the Scheffe procedure.

Differences in superscripts indicate statistically significant differences between groups at  $p < .05$ .

Standard deviations are presented in parentheses.

Table 4: Participants' scores on general model variables

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Sample</u>	<u>Family of origin group</u>			<u>F</u>
		<u>Intact</u> (n = 98)	<u>Divorce</u> (n = 101)	<u>Conflict</u> (n = 65)	
<u>Models of Self</u>					
<i>Anxiety</i>	Females	3.45	3.87	3.91	
	Males	3.25	3.19	3.50	
	Combined	3.37 (1.12)	3.60 (1.53)	3.79 (1.25)	2.05
<i>Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale</i>	Females	3.32	3.17	3.06	
	Males	3.52	3.38	2.98	
	Combined	3.39 <sup>a</sup> (.46)	3.25 <sup>a</sup> (.55)	3.04 <sup>b</sup> (.51)	9.09***
<u>Models of others</u>					
<i>Avoidance</i>	Females	3.03	3.24	3.54	
	Males	3.45	3.35	3.52	
	Combined	3.18 <sup>a</sup> (.83)	3.29 <sup>ab</sup> (.93)	3.54 <sup>b</sup> (.84)	3.26*
<u>Models of self and others combined</u>					
<i>General distrust</i>	Females	2.62	3.12	3.66	
	Males	2.98	3.02	3.31	
	Combined	2.75 <sup>a</sup> (1.10)	3.08 <sup>a</sup> (1.34)	3.56 <sup>b</sup> (1.22)	8.82***

Table 4 is continued on the next page.

Table 4 continued

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Sample</u>	<u>Family of origin group</u>			<u>Overall F</u>
		<u>Intact</u> (n = 98)	<u>Divorce</u> (n = 101)	<u>Conflict</u> (n = 65)	
<i><u>General Relationship Beliefs</u></i>					
<i>Marital optimism</i>	Females	6.29	5.57	5.69	
	Males	6.25	5.90	5.75	
	Combined	6.28 <sup>a</sup> (.98)	5.70 <sup>b</sup> (1.12)	5.71 <sup>b</sup> (1.02)	9.22***
<i>Conflict efficacy</i>	Females	4.95	4.53	4.67	
	Males	4.70	4.80	4.23	
	Combined	4.86 (.96)	4.64 (1.05)	4.55 (1.04)	2.10

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

Pairs of group means for the combined gender sample were tested using the Scheffe procedure.

Differences in superscripts indicate statistically significant differences between groups at  $p < .05$ .

Standard deviations are presented in parentheses.

Table 5: Participants' current (i.e., specific) relationship schemata

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Sample</u>	<u>Family of origin group</u>			<u>Overall F</u>
		<u>Intact</u> (n = 98)	<u>Divorce</u> (n = 101)	<u>Conflict</u> (n = 65)	
<u>Cognitive/affective vulnerabilities</u>					
<i>Abandonment concerns</i>	Females	2.84	3.32	2.84	
	Males	2.85	2.93	3.38	
	Combined	2.84 (1.08)	3.17 (1.43)	2.99 (1.23)	1.66
<i>Approach-avoidance conflicts</i>	Females	2.58	2.92	3.14	
	Males	2.77	3.33	3.74	
	Combined	2.65 <sup>a</sup> (1.28)	3.07 <sup>ab</sup> (1.29)	3.31 <sup>b</sup> (1.27)	5.68**
<i>Intimacy-demand concerns</i>	Females	2.32	2.34	2.80	
	Males	2.54	2.79	3.01	
	Combined	2.40 <sup>a</sup> (1.10)	2.52 <sup>ab</sup> (1.10)	2.86 <sup>b</sup> (1.22)	3.22*
<i>Conflict concerns</i>	Females	3.31	3.95	3.58	
	Males	2.93	3.33	3.89	
	Combined	3.17 <sup>a</sup> (1.53)	3.70 <sup>b</sup> (1.49)	3.67 <sup>b</sup> (1.36)	3.87*
<u>Behavioural vulnerabilities</u>					
<i>Conflict severity index</i>	Females	2.15	3.10	2.81	
	Males	2.33	3.19	3.28	
	Combined	2.22 <sup>a</sup> (1.42)	3.14 <sup>b</sup> (1.48)	2.94 <sup>b</sup> (1.45)	10.74***

Table 5 is continued on the next page.

Table 5 continued

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Sample</u>	<u>Family of origin group</u>			<u>Overall F</u>
		<u>Intact</u> (n = 98)	<u>Divorce</u> (n = 101)	<u>Conflict</u> (n = 65)	
<u>Behavioural vulnerabilities</u>					
<i>Destructive</i>	Females	2.71	3.36	3.22	
<i>conflict</i>	Males	2.82	3.23	3.88	
<i>style</i>	Combined	2.75 <sup>a</sup> (1.11)	3.31 <sup>b</sup> (1.17)	3.40 <sup>b</sup> (1.06)	8.80***
<u>Relationship evaluations</u>					
<i>Satisfaction</i>	Females	5.90	5.68	5.64	
	Males	5.87	5.56	5.46	
	Combined	5.89 (1.19)	5.63 (1.28)	5.59 (1.11)	1.62
<i>Commitment</i>	Females	5.73	5.40	5.45	
	Males	5.81	5.33	5.36	
	Combined	5.76 (1.18)	5.37 (1.43)	5.42 (1.11)	2.63
<i>Optimism</i>	Females	5.49	5.28	5.21	
	Males	5.58	5.05	4.63	
	Combined	5.53 <sup>a</sup> (1.17)	5.19 <sup>a</sup> (1.40)	5.05 <sup>a</sup> (1.16)	3.20*

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

Pairs of group means for the combined gender sample were tested using the Scheffe procedure.

Differences in superscripts indicate statistically significant differences between groups at  $p < .05$ .

Standard deviations are presented in parentheses.



Table 6: Zero-order correlations among general model and vulnerability variables

Variables	Sample	General models					
		Anxiety	Avoidance	Rosenberg	General distrust	Conflict efficacy	Marital optimism
Abandonment concerns	Intact	.53 <sup>a</sup>	.22 <sup>a</sup>	-.33	.33 <sup>a</sup>	-.36 <sup>a</sup>	-.37 <sup>a</sup>
	Divorce	.68 <sup>a</sup>	.10 <sup>a</sup>	-.47 <sup>a</sup>	.52 <sup>a</sup>	-.18 <sup>a</sup>	-.43 <sup>a</sup>
	Conflict	.50 <sup>a</sup>	.30 <sup>a</sup>	-.20 <sup>b</sup>	.33 <sup>a</sup>	-.19 <sup>a</sup>	-.46 <sup>a</sup>
	Combined	.60 <sup>***</sup>	.19 <sup>**</sup>	-.36 <sup>***</sup>	.42 <sup>***</sup>	-.24 <sup>***</sup>	-.43 <sup>***</sup>
Closeness concerns: Approach - avoidance conflicts	Intact	.28 <sup>a</sup>	.27 <sup>a</sup>	-.25 <sup>a</sup>	.29 <sup>a</sup>	-.19 <sup>a</sup>	-.31 <sup>a</sup>
	Divorce	.18 <sup>a</sup>	.52 <sup>b</sup>	-.16 <sup>a</sup>	.31 <sup>a</sup>	-.10 <sup>a</sup>	-.37 <sup>a</sup>
	Conflict	.15 <sup>a</sup>	.36	-.07 <sup>a</sup>	.38 <sup>a</sup>	-.15 <sup>a</sup>	-.08 <sup>b</sup>
	Combined	.22 <sup>***</sup>	.41 <sup>***</sup>	-.21 <sup>**</sup>	.35 <sup>***</sup>	-.16 <sup>**</sup>	-.31 <sup>***</sup>
Conflict Concerns	Intact	.34 <sup>a</sup>	.04 <sup>a</sup>	-.52 <sup>a</sup>	.18 <sup>a</sup>	-.10 <sup>a</sup>	-.30 <sup>a</sup>
	Divorce	.36 <sup>a</sup>	.04 <sup>a</sup>	-.33	.34 <sup>a</sup>	-.09 <sup>a</sup>	-.34 <sup>a</sup>
	Conflict	.26 <sup>a</sup>	.02 <sup>a</sup>	-.11 <sup>b</sup>	.19 <sup>a</sup>	-.23 <sup>a</sup>	-.30 <sup>a</sup>
	Combined	.33 <sup>***</sup>	.06	-.35 <sup>***</sup>	.27 <sup>***</sup>	-.14 <sup>*</sup>	-.34 <sup>***</sup>
Conflict severity index	Intact	.20 <sup>a</sup>	.13 <sup>a</sup>	-.38 <sup>a</sup>	.27 <sup>a</sup>	-.23 <sup>a</sup>	-.39 <sup>a</sup>
	Divorce	.16 <sup>a</sup>	.02 <sup>a</sup>	-.23	.21 <sup>a</sup>	-.12 <sup>a</sup>	-.33 <sup>a</sup>
	Conflict	.15 <sup>a</sup>	.09 <sup>a</sup>	-.07 <sup>b</sup>	.08 <sup>a</sup>	-.13 <sup>a</sup>	-.06 <sup>b</sup>
	Combined	.19 <sup>**</sup>	.10	-.27 <sup>***</sup>	.23 <sup>***</sup>	-.18 <sup>**</sup>	-.33 <sup>***</sup>

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

Family of origin group differences in the correlations between general model and vulnerability variables (e.g., anxiety and abandonment concerns) were evaluated using Fisher's z tests. Different superscripts indicate significant differences at the  $p < .05$  level.

Table 7: Zero-order correlations among vulnerability and relationship evaluation variables

<u>Vulnerability Variables</u>	Sample	<u>Relationship quality variables</u>		
		Satisfaction	Commitment	Optimism
Abandonment concerns	Intact	-.50 <sup>a</sup>	-.47 <sup>a</sup>	-.45 <sup>a</sup>
	Divorce	-.24 <sup>b</sup>	-.05 <sup>b</sup>	-.28 <sup>a</sup>
	Conflict	-.31	-.13 <sup>b</sup>	-.26 <sup>a</sup>
	Combined	-.34 <sup>***</sup>	-.20 <sup>**</sup>	-.33 <sup>***</sup>
Closeness concerns: Approach-avoidance conflicts	Intact	-.33 <sup>a</sup>	-.19 <sup>a</sup>	-.39 <sup>a</sup>
	Divorce	-.43 <sup>a</sup>	-.21 <sup>a</sup>	-.44 <sup>a</sup>
	Conflict	-.51 <sup>a</sup>	-.27 <sup>a</sup>	-.45 <sup>a</sup>
	Combined	-.42 <sup>***</sup>	-.23 <sup>***</sup>	-.44 <sup>***</sup>
Conflict Concerns	Intact	-.41 <sup>a</sup>	-.17 <sup>a</sup>	-.44 <sup>a</sup>
	Divorce	-.26 <sup>a</sup>	-.01 <sup>a</sup>	-.27 <sup>a</sup>
	Conflict	-.29 <sup>a</sup>	.03 <sup>a</sup>	-.27 <sup>a</sup>
	Combined	-.34 <sup>***</sup>	-.09	-.35 <sup>***</sup>
Conflict severity index	Intact	-.45 <sup>a</sup>	-.19 <sup>a</sup>	-.59 <sup>a</sup>
	Divorce	-.30 <sup>a</sup>	-.00 <sup>a</sup>	-.38 <sup>b</sup>
	Conflict	-.34 <sup>a</sup>	-.15 <sup>a</sup>	-.36 <sup>b</sup>
	Combined	-.37 <sup>***</sup>	-.14 <sup>*</sup>	-.46 <sup>***</sup>

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

Family of origin group differences in the correlations between vulnerability and relationship quality variables (e.g., abandonment concerns and satisfaction) were evaluated using Fisher's z tests.

Different superscripts indicate statistically significant differences at the  $p < .05$  level.

Table 8: Zero-order correlations among general model and relationship evaluation variables

<u>Variables</u>	<u>Relationship quality</u>	<u>Sample</u>	<u>General Models</u>						
			<u>Anxiety</u>	<u>Avoidance</u>	<u>Rosenberg</u>	<u>General distrust</u>	<u>Conflict efficacy</u>	<u>Marital optimism</u>	
Satisfaction	Intact		-.18 <sup>a</sup>	-.32 <sup>a</sup>	.16 <sup>a</sup>	-.24 <sup>a</sup>	.29 <sup>a</sup>	.37 <sup>a</sup>	
	Divorce		-.25 <sup>a</sup>	-.35 <sup>a</sup>	.18 <sup>a</sup>	-.25 <sup>a</sup>	.22 <sup>a</sup>	.41 <sup>a</sup>	
	Conflict		-.19 <sup>a</sup>	-.43 <sup>a</sup>	.07 <sup>a</sup>	-.41 <sup>a</sup>	.36 <sup>a</sup>	.42 <sup>a</sup>	
	Combined		-.22 <sup>***</sup>	-.36 <sup>***</sup>	.16 <sup>**</sup>	-.29 <sup>***</sup>	.29 <sup>***</sup>	.41 <sup>***</sup>	
Commitment	Intact		-.07 <sup>a</sup>	-.34 <sup>a</sup>	.14 <sup>a</sup>	-.19 <sup>a</sup>	.18 <sup>a</sup>	.41 <sup>a</sup>	
	Divorce		-.04 <sup>a</sup>	-.29 <sup>a</sup>	-.07 <sup>a</sup>	-.12 <sup>a</sup>	.35 <sup>a</sup>	.22 <sup>a</sup>	
	Conflict		-.04 <sup>a</sup>	-.38 <sup>a</sup>	.08 <sup>a</sup>	-.27 <sup>a</sup>	.24 <sup>a</sup>	.37 <sup>a</sup>	
	Combined		-.06	-.33 <sup>***</sup>	.05	-.19 <sup>**</sup>	.28 <sup>***</sup>	.33 <sup>***</sup>	
Optimism	Intact		-.18 <sup>a</sup>	-.26 <sup>a</sup>	.19 <sup>a</sup>	-.27 <sup>a</sup>	.39	.47 <sup>a</sup>	
	Divorce		-.26 <sup>a</sup>	-.23 <sup>a</sup>	.24 <sup>a</sup>	-.26 <sup>a</sup>	.27 <sup>a</sup>	.47 <sup>a</sup>	
	Conflict		-.14 <sup>a</sup>	-.40 <sup>a</sup>	.03 <sup>a</sup>	-.35 <sup>a</sup>	.51 <sup>a</sup>	.39 <sup>a</sup>	
	Combined		-.22 <sup>***</sup>	-.29 <sup>***</sup>	.20 <sup>**</sup>	-.31 <sup>***</sup>	.37 <sup>***</sup>	.47 <sup>***</sup>	

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

Family of origin group differences in the correlations between general model and relationship quality variables (e.g., anxiety and satisfaction) were evaluated using Fisher's z tests. Different superscripts indicate significant differences at the  $p < .05$  level.

Table 9: Zero-order correlations between predictor variables and break-up<sup>1</sup> status at one year

<i>Variable</i>	<u>Family of origin group</u>			
	<u>Intact</u> (n = 92)	<u>Divorce</u> (n = 87)	<u>Conflict</u> (n = 58)	<u>Combined</u>
<u>Relationship quality indices</u>				
<i>Satisfaction</i>	-.53 <sup>a</sup>	-.24 <sup>b</sup>	-.43	-.40***
<i>Commitment</i>	-.42 <sup>a</sup>	-.27 <sup>a</sup>	-.32 <sup>a</sup>	-.34***
<i>Optimism</i>	-.38 <sup>a</sup>	-.24 <sup>a</sup>	-.37 <sup>a</sup>	-.32***
<u>Specific vulnerabilities</u>				
<i>Abandonment concerns</i>	.29 <sup>a</sup>	.20 <sup>a</sup>	.19 <sup>a</sup>	.23***
<i>Closeness concerns</i>	-.03 <sup>a</sup>	.23 <sup>a</sup>	.22 <sup>a</sup>	.13*
<i>Conflict concerns</i>	.07 <sup>a</sup>	.09 <sup>a</sup>	-.10 <sup>a</sup>	.05
<i>Conflict Severity Index</i>	.21 <sup>a</sup>	-.00 <sup>a</sup>	.06 <sup>a</sup>	.11
<u>General models</u>				
<i>Anxiety</i>	.11 <sup>a</sup>	.06 <sup>a</sup>	.20 <sup>a</sup>	.11
<i>Rosenberg</i>	-.11 <sup>a</sup>	.02 <sup>a</sup>	.07 <sup>a</sup>	-.01
<i>Avoidance</i>	.19 <sup>a</sup>	.16 <sup>a</sup>	.19 <sup>a</sup>	.18**
<i>General distrust</i>	.22 <sup>a</sup>	.11 <sup>a</sup>	.31 <sup>a</sup>	.19**
<i>Marital optimism</i>	-.33 <sup>a</sup>	-.06 <sup>a</sup>	-.25 <sup>a</sup>	-.21**
<i>Conflict efficacy</i>	-.25 <sup>a</sup>	-.06 <sup>a</sup>	-.09 <sup>a</sup>	-.15*

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

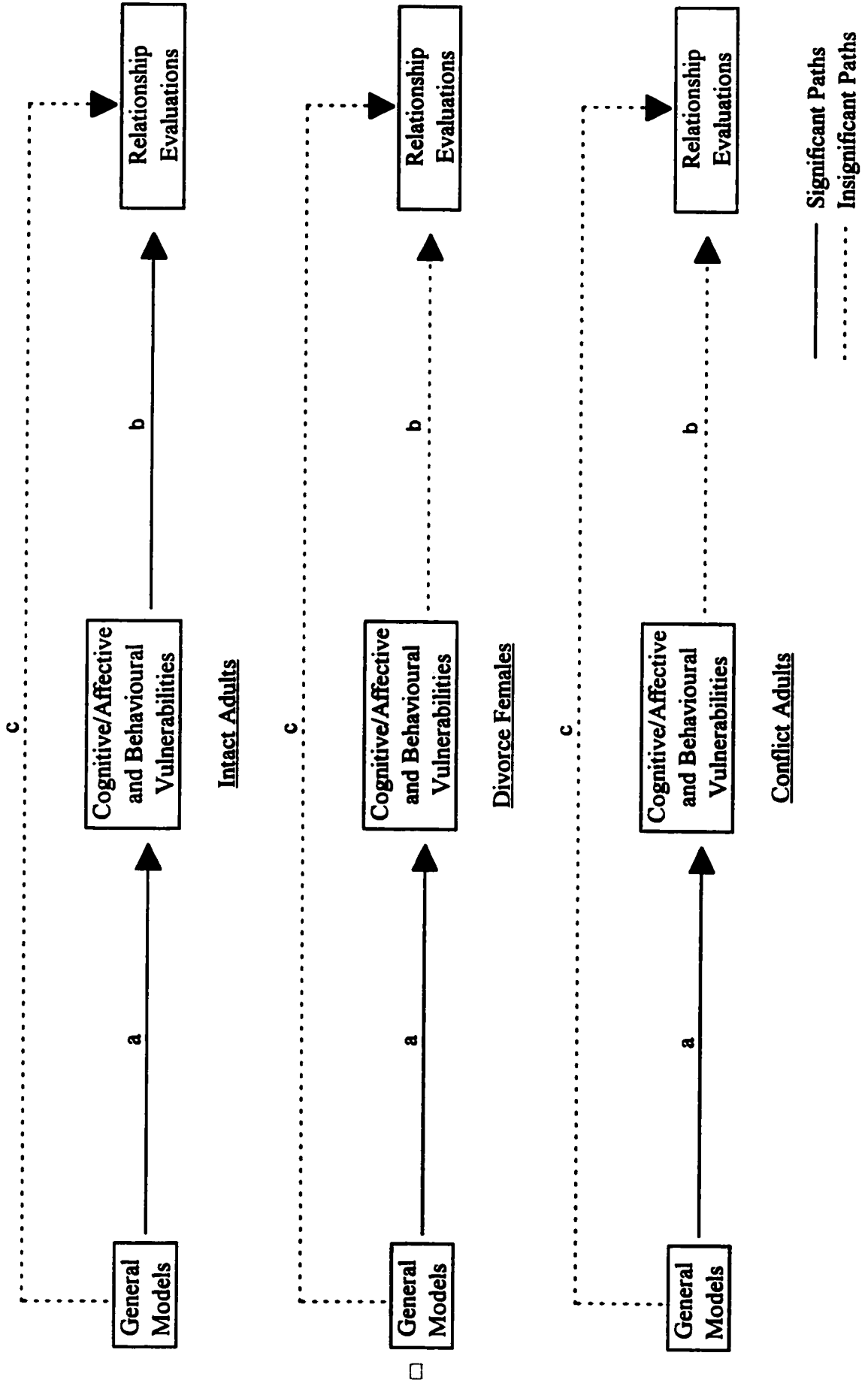
<sup>1</sup>In the analysis, intact relationships were coded '0' and break-ups were coded '1'.

Family of origin group differences in correlations between break-up and predictors were evaluated using Fisher's z tests. Different superscripts indicate significant differences at  $p < .05$ .

Table 10: Mean scores of participants who broke up with or remained with partners

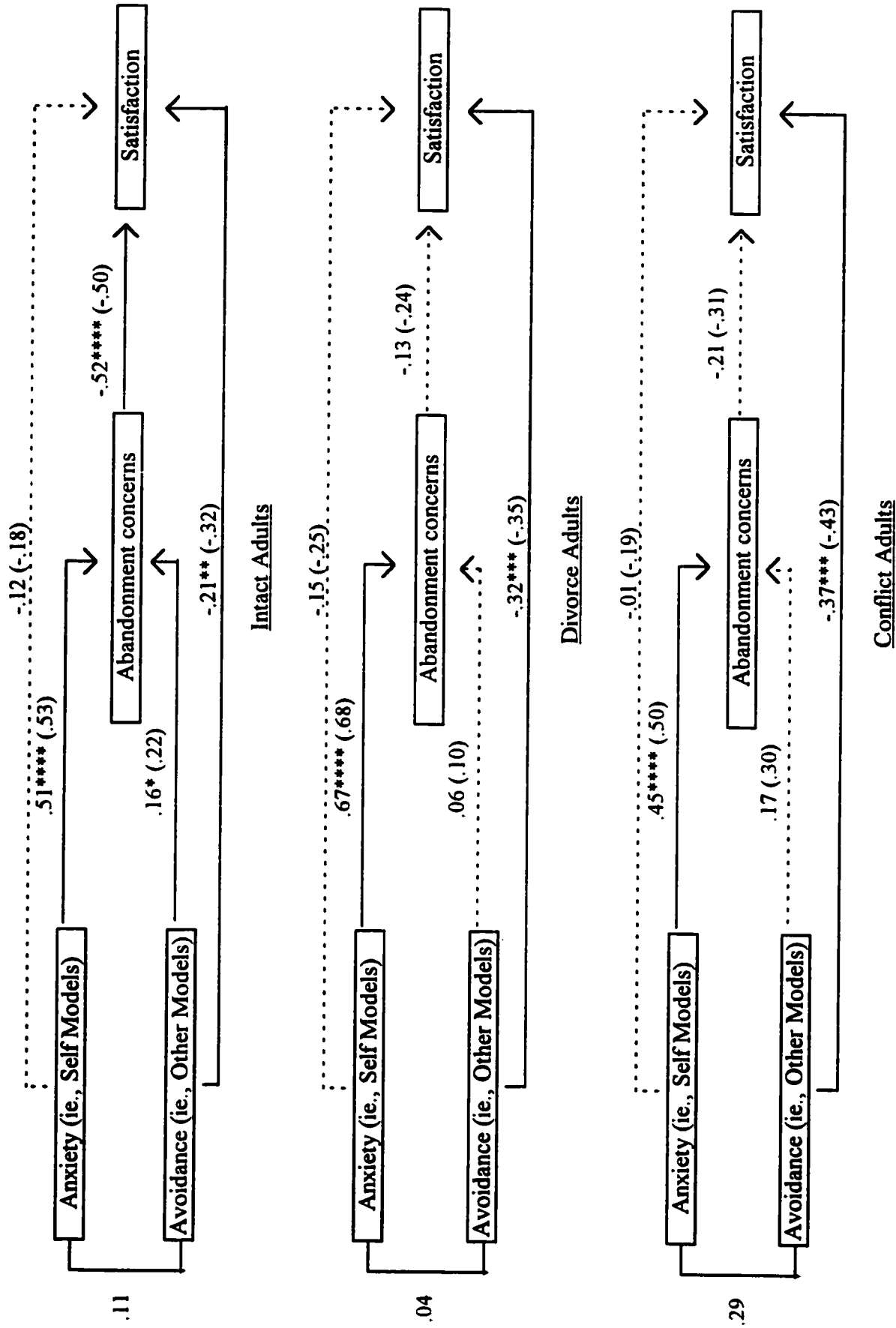
<i>Variable</i>	<b>Break-up status</b>	<u>Family of origin group</u>		
		<u>Intact</u>	<u>Divorce</u>	<u>Conflict</u>
<i>General distrust</i>	<b>Together</b>	2.57 (n = 54)	2.87 (n = 45)	3.30 (n = 33)
	<b>Apart</b>	3.06 (n = 37)	3.16 (n = 43)	4.03 (n = 25)
<i>Conflict severity</i>	<b>Together</b>	2.00 (n = 54)	3.08 (n = 45)	2.79 (n = 33)
	<b>Apart</b>	2.61 (n = 37)	3.08 (n = 43)	2.96 (n = 25)

Figure 1: Hypothesized relationships among categories of measures



□

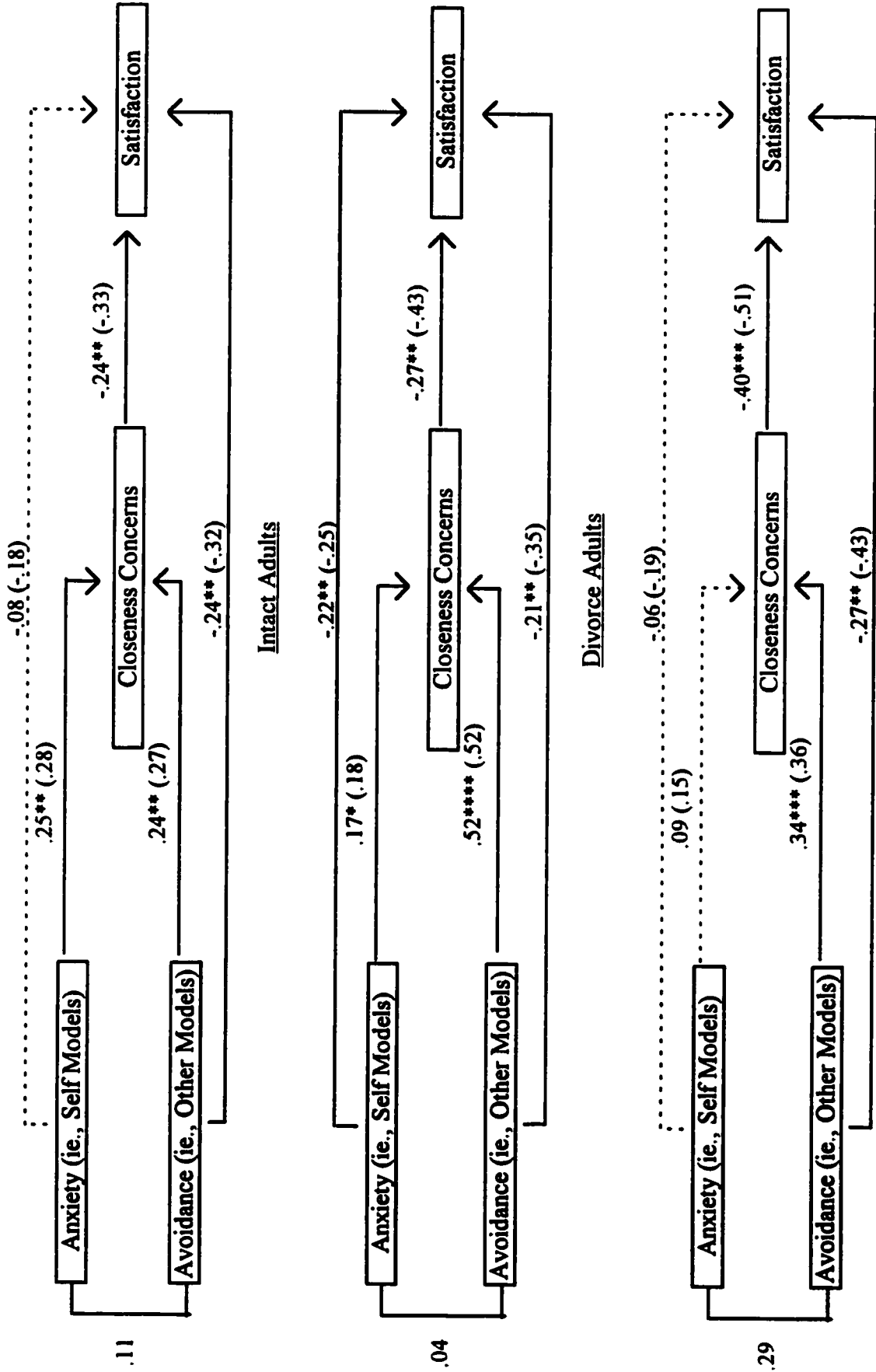
Figure 2: Exploring the link between abandonment concerns and satisfaction for all family of origin groups



\*  $p < .10$ , \*\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

(Correlations are displayed in parentheses)

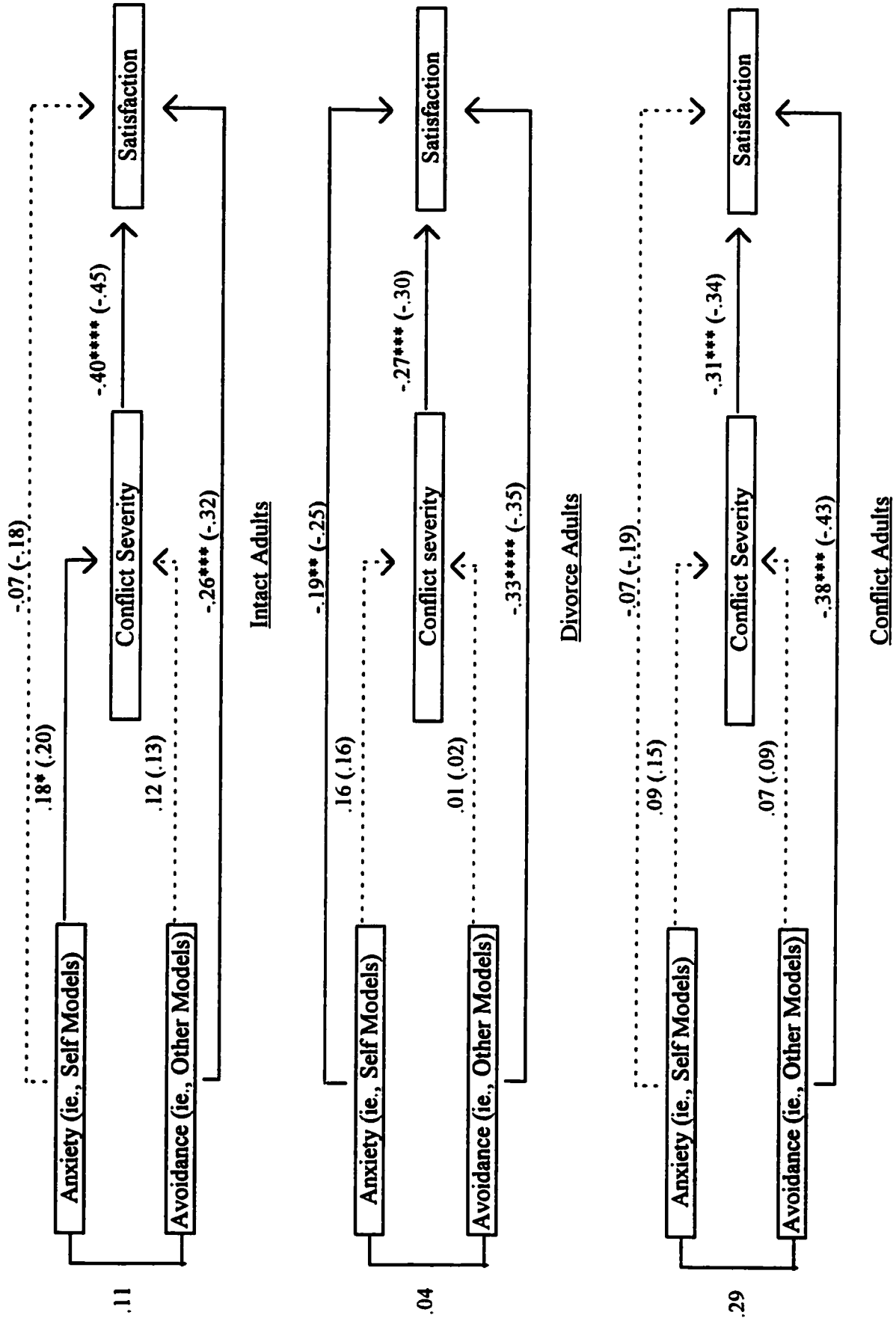
Figure 3: Exploring the link between closeness concerns and satisfaction for each family of origin group



\* p < .10, \*\* p < .05, \*\*\* p < .01, \*\*\*\* p < .001. (Correlations are displayed in parentheses)



Figure 4: Exploring the link between conflict severity and satisfaction for each family of origin group



\*  $p < .10$ , \*\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

(Correlations are displayed in parentheses)



## Appendix B: Avoidance (i.e., Models of Others)

We are interested in the thoughts and feelings that individuals have about romantic relationships in general. Please indicate how true each of the following statements is of you. Respond using the following scale.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7  
Not at all true                      Moderately True                      Completely True

- \*1. \_\_\_\_ I do not often worry about partners getting too close to me.
- 2. \_\_\_\_ It is very important to me to feel independent and self-sufficient in relationships.
- 3. \_\_\_\_ I prefer not to have others depend on me.
- \*4. \_\_\_\_ I like to be as emotionally close as possible with romantic partners.
- \*5. \_\_\_\_ I feel comfortable sharing my private thoughts and feelings with romantic partners.
- 6. \_\_\_\_ I would rather take care of myself than depend on a romantic partner.
- 7. \_\_\_\_ I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on romantic partners.
- 8. \_\_\_\_ I am not the kind of person who readily turns to partners in times of need.
- 9. \_\_\_\_ I am somewhat uncomfortable being close to others.
- 10. \_\_\_\_ Often, love partners want me to be more intimate/close than I feel comfortable being.
- 11. \_\_\_\_ When I am troubled (i.e., anxious, upset, etc.), I prefer to be alone.
- 12. \_\_\_\_ I do not need much affection from a romantic partner.

\*Reverse-scored

### Appendix C: Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

Please think about each statement and rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with it on the following scale:

1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

1. \_\_\_\_ I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others.
2. \_\_\_\_ I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
- \*3. \_\_\_\_ All in all I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.
4. \_\_\_\_ I am able to do things as well as most other people.
- \*5. \_\_\_\_ I feel that I do not have much to be proud of.
6. \_\_\_\_ I take a positive attitude toward myself.
7. \_\_\_\_ On the whole I am satisfied with myself.
- \*8. \_\_\_\_ I wish I could have more respect for myself.
- \*9. \_\_\_\_ I certainly feel useless at times.
- \*10. \_\_\_\_ At times I think I am no good at all.

\*Reverse-scored











## **Appendix H: Approach-Avoidance Conflicts (Closeness Concerns)**

Individuals' overall impressions of their partners and relationships are made up of many different thoughts and feelings. We are interested in assessing the diversity of the thoughts and feelings that may contribute to your overall impression of your partner and relationship.

Please describe how true the following statements are of your feelings and/or thoughts about your partners and/or your relationship. Respond according to the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true			Moderately True			Completely True

1. \_\_\_\_ I want attention and affection from my partner but sometimes feel uncomfortable when I get it.
2. \_\_\_\_ Sometimes, I love my partner passionately, but at other times I feel myself pulling back.
3. \_\_\_\_ I miss my partner intensely when we are apart, but sometimes when we are together, I feel like escaping.
4. \_\_\_\_ I sometimes feel angry or annoyed with my partner without knowing why.

## **Appendix I: Intimacy-Demand Concerns (Closeness Concerns)**

This last part of the vulnerability questionnaire again deals with situations that you may know, **logically**, should not make you feel uneasy or uncomfortable; however, for some reason, when situations like this arise, you cannot help but feel anxious. Please rate the extent to which the following situations would make you feel anxious, uneasy or uncomfortable. Again, please try to imagine yourself in the situation, and respond as honestly as possible:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all anxious/ uneasy			Moderately anxious/ uneasy			Extremely anxious/ uneasy

1. \_\_\_\_ Your partner is upset and needs your support (i.e., needs you to comfort, soothe, etc.).
2. \_\_\_\_ Your partner requests that you be more emotionally expressive (e.g., that you show your affection more often, that you tell your partner that you love him/her, etc.).
3. \_\_\_\_ Your partner is crying, yet cannot tell you what is wrong -- s/he promises to tell you later, but requests that for now, that you hold and soothe him/her.
4. \_\_\_\_ Your partner is anxious about something (e.g., an upcoming interview, a doctor's appointment, etc.); s/he asks that you be there for him/her to provide emotional or moral support.
5. \_\_\_\_ Your partner asks that the two of you take the next step (e.g., you move in together, get married, etc.). This means that you and s/he will be spending more time together, becoming more involved in one another's daily routines, etc.

## Appendix J: Conflict Concerns

Individuals' overall impressions of their partners and relationships are made up of many different thoughts and feelings. We are interested in assessing the diversity of the thoughts and feelings that may contribute to your overall impression of your partner and relationship.

Please try to answer as honestly as possible. We are interested in how you would actually react or feel in these situations -- not how you think you should act/feel. Respond according to the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true			Moderately true			Completely True

1. \_\_\_\_ I find myself becoming extremely anxious when my partner and I fight.
2. \_\_\_\_ I become extremely disturbed during conflictual interactions with my partner.
- \*3. \_\_\_\_ I do not become extremely anxious/uneasy when my partner is angry with me.

\*Reverse-scored

## **Appendix K: Conflict Severity Index (CSI)**

**Problems and disagreements arise in even the best of relationships. Please respond to the following questions about the conflicts in your relationship.**

**1. Please rate the frequency of conflict in your current relationship:**

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>We rarely fight</b>			<b>We fight as often as most couples do</b>			<b>We fight significantly more often than most couples do</b>

**2. Please rate the intensity of conflict in your current relationship:**

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Not at all intense</b>			<b>Moderately intense</b>			<b>Extremely intense</b>

## Appendix L: Destructive Conflict Style

Problems and disagreements arise in even the best of relationships. We are interested in your perceptions of how you and your partner deal with difficult issues. Couples may deal with potentially contentious issues in many different ways. Quite simply, we are interested in assessing the diverse ways in which couples deal with problems in their relationships.

When you are responding to the following statements, please try to answer honestly. Again, keep in mind that even the happiest of couples may behave in less than ideal ways when confronting difficult issues. Please respond using the following scale:

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7  
Not at all true                      Moderately true                      Completely true

1. \_\_\_\_ Most of the time our disagreements seem to follow a familiar course, with one of us defending him/herself against the other's criticisms.
- \*2. \_\_\_\_ My partner and I never have any difficulty discussing our problems in a straightforward, calm, and constructive manner.
3. \_\_\_\_ When my partner and I try to discuss a difficult issue, we sometimes end up criticizing or blaming one another for problems that are not related to the issue at hand.
- \*4. \_\_\_\_ My partner and I always express our feelings about our problems in an open and honest manner that prevents little problems from becoming big ones.
5. \_\_\_\_ Somehow conflicts get out of hand in our relationship; we often end up fighting about about issues that have little relation to the problem that started the argument.
6. \_\_\_\_ If my partner acts in an angry or hurtful way, I tend to respond in an equally harsh and critical manner.
7. \_\_\_\_ If I criticize my partner, my partner tends to criticize me in return.
8. \_\_\_\_ Rather than feeling better after discussing a difficult issue, my partner and I end up feeling even more hurt and angry than we did before the discussion.
9. \_\_\_\_ I find it very difficult not to criticize and blame my partner when he or she behaves badly.
- \*10. \_\_\_\_ When I act in an angry or hurtful way, my partner tries to find out what is bothering

me rather than acting angry and hurt too.

- \*11. \_\_\_\_ My partner and I always try to find a constructive, positive way to respond to one another's angry outbursts, complaints, or misbehaviours.
- \*12. \_\_\_\_ My partner and I always strive to take one another's points of view into consideration when we deal with difficult issues in our relationship.
- 13. \_\_\_\_ My partner seems too willing to criticize me when I behave badly.
- \*14. \_\_\_\_ When my partner acts in an angry and hurtful way, I try to find a way to make him or her feel better.
- \*15. \_\_\_\_ My partner and I are able to reach mutually satisfying compromises when we discuss contentious issues in our relationship.
- 16. \_\_\_\_ On more than one occasion, our disagreements have escalated to a point where one of us threatened to end our relationship.
- 17. \_\_\_\_ My partner and I agree that some issues in our relationship are better left untouched.
- \*18. \_\_\_\_ My partner accepts my faults and misbehaviours; s/he doesn't nag at me to change.
- 19. \_\_\_\_ When my partner and I discuss contentious issues, one of us often ends up yelling or screaming at the other.
- \*20. \_\_\_\_ Even when we are discussing an issue that we both feel strongly about, I try hard to focused on my partner's concerns.
- \*21. \_\_\_\_ My partner never loses sight of my own needs and goals when we are trying to resolve a difficult issue in our relationship.
- 22. \_\_\_\_ My partner can be rather selfish and think largely of him/herself when we are dealing with contentious issues.
- 23. \_\_\_\_ At times, I tend to press for my own concerns and almost forget my partner's when we are dealing with a difficult issue that is especially important to me.

\*Reverse-scored



## **Appendix N: Commitment Index**

**Individuals' overall impressions of their partners and relationships are made up of many different thoughts and feelings. We are interested in assessing the diversity of the thoughts and feelings that may contribute to your overall impression of your partner and relationship.**

**Please describe how true the following statements are of your feelings and/or thoughts about your partners and/or your relationship. Respond according to the following scale:**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true			Moderately True			Completely True

1. \_\_\_\_ I am extremely committed to this relationship.
2. \_\_\_\_ I have made a firm promise to myself to do everything in my power to make my relationship work.





## **Appendix P: Parents' relationship quality**

In addition to being interested in intimate/romantic relationships, we are interested in individuals' early experiences with close relationships. For example, we are interested in familial ties (e.g., in individuals' relationships with parents, and views of their parents' relationship).

Please respond according to the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true			Moderately True			Completely True

1. \_\_\_\_ When I was growing up, my parents had an excellent marital relationship.
2. \_\_\_\_ When I was growing up, my mother was completely satisfied with the quality of her marital relationship.
3. \_\_\_\_ When I was growing up, my father was completely satisfied with the quality of his marital relationship.
- \*4. \_\_\_\_ My parents should never have gotten married.
- \*5. \_\_\_\_ If my parents had worked harder at their marriage, they could have had a better relationship.
- \*6. \_\_\_\_ My parents are not right for each other.

\*Reverse-scored

### **Appendix Q: Parental conflict severity**

**1. Please rate the frequency of parental conflict (i.e., conflict between parents) when you were growing up:**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My parents rarely fought with one another			My parents fought as often as most couples			My parents fought significantly more than most couples

**2. Please rate the intensity of parental conflict (i.e., conflict between parents) when you were growing up:**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all intense			Moderately intense			Extremely intense

**\*Divorce Adults were asked to rate the frequency and intensity of parental conflict both before and after the divorce.**

## **Appendix R: Quality of relationship with mother**

In addition to being interested in intimate/romantic relationships, we are interested in individuals' early experiences with close relationships. For example, we are interested in familial ties (e.g., in individuals' relationships with parents, and views of their parents' relationship).

Please respond according to the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true			Moderately True			Completely True

1. \_\_\_\_ During childhood, I had a very good relationship with my mother.
2. \_\_\_\_ During adolescence, I had a very good relationship with my mother.
- \*3. \_\_\_\_ When I was growing up, I did not have a very positive relationship with my mother.

\*Reverse-scored

Divorce Adults were also asked to rate the quality of their mother-child relationship prior to and following the marital separation.

### **Appendix S: Quality of relationship with father**

In addition to being interested in intimate/romantic relationships, we are interested in individuals' early experiences with close relationships. For example, we are interested in familial ties (e.g., in individuals' relationships with parents, and views of their parents' relationship).

Please respond according to the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true			Moderately True			Completely True

1. \_\_\_\_ During childhood, I had a very good relationship with my father.
2. \_\_\_\_ During adolescence, I had a very good relationship with my father.
- \*3. \_\_\_\_ When I was growing up, I did not have a very positive relationship with my father.

\*Reverse-scored

Divorce Adults were also asked to rate the quality of their father-child relationship prior to and following the marital separation.

**Appendix T: Percentage of participants in each attachment category**

<i>Category</i>	<i>Sample</i>	<u>Family of origin group</u>		
		<u>Intact</u> (n = 98)	<u>Divorce</u> (n = 101)	<u>Conflict</u> (n = 65)
<i>Secure</i>	Females	53.2%	32.8%	29.8%
	Males	38.9%	35.0%	41.2%
	Combined	48.0%	33.7%	32.8%
<i>Preoccupied</i>	Females	19.4%	34.4%	12.8%
	Males	19.4%	25.0%	23.5%
	Combined	19.4%	30.7%	15.6%
<i>Fearful</i>	Females	14.5%	21.3%	29.8%
	Males	11.1%	12.5%	11.8%
	Combined	13.3%	17.8%	25.0%
<i>Dismissive</i>	Females	12.9%	11.5%	27.7%
	Males	30.6%	27.5%	23.5%
	Combined	19.4%	17.8%	26.6%

Participants were assigned to attachment categories based on their scores on anxiety and avoidance indices.

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