

2004

Emotional competence and relationship satisfaction: identifying skills that may be essential to having a happy and intimate relationship

Cindy Nour

University of Wollongong

Recommended Citation

Nour, Cindy, Emotional competence and relationship satisfaction: identifying skills that may be essential to having a happy and intimate relationship, Doctor of Psychology (Clinical) thesis, Department of Psychology, University of Wollongong, 2004.
<http://ro.uow.edu.au/theses/2137>

NOTE

This online version of the thesis may have different page formatting and pagination from the paper copy held in the University of Wollongong Library.

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

COPYRIGHT WARNING

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study. The University does not authorise you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site. You are reminded of the following:

Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright. A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. A court may impose penalties and award damages in relation to offences and infringements relating to copyright material. Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.

**Emotional competence and relationship satisfaction:
Identifying skills that may be
essential to having a happy and intimate relationship.**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree

Doctor of Psychology (Clinical)
at the
University of Wollongong

Cindy Nour

Bachelor of Arts (Macquarie University)

Postgraduate Diploma in Psychology (Macquarie University)

Department of Psychology

2004

Thesis certification

I, Cindy Amanda Nour, declare that this thesis, submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Doctor of Psychology (Clinical), in the Department of Psychology, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institute.

Cindy Amanda Nour

5th January, 2004.

Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my thanks to my supervisor, Dr Joseph Ciarrochi for his expertise, foresight, support, guidance, enthusiasm and patience. Thank you for being so generous with your time and for your thorough back up plans. I consider myself very lucky to have had such a wonderful supervisor.

Thanks to Mum who has always shown me unconditional love. Without your support, completing my degree would not have been possible. I will never forget the sacrifices you have made to help me achieve my goals. To Dad, although you are no longer with me I hope I have made you proud.

Thank you to Mark McDonald, you are such a beautiful person. You have encouraged me, supported me and made me laugh. Thanks are also due to: Chantal Nagib, for allowing me to share my innermost feelings with you, Judy Harris, for your endless faith, love and encouragement. Thanks to Sharon Jonathan, Patty Malak, Elizabeth Morcos for encouraging me to persevere and reminding me that I can accomplish my goals. To Tania Mirosevich, Cherry Valleja and Loretta Nichols, thank you for your faith in me. Finally, but certainly not least, thanks are due to Suzy Green, Lisa Parker and Tanya Cartmill, this journey would not have been the same without you guys. You have helped me to achieve this goal with your support and endless encouragement.

Abstract

What emotional skills do people need to have a satisfying, close personal relationship? Two studies examined the relationship between measures of emotional competence and relationship satisfaction. The four aspects of emotional competence examined were effective social and emotional problem solving, accurate identification and describing of emotions, adaptive expression of emotions and effective management of emotions. 421 university students participated in study 1 (322 females; 99 males). 232 of these participants were in a relationship and 71 partners responded. 409 university students participated in study 2 (327 females; 82 males). 209 of these participants were in a relationship and 93 partners responded. Correlational and regression analyses revealed that the best predictors of close relationship satisfaction were ambivalence over the expression of intimacy emotions and difficulty identifying emotions. These effects held even after controlling for social desirability and a wide variety of other potential confounds. The basic and applied implications of these results are discussed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
THESIS CERTIFICATION	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	v
LIST OF APPENDICES	vi
INTRODUCTION	1
STUDY HYPOTHESES	22
METHOD	23
PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURE	23
MEASURES	24
RESULTS	30
DISCUSSION	49
REFERENCES	64
APPENDICES	75

LIST OF TABLES

1. Means and standard deviations for the dependant and independent variables for study 1.
2. Means and standard deviations for the dependant and independent variables for study 2.
3. Correlations (Pearson) of predictor variables with intimate relationship satisfaction and partner relationship satisfaction in study 1.
4. Correlations (Pearson) of predictor variables with intimate relationship satisfaction and partner relationship satisfaction in study 2.
5. Study 1 Intercorrelations between emotional competencies and social desirability
6. Study 2 Intercorrelations between emotional competencies and social desirability
7. Partial correlations (Pearson) of predictor variables with participant intimate relationship satisfaction and partner relationship satisfaction controlling for social desirability for study 1.
8. Partial correlations (Pearson) of predictor variables with participant intimate relationship satisfaction and partner relationship satisfaction controlling for social desirability for study 2.

9. Study 1 Correlations (Pearson) of predictor variables with participant intimate relationship satisfaction and Partner relationship satisfaction for males and females.

10. Study 2 Correlations (Pearson) of predictor variables with partner intimate relationship satisfaction and partner relationship satisfaction for males and females.

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A Participant information form

Appendix B Participant consent form

Appendix C Partner information form

Appendix D Partner consent form

Appendix E Demographic questions

Appendix F The Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS-20)

Appendix G Emotional Control Questionnaire (ECQ)

Appendix H Social problem solving inventory (SPSI-a)

Appendix I Ambivalence over Emotional Expression (AEQ)

Appendix J Relationship Quality Questionnaire (RQQ)

Appendix K Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (MCSDS)

Appendix L The Social Desirable Responding Questionnaire (SDQ)

Intimate relationships can be a great source of joy and happiness, providing strength and support, buffering people against loneliness and depression. Relationships provide love, joy, and feelings of great ecstasy and awe. According to Maslow, one of the characteristics of self-actualised persons is that they are more likely to have so-called *peak experiences* than others (1970). Such experiences may come while in the moment with a lover or in the ecstasy of fulfilled love. However, once the euphoria of falling in love and the excitement fades, the 'other' becomes a real person with flaws.

The very same relationship that once provided ecstasy, intimacy, love and support may also be the source of conflict, frustration, pain, stress, disappointment and misery. Not surprisingly, many of the problems experienced in close relationships are emotional in nature (Mehta & Clark, 1999). For example, the threat of losing the significant other to another individual may evoke feelings of fear and jealousy. Feelings of loss and anger may be associated with losing oneself within the relationship or compromising personal goals for united goals. Many people's most intense emotions are associated with the initiation, maintenance, and disruption of affectional bonds (Bowlby, 1973, cited by Fitness & Fletcher, 1993).

It is important to explore intimate relationships because they are so closely intertwined with our emotional, physical and mental health. There is virtually no aspect of human experience that is not profoundly influenced by the quality of one's close relationships. For this reason, psychologists over the years have been examining the health and psychological implications of being in a close relationship. Investigations have suggested that intimacy and at least some minimal number of close relationships are associated with and may be necessary in order to maintain individual health, to ameliorate the effects of stress, and to avoid at least some forms of psychological disturbance (Duck, 1988; Sarason & Sarason, 1984).

Evidence has accumulated from epidemiological research suggesting that social isolation and loneliness increase the risk for morbidity and mortality (Campbell, 1986). Berkman (1985) found that people who had more personal and public social ties, and more frequent contact with them, had significantly lower mortality rates than people who were more socially isolated. House, Landis & Umberson (1988) also found this association even after controlling for biomedical risk factors such as smoking, diet, exercise, and initial health status. These researchers found that in general, married people tend to be healthier than unmarried people. Furthermore, Gottlieb and Wagner (1991) suggest that social support is a critical resource for resisting stress. Studies have shown that people who receive social support or believe that they could obtain it if they wanted to are at lower risk of maladjusting or becoming mentally or physically ill than those who lack support.

However, not all relationships provide support and benefits to health and well-being. Troubled relationships and relationship problems such as abuse, betrayal and divorce can have great personal risk and cost. Marital conflict and divorce are associated with adverse health outcomes, such as psychopathology, alcoholism, (Jacobson, Holtzworth-Munroe & Schmaling, 1989) poor general health, and increased risk for physical illnesses (Hafstrom & Schram 1984). Schmaling and Sher (1997, cited by Fincham & Beach, 1999) found that marital conflict has also been linked with specific illnesses such as cancer, cardiac disease, and chronic pain. Although it is difficult to establish cause and effect with these findings, these results are rather informative.

It is also important to explore emotions in the context of close relationships because emotional expression is the means by which people communicate experience and influence relationships. Such a wide range of expression may be communicated within a close relationship, from mild irritation to raging hatred to blinding joy to placid contentment

(Berscheid, 1983). Furthermore, people differ in their ability to accurately perceive, identify emotions, express and manage their emotions (Forgas, 2001). This study will investigate how these individual differences relate to relationship satisfaction, and which of these emotional competencies are most important with regard to relationship satisfaction.

Emotional intelligence has been defined as the ability to appraise, understand, express and regulate emotions, in ones self and in others (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Researchers have suggested that individuals who are most likely to succeed in life possess skills and abilities that relate to emotional intelligence. For instance, they have intrapersonal skills that help them recognise, understand and using emotions, and interpersonal skills that help them manage their emotions (Bar-on 1997, as cited by Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 1999). Mayer & Salovey (1995, as cited by Mayer et al, 1999) also predicted that individuals who are high in emotional intelligence are optimistic, choose good role models, and are able to discuss and communicate their feelings to others. All of these factors may therefore contribute to intimate relationship satisfaction.

The primary and most basic skill associated with the development of emotional intelligence involves the perception, awareness and appraisal of emotions in everyday life (Mayer et al, 1999). Emotion perception incorporates the ability to recognise and understand one's own feelings, to detect and convey the relevant emotion associated with physical states and thoughts and to be able to recognise these emotions in other people (Mayer, et al, 1999).

Furthermore, the component of emotional intelligence that involves one's own regulation and management of emotion is considered to be one of the highest forms of emotional intelligence (Mayer et al, 1999). These authors asserted that this skill would help the individuals calm themselves down, recover from feelings of anxiety, irritability or despair and act as an inhibitor so that they only reveal appropriate feelings for appropriate circumstances. All of these skills may be pivotal when interacting with an intimate partner.

Therefore emotional intelligence may be considered to be particularly important for social interactions, more specifically intimate relationships. These abilities may help to serve communicative and social functions, conveying information about an individual's thoughts and intentions, and coordinating social encounters (Keltner & Haidt, 2000).

Emotional Competencies

Based on previous theory and research (Ciarrochi, Chan, & Caputi, 2000), the focus of this research will be on four aspects of emotional competence: effective social and emotional problem solving, accurate identification and describing of emotions, adaptive expression of emotions and effective management of emotions. The most general hypothesis is that higher competence will be associated with higher relationship satisfaction. This study brings together these four major classes of emotional competence measures within a single study. By bringing these four major classes of emotional competence together within a single study it is possible to best identify the emotional competencies most strongly and consistently linked to close relationship satisfaction. In principle, by identifying the most important emotional competence correlates of close relationship satisfaction it may be possible to develop time-limited interventions to target these and seek to improve them.

Therefore, it is proposed that certain basic emotional competencies are important to the development and maintenance of close relationship satisfaction, and to the promotion of well-being. Emotional competence refers to the ability to effectively identify, describe and manage emotions. There are a substantial number of possible competence measures that could have been included in the study. The decision to include a particular competence variable was based on both theoretical and pragmatic considerations (Ciarrochi et al., 2000).

Theoretically, the chosen measures sample a relatively full range of emotional competencies defined by current theory (Ciarrochi et al., 2000; D’Zurilla & Nezu, 1990; Mayer, 2001) and can be described in terms of a more or less effective functioning dimension (e.g., someone low in emotion identification is presumed to function less effectively in terms of this competence). Therefore, higher scores mean that the individual is more effective at identifying, describing and managing emotions. On a practical level, the chosen measures have been well researched and validated in multiple independent laboratories and so it is possible that they overlap to such an extent that they do not predict unique variance. (Bagby, Parker, & Taylor, 1994; Nolen-Hoeksema, Larson, & Grayson, 1999; Roger & Najarian, 1989).

For the purpose of this research, the term close relationships refers to an intimate relationship between two adults of the opposite sex. Relationship satisfaction refers to subjective feelings that the relationship provides more rewards than costs, and that the accumulation of positive outcomes is better than would be expected by comparison to other relationships of the same type (Sprecher, Metts, Burleson, Hatfield & Thompson, 1995).

Effective social and emotional problem solving

Saarni (1999) suggests that emotional competence and social competence are inseparable, with emotional competence being defined as skills needed to be self-efficacious in emotion eliciting social contexts. Both emotional and social competencies entail displays of resilience and self-efficacy. According to Saarni (1999), the notion of self-efficacy relates to how people can respond emotionally, yet simultaneously and strategically apply their knowledge about emotions and their emotional responsiveness to negotiate their way through interpersonal exchanges (e.g. close relationships).

Chang and D’Zurilla (1996) suggest two components that operate in the problem solving process: problem orientation and problem solving skill. Problem orientation is defined as a “motivational process involving the operation of a set of relatively stable cognitive-emotional schemas that describe how a person generally thinks and feels about problems in living, as well as his or her own problem solving ability” (p.186). Effective problem solving orientation involves (a) appraising a problem as a challenge rather than a threat, (b) belief in one’s own problem solving capability, (c) expectation of positive problem solving outcomes, and (d) commitment of time and effort to solving problems rather than avoiding them (Chang & D’Zurilla, 1996).

Effective orientation involves confronting rather than avoiding difficult emotional problems (Ciarrochi, et al., 2000). Problem solving skill refers to the rational search for a solution through the application of problem solving strategies and techniques that are designed to maximize the probability of finding the most adaptive solution for a particular problem (Chang & D’Zurilla, 1996).

Furthermore, effective problem orientation involves perceiving emotional problems as challenges as opposed to threats. Research has found that those who appraise problems as challenges demonstrated higher scores on measures of psychological well being (Ciarrochi, et al., 2000). Effective problem orientation has been associated with low depression, anxiety, hopelessness, suicidal ideation, health complaints, and neuroticism (Ciarrochi, Scott, Deane & Heaven, 2003; D’Zurilla, Chang, Nottingham & Faccini, 1998; Elliott, Herrick, MacNair, & Harkins, 1994; Elliott & Marmarosh, 1994).

Although relationship research has examined problem solving beliefs and behaviours (Fincham, Bradbury & Scott, 1995), effective problem solving orientation as conceptualised by Chang and D’Zurilla has not been explored in the context of intimate relationships. This study aims to explore effective problem solving orientation and problem solving skills in relation to close relationship satisfaction. It is predicted that participants who have an effective problem solving orientation (i.e. face rather than avoid their emotional problems), and effective problem solving skills will experience higher relationship satisfaction. This study seeks to understand how important effective problem orientation and effective problem solving skills are when compared to other emotional competencies.

Accurate identification of emotions

Another important emotional competence is the ability to identify emotions (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 1999). Marital interaction research has found that individuals vary in their abilities to accurately perceive and identify emotions, with some spouses misidentifying even the most obvious emotions (Noller, 1991). Furthermore, research has found reliable associations between people’s abilities to accurately recognise and adaptively express emotions with relationship satisfaction. This evidence is reviewed in detail below.

Noller and Ruzzene (1991) found that unhappy spouses were more likely to misidentify their partner's emotions. The study also found that non-distressed spouses were more empathetically aware of each other's affective states than were distressed spouses. However, cause and effect is difficult to establish with regards to these results. Fitness (2001) suggests that marital unhappiness may decrease spouses' emotional sensitivity to one another, or emotional insensitivity may decrease marital happiness. Regardless, marital literature and research highlight the role of emotion misidentification in increased conflict and relationship dissatisfaction.

Emotion misidentification has often been identified as the beginning of a destructive spiral of increased conflict and low relationship satisfaction (Gaelick, Bodenhausen & Wyer, 1985; Gottman 1994). Noller and Ruzzene (1991) studied fifty couples, 15 of who were classified as nondistressed, 22 as moderately distressed, and 13 as distressed. These couples were videotaped while discussing a long-standing problem issue. The problem issue was specifically relevant to their marital happiness. Following the discussion, spouses provided information about the way they had experienced the interaction, the way they thought their partners had experienced the interaction, and about their causal explanations for the problems being discussed.

These researchers found that non-distressed spouses were more accurate than distressed spouses in judging affect. It appears that once the spiral begins for spouses who are already experiencing low relationship satisfaction, their identification of emotion is compromised. Thus, high marital adjustment couples were more accurate in their understanding of each other's affective communication than low marital adjustment couples (Noller & Ruzzene, 1991). Interestingly, wives were more accurate at identifying their partners' affect when they were communicating to the partner rather than when the partner

was communicating to them. In contrast, distressed husbands displayed less accuracy when their wives were communicating to them than when they were communicating to their wives (Ruzzene & Noller, 1991).

Other evidence that examines the ability to accurately identify emotions comes from Knudson, Sommers and Golding (1980). These researchers found that relative to couples that avoid conflict, couples who resolve conflict in a direct and open fashion tend to develop more accurate understandings of each other's thoughts and feelings. Perhaps, a possible explanation for such findings is that couples that resolve their conflicts constructively talk more about their emotions. Consequently, this process may improve their ability to accurately identify their own emotions and their partner's identify emotions. This process may increase their own emotional awareness and their understanding of their partner's emotional awareness.

Clearly, past research has found that the ability to correctly identify emotions is central to the experience of close relationship satisfaction. More specifically, poor identification of emotion is associated with lower relationship satisfaction. This study seeks to replicate the association between self-report emotion identification and relationship satisfaction. This study also seeks to understand how important identification is when compared to the other emotional competencies examined in this study.

Adaptive expression of emotions

Another competency that this study is interested in is the adaptive expression of emotion. Ambivalence over the expression of emotion is a fairly new construct and is considered to be an obstacle to adaptive emotion expression. Ambivalence over emotion expression refers to the experience of conflict over one's style of emotional expression (King & Emmons, 1990, 1992).

Individuals who are ambivalent over emotion expression want to express their emotions more, but actively hold back from expressing. This type of ambivalence may be felt with regard to either positive emotions or entitlement emotions. Past research indicates that the presence of this internal conflict that is detrimental to subjective well-being (King, 1998; King & Emmons, 1991). King and Emmons (1990) suggest that the conflict dynamic that underlies an individual's overt expressiveness style might serve as an important variable in relation to emotional expression.

This current research examines two factors thought to relate to intimate relationship satisfaction: ambivalence over expression of positive emotions and entitlement emotions. King and Emmons (1990) propose that positive emotions include love, affection and true feelings, and entitlement emotions include anger, pride and jealousy. However, this study conceptualises the first factor in terms of ambivalence over the expression of intimacy emotions (AIE). The items that load the most on this factor relate to love, affection and "true" feelings. For example, an individual who is ambivalent about expressing intimacy emotions may want to express love, but for some reason they do not (e.g., "fear of appearing weak"). In other words, the ambivalent individual cannot bring himself or herself to express intimacy emotions even though they may want to.

The second factor is termed ambivalence over the expression of entitlement emotions and seems to load more on anger than the other emotions. Other emotions loading on this factor were pride and jealousy. However, anger was the dominant emotion. In other words, the individual who is ambivalent over the expression of entitlement emotions may want to express anger at times, but actively holds back from doing so.

Emmons and Colby (1995) asked participants to answer questionnaire measures of emotional ambivalence, fear of intimacy, repressive defensiveness, social support, and well-being. The participants then completed daily mood and experience forms for twenty-one consecutive days. Observer reports of social support provided and requested were obtained from participants' peers, relatives, and so on. Thus, social support was measured a number of different ways, including the participants' perceptions of their available support, daily utilisation efforts, and ratings of support by knowledgeable observers.

Emmons and Colby (1995) suggest that ambivalence over emotional expression may interfere with the necessary reciprocity involved in interpersonal exchanges. These researchers found that ambivalence over expressing emotion was associated with lower perceived support, negative attitudes toward support, and increased use of avoidant coping strategies. In addition, individuals high on emotional ambivalence were especially unlikely to share personal information or intimate feelings with those in their support network. It is hypothesized that this ambivalence leads to lower relationship satisfaction. These types of behaviours require more self-disclosure, an action that is thought to be particularly challenging for these individuals (Emmons & Colby, 1995).

Undergraduate university students in King's (1998) study completed measures of ambivalence over emotional expression, emotional expressiveness, confusion in reading the emotions of others, and questionnaire measures of various other emotional characteristics. Participants were required to examine emotional scenes and were also asked to write narratives about the feelings of the individuals in brief scenarios or in pictures of the universal facial expressions.

In the abovementioned study, King (1998) found that individuals ambivalent over expressing emotion were less likely to communicate distress in close relationships, making it more difficult for partners to detect that they are in need of assistance. Furthermore, individuals who were high in ambivalence over emotional expression reported confusion in reading the emotions of others. These individuals were inexpressive and also tended to mismatch emotion words with emotional situations. Furthermore, these individuals tended to infer opposite emotions when presented simple emotional stimuli (King, 1998). When given the most obvious emotional cues, conflicted individuals inferred not only the clear emotion conveyed, but also emotions of the opposite valence. King (1998) therefore suggests that conflicted individuals may have problems reading the needs of others and gauging the emotional reactions of those around them.

King (1998) suggests that it is not difficult to see how such confusion might influence the interpersonal functioning of these individuals, as well as of those who are in relationships with them. She suggested that confusion in reading simple emotional cues might relate to difficulty receiving as well as delivering emotional support. This may have significant implications for close relationships, which are often a source of emotional support. These findings were offered as explanations for the relationship between emotional ambivalence and spouse's symptomatology and alcohol consumption (King & Emmons, 1991).

Moreover, King (1993) found that individuals who are ambivalent over emotional expression tend to be conflicted not only about their own emotions, but also about their partner's emotions. Spouses' ratings of each other's expressiveness correlated with marital satisfaction, independent of spouses' self-reported expressiveness. However, only husbands' ambivalence over emotional expression was negatively correlated with marital satisfaction. Therefore, it seems that ambivalence over the expression of emotion is linked to lower relationship satisfaction.

In a recent study conducted by Mongrain and Vette (2003), the ambivalence over the expression of emotion questionnaire was administered to ninety four female undergraduate university students who were videotaped while engaging in a conflict resolution and feedback task with their boyfriends. Several interesting results were found. First, highly ambivalent women reported suppressing their negative feelings (e.g., anger) toward their partner during the conflict resolution task. These findings also remained when mood and other personality variables were controlled for. Second, the data indicated that being conflicted about expressing oneself might lead to a less positive social portrayal. More ambivalent women made fewer positive statements during the feedback task, and so these researchers suggested that the efforts of the women "leaked" and found expression in their less positive communication.

Furthermore, the withholding of positive feedback (love and affection) may be particularly damaging within romantic relationships. For example, Filsinger and Thoma (1988) found that declines in moderate levels of satisfaction among newlyweds to low levels of satisfaction were associated with low levels of positive behaviour. Furthermore, Gaelick, Bodenhausen and Wyer (1985) examined emotional communication patterns between partners by asking twenty-nine married and de-facto couples to engage in a videotaped

discussion of a problem they were having in their relationship. Also, couples were asked to identify specific communications that they believed had an important influence on the discussion and then to rate the communications in terms of the dealings the communicator intended to convey and the recipient's reactions.

These researchers found that during these communications the absence of hostile behaviour was interpreted by men (but not women) as hostile, whereas the absence of hostile behaviour was interpreted by women (but not men) as evidence of love. These authors thus concluded that women's absence of loving behaviours plays a critical role in escalating conflict within romantic relationships. The study also found that only negative feelings were reciprocated and that they were inaccurate in perceiving their partners' expressions of positive feelings. Evidently, it seems that the inability or failure to express positive/intimacy emotions may have negative ramifications for close relationship satisfaction.

Mongrain and Vetteuse (2003) also found that ambivalence was related to lower congruence between verbal and nonverbal channels of communication. By failing to communicate clearly, more ambivalent individuals risk confusion and frustrating their partners, who may be unsure about what their partners are truly saying and feeling. Therefore, the research clearly suggests that the ability to be open and unambiguously describe and share emotions with one's partner is essential for the establishment of intimacy and satisfaction in close relationships. This present research suggests that ambivalence over the expression of emotions is an obstacle to adaptive emotional expression, and consequently a potential obstacle to relationship satisfaction.

Clark, Fitness and Brissette (2001) found that the more concerned people are with their partner's needs, the more likely they are to express emotions. These researchers found that expressing emotions is often reacted to with more liking and more responsiveness in close relationships. They propose that concerned couples experience higher relationship satisfaction because the expression of emotion communicates needs and allows partners to be responsive to these needs. This expression also indicates that the other can be trusted with this information.

A two-year study of young Australian married couples has linked marital satisfaction with a range of communication behaviours relating to emotional ambivalence and expressiveness (Feeney, Noller & Peterson, 1994). These patterns were linked with both concurrent and later marital satisfaction, although the predictors of later satisfaction were somewhat different for wives and husbands. For wives, later satisfaction was predicted by less negative emotional expression and disengagement during conflict; for husbands, later satisfaction was predicted by high self-disclosure and low conflict in day-to-day communication.

Levenson, Carstensen and Gottman (1993) found a similar pattern with young American couples. The women were more confronting and more expressive emotionally and both more negative and more positive than men. Men, on the other hand were generally less expressive emotionally. In the face of conflict, men were more likely than women to be defensive and withdrawn. They were also more likely to engage in "stonewalling" behavior (i.e., non-expressiveness when experiencing strong negative emotion).

Johnson and Greenberg (1994) consider emotional expression as a primary signaling system, and if this expression is clear, congruent and open it tends to create interactional positions that encourage affective attunement, emotional engagement and responsiveness. A marital therapist's goal is therefore not only to raise the partners' awareness of their own emotional responses, but also to explore the obstacles to emotional expression and to gain insight about the emotional ambivalence. These authors assert that this awareness can provide information about partners' attributions, interpersonal needs, and barriers; information that promotes emotional engagement, intimacy and satisfaction.

Past research clearly indicates that the ability to express emotions openly, constructively and appropriately is important for relationship satisfaction for males and females. The present research examines two dimensions related to emotional expression. The first dimension relates to the difficulty describing emotions, where individuals have difficulty putting emotions into words. One's ability to effectively describe emotions is likely to be related to ambivalence over the expression of emotions (e.g., intimacy emotions). The ability to describe emotions and to express emotions (i.e. liking) rather than suppress them, has been found to be pivotal to the development of intimacy and strong social bonds, for both the individual suppressing emotions and the social partner (Butler, Egloff, Wilhelm, Smith, Erickson & Gross, 2003).

The second dimension relates to ambivalence over emotional expression, where individuals want to express emotions but don't feel like they can. Both dimensions are related to poor relationship satisfaction. Based on past research, (eg. King, 1993 & 1998, Mongrain & Vetteese, 2003) it is hypothesised that those who score high on ambivalence over intimacy emotions are less likely to be in a relationship; if an individual is ambivalent about expressing intimacy emotions, they may have trouble establishing a romantic relationship. These

individuals are also likely to experience lower relationship satisfaction. This research seeks to understand how important ambivalence over expression of intimacy emotions and entitlement emotions is, compared to the emotional competencies examined in this study.

Effective management of emotions

The fourth aspect of emotional competence that this study is interested in is effective emotional management. Is there a link between the ability to manage one's emotions and relationship satisfaction? Effective management of emotions may involve knowing how to calm down after feeling angry or being able to alleviate the anxiety of another person (Mayer, Salovey & Caruso, 1999). Emotional inhibition, aggression control, impulsivity and rumination are of particular interest in terms of measuring emotional management.

Emotional inhibition relates to the tendency to inhibit or bottle up experienced emotions rather than expressing them. Aggression control measures the inhibition of hostility. It has been associated with aggressive behaviour, verbal hostility and assaultiveness (Roger & Najarin, 1998). Rehearsal refers to the degree of rumination occurring over emotionally upsetting events. People who score high on the rehearsal measure tend to repeat upsetting thoughts in their mind and focus on their symptoms of distress, worrying about their meanings (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2000).

There have been consistent and impressive patterns of results with regards to the mismanagement of emotions and inappropriate emotional responses. Compared to nondistressed couples, distressed couples show more negativity and greater reciprocation of negativity. (Beach and Fincham, 1994; Gottman, 1993; Margolin & Wampold, 1981). Furthermore, past research suggests that the ability to manage emotions is an important factor in maintaining close relationship satisfaction (Beach & Fincham, 1994; Gottman, 1993).

However, this ability seems to vary for men and women. Cartensen et al., (1995) found that wives were more affectively negative than husbands, whereas husbands were more defensive than wives. In addition, unhappy marriages involved greater exchange of negative affect than happy marriages.

Beach and Fincham (1994) characterise negative affect along a dimension, where the high end of negative is defined by affects such as distress, anxiety, fear and hostility, and the low end is defined by calmness and relaxation. Beach and Fincham (1994) suggest that high negative affect (NA) individuals are expected to notice more negative aspects of their relationships and to react to these with more intense negative affect as opposed to inhibiting their emotion (Kelly & Conely, 1987). NA individuals tend to overreact to even mildly unpleasant or anxiety-inducing situations; they also tend to ruminate over perceived injustices. These more intense negative affective reactions to the partner may also dispose High NA individuals to engage in problematic emotional disinhibition and aggressive behaviours. High NA is also likely to be associated with behaviours that are strong cross-sectional correlates of lower marital satisfaction. Accordingly, the cognitive and behavioural effects of high NA seem to relate to less marital satisfaction both initially and over the longer term (Beach & Fincham, 1994).

Therefore, it seems that the ability to manage emotions leads to less negative affect and less negative affect is linked to better relationship satisfaction. Given the research regarding negative affect, it hypothesised that rumination will lead to more negative affect and more negative affect will in turn lead to lower relationship satisfaction. There is no previous evidence for the effects of rumination on relationship satisfaction, but the evidence for negative affect is clear.

The ability to manage emotions and in particular emotions such as anger in the context of close relationships has been widely researched. Gottman and Kroff (1989) found that negative affect (hostility and anger) and negative emotional responses tend to elicit reciprocal aversiveness or distance from the partner that can lead to cycles of hostility and counter-hostility. These destructive cycles tend to result in lower levels of relationship satisfaction.

Over the years, extensive research has been conducted in an effort to explore ineffective management of emotions (e.g. aggression) and close relationship satisfaction. For example, Burman, Margolin and John (1993) found that maritally aggressive men and their spouses displayed more negative behaviors than did couples in which the husband reported primarily withdrawal or verbal aggression in conflict situations. Similarly, Jacobson, Cordova, Gottman, Rushe and Cox (1993) observed that both violent husbands and their wives displayed more negative behavior, and more angry and belligerent affect than did either distressed non-aggressive or happily married couples.

Furthermore, Gottman and Levenson (1995) asked married couples to complete a range of questionnaires, and to attend a discussion and an interview. Couples had to discuss different topics after an absence from each other of at least eight hours. On the basis of the content of their discussion couples were classified into 'regulated' and 'non-regulated' couples. Regulated couples were able to respond to each other with more positive than negative messages, whereas, non-regulated couples had at least one spouse who had predominately negative features. The non-regulated couples showed less emotional control, displaying greater negativity, shown in ways of conflict engagement and withdrawal. They showed less interest, care, joy and enthusiasm, and were more likely to express disgust, contempt and anger. The non-regulated couples engaged in more conflict, were more

defensive, more aggressive, more withdrawn and were less affectionate. These couples reported the least satisfaction with their relationships.

Gottman and Levenson (1992) propose that a balanced relationship is one in which couples act out five times more positive behaviours than negative. Non-regulated couples did not achieve this ratio. Clearly, Gottman's work highlights the pivotal role of effective emotion management and expression in close relationship satisfaction.

Research pertaining to withdrawal behaviours is also worth considering when examining the ineffective management of emotions. Babcock, Waltz, Jacobson and Gottman (1993) found that violent couples were more likely to use avoidance to cope with unresolved arguments than were nonviolent couples. They also found that violent couples were more likely to report husband demand–wife withdrawal sequences than distressed or happy couples. Thus, a pattern of high verbal aggression and high withdrawal is associated with marital aggression. Therefore, it appears that couples that have poor emotional control and emotion management seem to be the least satisfied.

Much of the past research gives a cross sectional picture of close relationships. However, there have been some valuable longitudinal studies (e.g., Gottman & Krokoff, 1989; Levenson & Gottman, 1992). Longitudinal research conducted by Kelly and Conley (1987) in a 45-year study of 278 marriages also found that negative affectivity was related to poor marital satisfaction and adjustment. Similarly, Gottman (1994) found that four acts were more predictive of dissolution than others. These included defensiveness, contempt and stonewalling (withdrawing) for husbands and criticism, defensiveness, and contempt were predictive for wives. Overall, these findings suggest that the ability to appropriately manage one's negative emotions is a necessity for the long-term maintenance of intimate relationship satisfaction.

Clearly, these findings suggest that couples that have effective emotion management skills will be more likely to experience relationship satisfaction. Previous research has clearly demonstrated that high aggression is related to lower relationship satisfaction. This current study seeks to replicate the association between self-report aggression control and relationship satisfaction. It appears that aggression control seems to be a prominent theme in the relationship satisfaction literature. Therefore, this study also seeks to understand how important aggression control is, compared with not only emotional inhibition, and rumination, but with the other emotional competencies examined in this study.

Finally, close relationships whether satisfying or not, often present demanding emotional challenges. It is imperative to understand what emotional competencies may be most important in meeting such challenges. A strength of this study is that both partners were recruited, and so both partners' satisfaction ratings are represented. This research seeks to investigate which emotional competencies are best associated with close relationship satisfaction. Thus, this study is unique in that it brings together a wide range of emotional competence measures within a single study. By bringing all these competence measures together, the emotional competencies that best predict relationship satisfaction may be identified.

It is possible that the association between the emotional competencies and relationship satisfaction may be inflated by social desirable responding. The present study will therefore extend on past research by controlling for social desirability.

Study Hypotheses

Two studies will be conducted in order to identify the most consistent and reliable effects. The studies will be conducted one year apart. The most general hypothesis is that higher competence will be associated with higher close relationship satisfaction. This research is interested in results that are replicated. For example, it is hypothesised that difficulty identifying emotions will be significantly associated with relationship satisfaction even after controlling for other emotional competency measures and social desirability. In addition, given the research regarding aggression control it is hypothesised that low aggression control will be significantly associated with low relationship satisfaction after controlling for social desirability.

The specific aim of both studies is to identify the emotional competencies that are most strongly and consistently associated with relationship satisfaction even after controlling for other measures of emotional competence and social desirability. By identifying the most important emotional competence correlates of relationship satisfaction it may possible to develop time-limited interventions to target these and seek to improve them. This study is also interested in significant sex differences given that the literature has found sex differences in the past.

Methods for Study 1 and Study 2

Participants and Procedure

First & Second year Wollongong University Psychology students participated in both studies. There were 421 participants in study 1. Three hundred and twenty two were females and 99 were males (Mean age = 22.2, SD = 6.20). Two hundred and thirty two of these participants were in a relationship and 71 partners responded. There were 409 participants in study 2. Three hundred and twenty seven were females and 82 were males (Mean age = 20.9, SD = 5.65). Two hundred and nine of these participants were in a relationship and 93 partners responded. There was a 31% response rate for partners in study 1 and a 45% response rate for partners in study 2.

Measures assessing emotional competencies were included in survey A, and the relationship satisfaction measure was included in survey B. Prior to completing the questionnaires, the participants were given an information and consent form which assured them that their answers would be kept confidential. The participants were also informed that the questionnaires were voluntary and that they were able to withdraw without penalty. In order to maintain anonymity, the participants were provided with envelopes, in which they were instructed to enclose completed sections. After completing survey A they signed up again to complete survey B in one week's time.

Following the completion of survey B every student was given information asking them if they have a partner. If the student had a partner they were asked if they thought their partner would be willing to complete a 6-item Relationship Quality questionnaire, they were given a reply paid envelope containing an information form, a consent form and the questionnaire for the partner. This meant that two independent ratings of relationship

satisfaction were ascertained. The forms assured the partner that their answers would be kept confidential and asked partners not to discuss their responses until after they had completed the questionnaire. The partners filled out the consent form and questionnaire and sent these back to Wollongong University. Care was taken to ensure that answers were anonymous. Participants were given codes so that their responses could be matched with their partner's responses.

Measures

Emotional Competence Measure

The Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS-20) is a self-report measure that has 20 items. The items are divided into three subscales: Difficulty Identifying Feelings (7 items; e.g., "When I am upset, I don't know if I am sad, frightened or angry;" $\alpha = .84$; $\alpha = .84$), Difficulty Describing Feelings (5 items; e.g., "I find it hard to describe how I feel about people;" $\alpha = .78$; $\alpha = .75$), and Externally Oriented Thinking (8 items; e.g., "I prefer talking to people about their daily activities rather than their feelings;" $\alpha = .60$; $\alpha = .63$). Respondents use a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The TAS-20 demonstrated good internal consistency ($\alpha = .83$; $\alpha = .82$). These alphas are based on study 1 and study 2 respectively.

The scale demonstrated sound test-retest reliability ($r = .77$) (Bagby, Parker, & Taylor, 1994). The *TAS- 20* has been found to correlate negatively with measures of psychological mindedness, need for cognition, and anger expression, and positively with measures of functional somatic symptoms (Bagby, Taylor & Atkinson, 1988; Bagby, Taylor & Ryan, 1986; Bagby, Taylor & Ryan, 1988).

Emotional Control Questionnaire (ECQ) is a self-report measure that uses a forced choice format (True/False) and has 56 items. Roger and Najarian (1989) defined the construct as the tendency to inhibit the expression of emotional responses. The items are divided into four subscales: a) Aggression Control (14 Items); b) Rehearsal (14 items); c) Benign Control (14 items); and d) Emotional Inhibition (14 items).

The Aggression Control scale measures the inhibition of hostility independently of the more general emotional restraint measure by emotional inhibition (“No one gets one over on me – I don’t take things lying down,” $\alpha = .71$; $\alpha = .67$). This scale has been associated with verbal hostility and assault (Roger & Najarin, 1998). The Rehearsal scale (or rumination) measures the degree of rumination over emotionally upsetting events (“I find it hard to get thoughts about things that upset me out of my mind,” $\alpha = .77$; $\alpha = .76$). People who score high have trouble getting rid of distressing thoughts out of their mind. Ruminators appear to ask themselves questions such as “Why are things happening this way?” “What am I going to do?” They tend to think repetitively about their negative emotions, focusing on symptoms of distress (Nolen-Hoeksema & Davies, 1999).

The Benign scale (or low impulsivity) measures the degree of impulsivity (“Almost everything I do is carefully thought out,” $\alpha = .63$; $\alpha = .66$). Finally, the Emotional Inhibition scale measures the tendency to inhibit emotions (“Expressing my feelings makes me feel very anxious and vulnerable,” $\alpha = .79$; $\alpha = .76$). The ECQ demonstrated good internal consistency ($\alpha = .69$; $\alpha = .68$). The alphas are based on study 1 and 2.

Past research has found that that test-retest reliability coefficients were substantial for the four scales; Rehearsal ($r = .80$), Emotional Inhibition ($r = .79$), Benign Control ($r = .92$) and Aggression Control ($r = .73$) over a 7 week period (Roger and Najarin, 1998). With

regards to concurrent validity data derived from comparison existing scales (i.e., Eysenck Personality Questionnaire) showed modest correlations with the ECQ (Roger and Najarin, 1998). The rehearsal factor has been found to related significantly to both heart-rate recovery and urinary cortisol elevations following stress.

Social Problem Solving Inventory (SPSI-a) is a self-report 28-item scale. The full scale was utilized in study 1. Participants are required to evaluate self-relevant statements on a 5-point scale that ranges from 0 (Not at all true of me) to 4 (Extremely true of me). The Problem Orientation subscale consists of statements such as “I often doubt that there is a good way to solve problems that I have;” $\alpha = .83$). The Problem-Solving Skills subscale assesses the extent that people are effective at identifying the problem, generating alternatives, predicting consequences of alternatives, implementing alternatives, evaluating alternatives, and flexibly reengaging the problem solving process if the original solution does not work ($\alpha = .89$). The Effective Automatic Processes subscale consists of items such as “ To solve a problem, I do what has worked for me in the past;” $\alpha = .78$) (Frauenknecht & Black, 1995). Study 2 only utilised the Problem Orientation subscale ($\alpha = .83$).

The test–retest coefficients for the total SPSI, the Problem Orientation Scale, and the Problem-Solving Skills Scale are .87, .83, and .88, respectively. The SPSI was found to have good test–retest reliability and internal consistency. Furthermore, the various subscales of the SPSI also demonstrated to be highly correlated with their corresponding scale scores and with the overall SPSI score while showing relatively low correlations with the divergent scale score. In addition, promising results concerning the content, concurrent, construct, and predictive validity of the SPSI were found with several different samples of subjects (D’Zurilla & Nezu, 1990).

Ambivalence over Emotional Expression (AEQ) is a self-report 28-item scale measuring conflict over one's emotional expressiveness style. Items on the AEQ pertain to wanting to express emotion and being unable to do so, as well as to expressing emotion and later regretting it. The rating scale uses a 1 to 5 rating scale, with 1 indicating that the respondent never feels what the statement suggests and 5 indicating that the respondent frequently feels that way. High scores indicate high ambivalence. None of the items are negatively worded. Factor analytic work supports the notion that the scale taps both ambivalence over positive emotions (“Often I am not able to tell others how much they really mean to me”) and ambivalence over entitlement (“After I express my anger at someone, it bothers me for a long time”, King & Emmons, 1990).

Past research has found the scale to demonstrate good psychometric properties, with an internal reliability of .89 and a test-retest correlation of .78 over a 6-week interval (King & Emmons, 1990). Scale scores have also been found to correlate with peer ratings of expression and with other measures of emotional expressiveness (King & Emmons, 1990).

In this study the AEQ scale demonstrated good internal consistency ($\alpha = .92$; $\alpha = .91$). The ambivalence over expression of positive emotions (renamed intimacy emotions - AIE) factor demonstrated good internal consistency ($\alpha = .91$; $\alpha = .90$). The ambivalence over expression of emotions of entitlement factor demonstrated good internal consistency ($\alpha = .79$; $\alpha = .79$).

Relationship Satisfaction Measure

Relationship Quality Questionnaire (RQQ) required participants to evaluate five relationship-relevant statements (e.g., “how happy are you in your relationship?”). These items are rated on a 1 to 7 scale that ranges from 0 (not at all) to 7 (extremely). This scale measures perceptions of happiness and general relationship satisfaction (e.g., “I want desperately for my relationship to succeed and would go to any lengths to see that it does”). In addition, the participant must choose from 7 statements a statement that applies most to them (e.g., “I want desperately for my relationship to succeed and would go to almost any lengths to see that it does” or “My relationship can never succeed and I do not wish to keep it going”). This scale measures relationship stability and level of commitment (Grigg, Fletcher & Fitness, 1989). Grigg, Fletcher and Fitness (1989) found this scale to attain adequate internal reliability with an α level of .78. This scale has demonstrated good internal reliability, test–retest reliability, convergent validity, and predictive validity in previous research. The RQQ demonstrated good internal consistency ($\alpha = .86$; $\alpha = .89$) in studies 1 and 2 respectively.

Social Desirability Scale

In the first study, the Crowne and Marlow Social Desirability Scale (MCSDS) was used to measure social desirability. This is a 33 item, self report measure that was used to control for response sets and biased responses. The MCSDS has been shown to have adequate internal consistency ($\alpha = .79$). Items were scored in the same direction, and the ratings were summed over all items. Higher scores indicate a greater propensity to answer questions in socially desirable ways (Crowne & Marlow, 1960).

In the second study, a different more comprehensive measure of social desirability was used. The Social Desirable Responding questionnaire (SDQ) measures two factors, self-deception and impression management. Self-deception is the tendency to give favourably biased but honestly held self-descriptions, whereas impression management is the tendency to give favourable self-descriptions to others. The MCSDS loaded highly on both factors (Paulhus & Reid, 1991). The Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Crowne & Marlowe, 1964) loaded highly on both factors.

In this study, both the self-deception subscale and the impression management subscale demonstrated good internal consistency ($\alpha = .65$; $\alpha = .73$) respectively. Overall, the SDQ demonstrated good internal consistency ($\alpha = .76$).

Demographic Questions

The first section of the questionnaire of both studies consisted of questions pertaining to the respondent's and their partner's gender, age, income level, current relationship status, length of current relationship, number of children, whether they have been divorced, and the highest level of education completed by themselves and their partner.

Results

The two studies will be discussed together given their similarities. The studies differed in the following ways. Study 2 had fewer problem solving measures (i.e. effective problem solving and effective automatic processing were excluded) because study 1 did not produce significant results for these measures. The studies were conducted one year apart, and study 2 included a more comprehensive social desirability measure. Overall, the studies were similar in terms of participant characteristics, procedures, and statistical analyses. Therefore, each study's results will be reported as follows.

Preliminary analyses for Study 1 and Study 2

Descriptives for Study 1. Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations for the dependant and the independent variables.

Table 1. Means and standard deviations for the dependant and independent variables for study 1

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Intimate relationship satisfaction	5.60	.98
Partner relationship satisfaction	6.03	.80
Rumination	1.48	.23
Emotional inhibition	1.40	.23
Benign control	1.52	.19
Aggression control	1.63	.22
TAS- identifying	15.57	5.80
TAS-describing	13.09	3.02
TAS-externalising	17.93	4.23
Problem solving orientation	2.60	.77
Problem solving automatic processing	2.59	.72
Problem solving skills	2.23	.64
Emotional ambivalence	2.70	.63
Ambivalence over the expression of intimacy emotions (e.g., love)	2.62	.74
Ambivalence over the expression of emotions of entitlement (e.g., anger)	2.76	.61
Social Desirability	1.44	.16

Descriptives for Study 2. Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations for the dependant and the independent variables.

Table 2. Means and standard deviations for the dependant and independent variables for study 2

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Intimate relationship satisfaction	5.60	1.0
Partner relationship satisfaction	5.90	.76
Rumination	1.47	.23
Emotional inhibition	1.40	.22
Benign control	1.63	.20
Aggression control	1.64	.22
TAS- identifying	16.11	5.87
TAS-describing	13.52	3.02
TAS-externalising	18.07	4.58
Problem solving orientation	2.73	.70
Ambivalence over the expression of emotions	2.58	.72
Ambivalence over the expression of intimacy emotions (e.g., love)	2.58	.72
Ambivalence over the expression of emotions of entitlement (e.g., anger)	2.73	.62
Social Desirability	9.06	5.09

Sex. ANOVAs were used to evaluate whether sex was related to relationship satisfaction and partner relationship satisfaction. There were no significant differences between men and women on relationship satisfaction and partner relationship satisfaction in both studies. A chi-square was used to evaluate whether sex was related to being in or not in a relationship. There was no significant relationship between sex and being in a relationship in both studies ($\chi^2(1) = .98, p > .05, \chi^2(1) = .51, p > .05$).

There were however some significant differences on the competence measures. In study 1, men inhibit their emotions more than women ($M_{men} = 1.44, M_{wom} = 1.39, F(1,417) = 4.56, MSE = 5.16, p = .033$). Men also exhibit more externally oriented thinking ($M_{men} = 19.06, M_{wom} = 17.64, F(1,417) = 8.72, MSE = 17.42, p = .003$). Women, on the other hand control hostility more than men ($M_{men} = 1.58, M_{wom} = 1.64, F(1,417) = 6.65, MSE = 4.66, p = .010$). In study 2, men inhibit their emotions more than women ($M_{men} = 1.44, M_{wom} = 1.39, F(1,407) = 3.76, MSE = .05, p = .05$). Men also exhibit more externally oriented thinking ($M_{men} = 19.09, M_{wom} = 17.82, F(1,407) = 5.08, MSE = 20.79, p = .025$). Women, on the other hand control hostility more than men ($M_{men} = 1.60, M_{wom} = 1.65, F(1,407) = 4.12, MSE = .04, p = .04$).

Age. Because age was skewed nonparametric correlations were used to evaluate the relationships between age and the emotional competence measures. In study 1, significant correlations with age and identifying emotion $r = -.11, p < .05$, effective problem solving orientation $r = .15, p < .005$, emotional ambivalence $r = -.18, p < .001$, AIE $r = -.17, p < .001$, ambivalence over the expression of entitlement emotions $r = -.16, p < .001$ were found. In study 2, significant correlations with age and difficulty identifying emotion $r = -.12, p < .05$, difficulty describing emotions $r = -.16, p < .001$, externally oriented thinking $r = -.20, p < .001$, emotion inhibition $r = -.13, p < .05$, problem solving orientation $r = .22, p < .001$, benign

control $r = .14$, $p < .005$, emotional ambivalence $r = -.19$, $p < .001$, ambivalence over the expression of intimacy emotions $r = -.24$, $p < .001$ were found. Age was also significantly correlated with partner relationship satisfaction $r = -.20$, $p < .05$.

In both studies, there were no significant relationship between type of relationship (married, de-facto, dating, and other) and relationship satisfaction and partner relationship satisfaction. Therefore, the following analyses were collapsed across these categories. There were also no significant differences between length of relationship on relationship satisfaction and partner relationship satisfaction.

Main analyses for Study 1 and Study 2.

Correlations (Pearson) of predictor variables with intimate relationship satisfaction and partner relationship satisfaction in study 1. Table 3 presents the correlations between the emotional competence measures with relationship satisfaction and partner relationship satisfaction for participants in study 1. As expected, relationship satisfaction and partner relationship satisfaction were highly correlated in both studies. The strongest relationships were between rumination with participant and partner relationship satisfaction, difficulty identifying and describing emotions with participant relationship satisfaction, externally oriented thinking with participant relationship satisfaction, emotional ambivalence with participant and partner relationship satisfaction, and AIE with participant and partner relationship satisfaction.

Table 3. Correlations (Pearson) of predictor variables with intimate relationship satisfaction and partner relationship satisfaction in study 1

Variable	PARTICIPANT RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION	PARTNER RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION
Intimate relationship satisfaction	-	
Partner relationship satisfaction	.61**	-
Rumination	-.16**	-.27**
Emotional inhibition	-.13*	-.17
Benign control	.11	.06
Aggression control	.13*	.22
TAS- identifying	-.22***	-.20
TAS-describing	-.16*	-.09
TAS-externalising	-.17**	-.07
Problem solving orientation	.10	.11
Problem solving automatic processing	.09	.11
Problem solving skills	.04	-.02
Emotional ambivalence	-.23***	-.26*
Ambivalence over the expression of intimacy emotions (e.g., love)	-.26***	-.32**
Ambivalence over the expression of emotions of entitlement (e.g., anger)	-.15*	-.13

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.

Correlations (Pearson) of predictor variables with participant intimate relationship satisfaction and partner relationship satisfaction in study 2. Table 4 presents the correlations between the emotional competence measures with participant and partner relationship satisfaction for participants in study 2. The following variables were all significantly correlated with participant relationship satisfaction: difficulty identifying emotions, difficulty describing emotions, effective problem solving orientation, emotional ambivalence, and ambivalence over expression of intimacy emotions and partner relationship satisfaction.

Table 4. Correlations (Pearson) of predictor variables with intimate relationship satisfaction and partner relationship satisfaction in study 2

Variable	PARTICIPANT RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION	PARTNER RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION
Intimate relationship satisfaction	-	
Partner relationship satisfaction	.55***	-
Rumination	-.12	-.14
Emotional inhibition	-.11	.02
Benign control	.11	.16
Aggression control	-.04	.10
TAS- identifying	-.23***	-.06
TAS-describing	-.14*	-.05
TAS-externalising	-.03	.00
Problem solving orientation	.17*	-.13
Emotional ambivalence	-.22***	-.03
Ambivalence over the expression of intimacy emotions (e.g., love).	-.26***	-.06
Ambivalence over the expression of emotions of entitlement (e.g., anger)	-.12	.02

p* < .05; *p* < .01; ****p* < .001.

Intercorrelations between emotional competencies and social desirability in study 1

and study 2. Table 5 and Table 6 present the intercorrelations between the measures of emotional competence in both studies. As expected, the emotional competence measures all tended to correlate, with high competence on one measure related to higher competence on the other measures. The strongest relationships in both studies were between difficulty describing emotions and emotional inhibition, difficulty identifying emotions and problem orientation, emotional ambivalence and difficulty identifying, emotional ambivalence and describing emotions, AIE and difficulty identifying emotions, AIE and difficulty describing emotions. Social desirability was correlated, sometimes substantially, with all the variables except externally oriented thinking and partner relationship satisfaction in study 1. In study 2, social desirability was again moderately correlated with all variables except for participant and partner relationship satisfaction.

Table 5. Study 1 Intercorrelations between emotional competencies and social desirability

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Rumination	-													
Emotional inhibition	.14**	-												
Benign control	-.28**	-.13**	-											
Aggression control	-.13**	.17**	.23**	-										
Difficulty identifying emotions	.42**	.24**	-.32**	-.05	-									
Difficulty describing emotions	.25**	.53**	-.20**	.06	.48**	-								
Externally oriented thinking	-.10*	.40**	-.22**	-.01	.12*	.27**	-							
Problem solving automatic process	.05	.01	.15**	.05	-.04	.00	-.08	-						
Problem solving orientation	-.47**	-.15**	.37**	-.01	-.49**	-.26**	-.08	-.05	-					
Problem solving skill	-.13**	-.17**	.28**	-.04	-.17**	-.16**	-.27**	.38**	.24**	-				
Emotional ambivalence	.41**	.50**	-.25**	.17**	.47**	.53**	.21**	.07	-.43**	-.08	-			
Emotional ambivalence (intimacy)	.41**	.56**	-.27**	.12*	.47**	.58**	.26**	.04	-.42**	-.14**	.96**	-		
Emotional ambivalence (non-entitlement)	.33**	.31**	-.17**	.21**	.37**	.35**	.08	.10	-.36**	.03	.88**	.70**	-	
Social desirability	-.44*	-.20**	.43**	.17**	-.33**	-.28**	-.06	.03	.37**	.23**	-.29**	-.31**	-.20**	-

Table 6. Study 2 Intercorrelations between emotional competencies and social desirability

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Rumination	-											
Emotional Inhibition	.15**	-										
Benign control	-.31**	-.10**	-									
Aggression control	-.23**	.19**	.31**	-								
Difficulty identifying emotions	.46**	.21**	-.36**	-.03	-							
Difficulty describing emotions	.24**	.47**	-.32**	.00	.42**	-						
Externally oriented thinking	-.02	.26**	-.23**	-.04	.09	.27**	-					
Problem solving orientation	-.50**	-.20**	.32**	.03	-.54**	-.35**	-.19**	-				
Emotional ambivalence	.38**	.46**	-.27**	.06	.50**	.46**	.14**	-.55**	-			
Emotional ambivalence (intimacy)	.36**	.51**	-.31**	-.01	.50**	.54**	.21**	-.54**	.95**	-		
Emotional ambivalence (non-entitlement)	.33**	.29**	-.15*	.14**	.40**	.24**	-.00	-.46**	.87**	.66**	-	
Social desirability	-.31**	-.10*	.42**	.15**	-.35**	-.25**	-.18**	-.37**	-.23**	-.25**	-.14**	-

Partial correlations of predictor variables with intimate relationship satisfaction and partner relationship satisfaction controlling for social desirability in study 1. Table 7 presents the partial correlations between the emotional competence measures with both relationship satisfaction and partner relationship satisfaction, when controlling for social desirability in study 1. Relationship satisfaction and partner relationship satisfaction were highly correlated even when controlling for social desirability. All significant relationships were in the expected direction.

Even after controlling for social desirability, the negative correlation between difficulty identifying emotions, emotional ambivalence, and AIE with participant relationship satisfaction and partner satisfaction were still significant. The correlation between ambivalence over expression entitlement emotions and participant relationship satisfaction was still significant, however, a significant relationship was not found with partner satisfaction. After controlling for social desirability, the correlation between difficulty describing feelings, aggression control, and rumination with participant relationship satisfaction was no longer significant. However, the correlation between rumination and partner relationship satisfaction became stronger when controlling for social desirability.

Table 7. Partial correlations (Pearson) of predictor variables with participant intimate relationship satisfaction and partner relationship satisfaction controlling for social desirability for study 1

Variable	PARTICIPANT RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION	PARTNER RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION
Intimate relationship satisfaction	-	
Partner relationship satisfaction	.63***	-
Rumination	-.11	-.34*
Emotional inhibition	-.11	-.19
Benign control	.05	.10
Aggression control	.11	.24*
TAS- identifying	-.18**	-.24*
TAS-describing	-.12	-.12
TAS-externalising	-.17**	-.07
Problem solving orientation	.05	.14
Problem solving automatic processing	.09	.11
Problem solving skills	.00	.00
Emotional ambivalence	-.20*	-.30*
Ambivalence over the expression of intimacy emotions (e.g., love)	-.23***	-.36**
Ambivalence over the expression of emotions of entitlement (e.g., anger)	-.13*	-.14

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.

Partial correlations of predictor variables with participant intimate relationship satisfaction and partner relationship satisfaction controlling for social desirability in study 2. Table 8 presents the partial correlations between the emotional competence measures with both relationship satisfaction and partner relationship satisfaction, controlling for social desirability in study 2. Relationship satisfaction and partner relationship satisfaction were highly correlated even when controlling for social desirability. All significant relationships were in the expected direction.

Similar to study 1, the negative correlation between difficulty identifying emotions, emotional ambivalence, and AIE with participant relationship satisfaction were significant, after controlling for social desirability. The correlations between the following variables: difficulty describing emotions, benign control and participant, rumination, and effective problem solving orientation with participant relationship satisfaction were significant after controlling for social desirability. The correlation between rumination and participant relationship satisfaction became significant after controlling for social desirability. The correlation between problem solving orientation and partner relationship satisfaction became significant after controlling for social desirability.

Table 8. Partial correlations (Pearson) of predictor variables with participant intimate relationship satisfaction and partner relationship satisfaction controlling for social desirability for study 2.

Variable	PARTICIPANT RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION	PARTNER RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION
Intimate relationship satisfaction	-	
Partner relationship satisfaction	.57***	-
Rumination	-.14*	-.10
Emotional inhibition	-.11	.04
Benign control	.14*	.10
Aggression control	-.04	.10
TAS- identifying	-.26***	-.01
TAS-describing	-.16*	-.00
TAS-externalising	-.04	.04
Problem solving orientation	.20*	-.21*
Emotional ambivalence	-.24***	.01
Ambivalence over expression of intimacy emotions (e.g., love)	-.28***	-.01
Ambivalence over expression of emotions of entitlement (e.g., anger)	-.12	.04

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.

Sex, emotional competence, and relationship satisfaction correlations (Pearson) for study 1 and study 2. Previous analysis showed that there were no sex differences with regard to relationship satisfaction. We next examined whether there were any sex differences in the magnitude of correlations between emotional competence and relationship satisfaction. Tables 9 and 10 present the correlations between the emotional competence measures with participant and partner relationship satisfaction for males and females in study 1 and 2. Given the exploratory nature of these analyses, we required that significant sex differences between

men and women were observed across both studies. Using this criteria, there was no evidence of sex differences.

Table 9. Study 1 Correlations (Pearson) of predictor variables with participant intimate relationship satisfaction and Partner relationship satisfaction for males and females

Variable	Male participant relationship satisfaction (N =51)	Female partner relationship satisfaction (N=14)	Female participant relationship satisfaction (N=184)	Male partner relationship satisfaction (N=66)
Intimate relationship satisfaction	-		-	
Partner relationship satisfaction	.76**	-	.61***	-
Rumination	-.39**	-.62*	-.10	-.24
Emotional inhibition	-.24	-.01	-.10	-.19
Benign control	.28*	.25	.07	.08
Aggression control	-.10	.34	.21**	.19
TAS- identifying	-.24	.01	-.23**	-.25*
TAS-describing	-.45***	-.14	-.10	-.10
TAS-externalising	-.20	.27	-.17*	-.10
Problem solving orientation	.37**	.59*	.02	.08
Emotional ambivalence	-.26	-.19	.22**	-.28*
Ambivalence over the expression of intimacy emotions (e.g., love)	-.29*	-.26	.25***	-.33**
Ambivalence over the expression of emotions of entitlement (e.g., anger)	-.17	-.01	.14	-.14

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.

Table 10. Study 2 Correlations (Pearson) of predictor variables with partner intimate relationship satisfaction and partner relationship satisfaction for males and females

Variable	Male participant relationship satisfaction (N=38)	Female partner relationship satisfaction (N=16)	Female participant relationship satisfaction (N=171)	Male partner relationship satisfaction (N=77)
Intimate relationship satisfaction	-		-	
Partner relationship satisfaction	.56*	-	.54***	-
Rumination	-.17	-.44	-.13	-.09
Emotional inhibition	-.17	-.37	-.09	.10
Benign control	.10	.31	.12	.14
Aggression control	-.14	.43	-.03	.04
TAS- identifying	-.34*	-.17	-.21**	-.04
TAS-describing	-.20	-.01	-.14	-.06
TAS-externalising	-.29	-.29	.04	.06
Problem solving orientation	.24	.03	.18*	-.15
Emotional ambivalence	-.24	-.12	-.23**	-.02
Ambivalence over the expression of intimacy emotions (e.g., love)	-.27	-.08	-.27***	-.06
Ambivalence over the expression of emotions of entitlement (e.g., anger).	-.14	-.15	-.12	.04

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.

Regression analyses

The two variables that were significantly correlated with participant relationship satisfaction in both studies after controlling for social desirability were difficulty identifying emotions and AIE. Therefore, difficulty identifying emotions and AIE were the only variables entered into a regression analysis. Social desirability was also controlled for in the regression analyses. The dependent variable was participant relationship satisfaction.

In study 1, difficulty identifying emotions $\beta = -.11$, $t = -1.44$, $p > .05$ was not a significant predictor of participant relationship satisfaction when controlling for AIE $\beta = -.19$, $t = -2.63$, $p < .05$ and social desirability $\beta = .08$, $t = -1.20$, $p > .05$. After controlling for social desirability both these variables accounted for 7.1% of the variance in participant relationship satisfaction, $F(3, 239) = 7.13$, $p < .001$. R² change for difficulty identifying emotions was 6.6%, $p < .01$ and R² change for AIE was 7.3% for AIE, $p < .01$.

However, in study 2, both difficulty identifying emotions $\beta = -.18$, $t = -2.21$, $p < .03$ and AIE $\beta = -.19$, $t = -2.53$, $p < .01$ were significant predictors of participant relationship satisfaction when controlling for social desirability $\beta = -.14$, $t = -1.96$, $p < .05$. In study 2, after controlling for social desirability both these variables accounted for 8.3% of the variance in participant relationship satisfaction, $F(3, 205) = 7.26$, $p < .001$.

Evaluating potential explanations for the relationship between emotional competence and relationship satisfaction. The main variables that significantly predict relationship satisfaction are difficulty identifying emotions and AIE. In order to examine potential explanations for the relationship between difficulty identifying emotions and participant relationship satisfaction and AIE and participant relationship satisfaction, several demographic variables were

analysed. These variables included: relationship length, amount of children, number of times divorced, sex, partner sex, age, partner's age and income. Social desirability was also included. Even after controlling for all these variables, AIE and difficulty identifying emotions were significantly related with participant relationship satisfaction across both studies (p 's $< .01$).

Evaluating differences between participants in a relationship and participants not in a relationship with regard to predictor variables. GLM multivariate analyses were used to first examine whether being in or not being in a relationship related to the set of emotional competence variables. Relationship status (in or not in a relationship) acted as the factor and emotional competence acted as the dependent variable. In order to reduce the type 1 error, we looked at the univariate tests only if the multivariate was significant. The alpha for the univariate test was set at a conservative .01. In both studies, there were significant differences between those participants in a relationship and participants not in a relationship on several of the predictor variables, Wilks' lambda .93, $p < .01$; Wilks' lambda = .94, $p < .01$. Univariate analyses revealed that three variables were consistently significant across both studies: AIE, emotional inhibition and externally oriented thinking.

Participants who were not in a relationship scored higher on AIE compared to those in a relationship ($M_{\text{not in}} = 2.75$, $M_{\text{in}} = 2.53$, $F(1,425) = 9.24$, $MSE = .54$, $p = .003$) and in study 2 ($M_{\text{not in}} = 2.71$, $M_{\text{in}} = 2.45$, $F(1,407) = 14.21$, $MSE = .50$, $p = .001$). Participants who were not in a relationship scored higher on emotional inhibition compared to those in a relationship ($M_{\text{not in}} = 1.43$, $M_{\text{in}} = 1.36$, $F(1,426) = 5.76$, $MSE = .05$, $p = .017$) and in study 2 ($M_{\text{not in}} = 1.43$, $M_{\text{in}} = 1.37$, $F(1,407) = 8.68$, $MSE = .05$, $p = .003$). Participants who were not in a relationship scored higher on externally oriented thinking compared to those in a relationship

($\underline{M}_{\text{not in}} = 18.40$, $\underline{M}_{\text{in}} = 17.57$, $\underline{F}(1,426) = 4.18$, $\underline{\text{MSE}} = 17.78$, $p = .042$) and in study 2 ($\underline{M}_{\text{not in}} = 18.67$, $\underline{M}_{\text{in}} = 17.50$, $\underline{F}(1,407) = 6.67$, $\underline{\text{MSE}} = 20.70$, $p = .010$).

Nonparametric statistics

In study 1 relationship satisfaction and difficulty identifying emotions were significantly skewed ($p < .01$). In study 2, relationship satisfaction, difficulty identifying emotions and AIE were significantly skewed ($p < .01$). These variables were converted to ranks to eliminate skewness and to investigate whether the effects still held. In study 1, difficulty identifying emotions $\beta = -.20$, $t = -3.11$, $p > .01$ and AIE $\beta = -.11$, $t = -1.44$, $p > .01$ were still significant. In study 2, difficulty identifying emotions $\beta = -.27$, $t = -2.96$, $p > .01$ and AIE $\beta = -.28$, $t = -4.03$, $p > .01$ were still significant. Therefore, even after ranking these variables they were still significant in both studies.

Discussion

The two studies investigated the relationship between emotional competencies and close relationship satisfaction. The four aspects of emotional competence examined were effective social and emotional problem solving, accurate identification and describing of emotions, adaptive expression of emotions and effective management of emotions. The specific aim of both studies was to identify the emotional competencies that were most strongly and consistently associated with close relationship satisfaction even after controlling for other measures of emotional competence and social desirability.

Of all the emotional competencies, AIE and difficulty identifying emotions were the two consistent correlates associated with participant relationship satisfaction. Both studies found that higher scores on AIE and difficulty identifying emotions were associated with lower scores on participant and partner relationship satisfaction. Another major finding across both studies was that individuals who scored higher on AIE were less likely to be in an intimate relationship. This relationship held for both men and women.

Across both studies, AIE and difficulty identifying emotions were significant, even after controlling for a number of potential confounds including social desirability, demographic variables (e.g., gender, participant and partner age, number of children, income, participant education, number of times divorced) length and type of relationship (e.g., dating, marriage, de-facto).

Relationship satisfaction ratings between participant and partner were highly correlated. This means that there was considerable agreement between participant and partner ratings on their relationship satisfaction. Also, many of the emotional competencies were correlated with each other. This suggests that some of these competencies overlap.

There were no significant sex differences between males and females with regard to AIE and difficulty identifying emotions across both studies. There were also no consistent significant correlations between emotional competence measures and partner relationship satisfaction for males and females. Although AIE and difficulty identifying emotions were related to participant satisfaction ratings, these variables were not reliably related to the partner's relationship satisfaction ratings. Therefore, AIE and difficulty identifying emotions appear to relate to the quality of own satisfaction.

Ambivalence over the expression of intimacy emotions

Two hypotheses as to why ambivalent individuals are less happy in relationships are proposed. First, it is possible that these individuals have difficulty making a connection with a significant other because they do not express intimacy emotions. Thus, ambivalence might cause relationship dissatisfaction and relationship problems. Second, ambivalent individuals may avoid expression because it is too stressful in a particular relationship. This second hypothesis suggests that ambivalence is caused by relationship dissatisfaction and relationship problems.

The first hypothesis proposes that an ambivalent individual may have difficulty making an interpersonal connection with a significant other. Kennedy-Moore and Watson (1999) suggest that when people reveal their feelings to others this can foster an interpersonal connection: (a) by communicating that they can be trusted and that there is a desire to be in relationship, (b) by allowing them to get to know one another better, and (c) by creating a normative demand or expectation that they will reciprocate, thereby allowing one to get to know them.

In support of the first hypothesis, Butler et al., (2003) found that individuals who interact with someone whilst suppressing their emotions (suppressors), experienced lower levels of rapport (feeling close to and connected with the other person) and were less willing to establish or maintain that relationship. They also found that during subsequent interactions suppressors reduced their expressivity and responsiveness, which further hindered the development of a new relationship. Based on this evidence, it seems that by suppressing emotions the process of making and maintaining a satisfying relationship with others is hindered.

Past research also suggests that the ability to be open and unambiguously describe and share emotions with one's partner is essential for the establishment of intimacy and satisfaction in close relationships (Mongrain & Vetteuse, 2003; Reis & Shaver, 1988). Reis and Shaver (1988) propose that the disclosure of personal desires, fantasies, anxieties, and emotions is more important to developing intimacy as opposed to the disclosure of mere facts (Collins & Miller, 1994). Other researchers suggest that positive self-disclosure can predict attraction, affiliation and rapport (Laurenceau, Barrett, & Pietromonaco, 1998). A highly ambivalent individual is less likely to be open and share true feelings, thus making it difficult to develop and maintain intimacy and satisfaction in their close relationships.

Butler et al., (2003) found that self-disclosure of emotions appears to be central to both the initial attraction and development of a close relationship. This finding suggests that making a connection depends on an interactive process involving positive emotional self-disclosure (e.g., true feelings) and responsiveness. Therefore, it is possible that AIE may be an obstacle to relationship initiation, maintenance and relationship satisfaction.

Emmons and Colby (1995) found that highly ambivalent individuals were especially unlikely to share personal information or intimate feelings with those in their support network. Furthermore, King (1998) found that ambivalence over expressing emotion was associated with lower perceived support, negative attitudes toward support, and increased use of avoidant coping strategies.

King (1998) found that ambivalent individuals were less likely to communicate distress in close relationships, making it more difficult for partners to detect that they are in need of assistance. Being less likely to seek support makes it difficult to get support from partners, and therefore these individuals are less likely to benefit from support. Therefore, it is not surprising that these individuals experience lower relationship satisfaction. It seems that by inhibiting emotional expression one can preclude satisfying interpersonal connections. Thus, these results suggest that ambivalence leads to relationship dissatisfaction.

Clearly, past research indicates that AIE may be an obstacle for an individual, leading to lower relationship satisfaction (Mongrain & Vetteese, 2003). Not only is AIE likely to affect how the individual acts towards the partner, it is also likely to affect how the partner acts towards the individual. Therefore, it is possible that an ambivalent individual makes it difficult for their partner to relate and reciprocate. In support of this hypothesis, Butler, et al., (2003) found that suppressors' partners felt less rapport when compared with controls, and were therefore less willing to establish a friendship. In summary, AIE may lead to difficulty making and sustaining satisfying interpersonal connections for both the ambivalent individual.

In contrast to this possibility, the second hypothesis suggests that relationship dissatisfaction may cause AIE. It is well established that reciprocal expressions of negative affect distinguish unhappy married couples from happy married couples (Gottman & Levenson, 1995). King (1998) offers an interesting interpretation regarding this finding. King

(1998) suggests that reciprocal expressions of negative affect may foster ambivalent feelings about expressing emotion. It is possible that intrapersonal ambivalence and inhibition are a reflection of the interpersonal relationship and that individuals begin to internalise the processes that characterise the relationship (King, 1998). Conflict strategies such as emotional withdrawal and stonewalling may be manifestations of ambivalence in response to external conflict (King, 1998). This interpretation suggests that relationship problems and dissatisfaction lead to ambivalence.

One important question raised by this current study is whether an individual experiences AIE because their partner discourages the expression of intimacy emotions. It is plausible that if a partner punishes displays of true feeling and affection, then an individual may withhold this expression. For example, if every time an individual tells their partner that they love them and their partner ignores the expression or invalidates such feelings, then one could expect that the next time the individual wants to express intimacy emotions they may experience ambivalence.

The present findings may shed some light on this interesting possibility. One of the most important findings of this research was that people high on AIE were less likely to be in a close relationship. This finding suggests that problems with a particular partner may not entirely explain the link between AIE and lower relationship satisfaction or problems.

Possible barriers to expressing intimacy emotions

If AIE causes relationship problems and dissatisfaction then researchers and clinicians alike may be interested in the possible barriers to the expression of intimacy emotions. These possible barriers may be closely related to the definition of the ambivalence construct. The ambivalence construct has been understood as a conflict between the goal of intimacy and the goal of self-protection (King, 1998). In other words, a highly ambivalent individual may desire to express intimacy emotions but may associate this expression with negative interpersonal outcomes.

The very definition of intimacy is ‘to make the innermost known’ (Hatfield, 1984). When an individual expresses love, affection and “true” feelings they are exposing a part of themselves, leaving them vulnerable, and thereby risking hurt or rejection from others. Therefore, being in a relationship may be too emotionally demanding or stressful for highly ambivalent people because of the requirement to communicate innermost feelings. It would make sense that perceived barriers relating to this conflict may prevent an ambivalent individual from attracting a partner, initiating and maintaining a satisfying, intimate relationship.

Highly ambivalent individuals may believe that if they express love and affection they may leave themselves open to abandonment, engulfment, loss of control (Hatfield, 1984), social disapproval, or retaliation (Mongrain & Vette, 2003). These individuals may have certain negative attributions about the expression of intimacy emotions. They may hold dysfunctional beliefs and theories about the possible negative consequences of expressing their “true” feelings. These individuals may draw on a script or memories regarding times when they expressed their true feelings, or they may hold certain relationship schemas, emotion schemas and expectations about the consequences of expressing intimacy emotions.

Further research is required to explore these possible barriers and their impact in terms of relationship satisfaction.

Furthermore, it is possible that the same barriers that relate to ambivalence may prevent these ambivalent individuals from initiating a relationship. For example, if an individual overestimates the probability that they will be hurt or rejected, they may draw upon evidence that supports this inference (a past abusive relationship) making them reluctant to initiate an intimate relationship. Reis and Shaver (1998) suggest that individual fears may be especially potent in shaping people's expressions of emotionally laden communications and interactions, feelings and judgments. Future research is required to clarify the potential barriers to expressing intimacy emotions.

Ambivalence over the expression of entitlement emotions

The present study is unique because the two factors of emotional ambivalence were investigated separately rather than being combined into a single factor. This study conceptualises these two factors differently; one factor relates to ambivalence over intimacy emotions (e.g., liking, love, 'true feelings') and the other factor relates to ambivalence over entitlement emotions (e.g., anger, pride, jealousy). Past research has not investigated these two factors separately.

This study found that ambivalence over the expression of entitlement emotions was neither a strong nor a consistent predictor of relationship satisfaction for both the participant and partner. In trying to explain this, it is hypothesised that individuals who are ambivalent over the expression of entitlement emotions are less likely to express anger, which has often been found to relate to relationship unhappiness. For example, past research has consistently found that a style of interaction characterised by anger displays are related to relationship

unhappiness and reciprocal negative interactions between partners (Burman, Margolin & John, 1993; Gottman & Kroffoff, 1989; Jacobson, Cordova, Gottman, Rushe & Cox, 1993). The expression of entitlement emotions seems to be maladaptive particularly amid escalating hostility and conflict.

It is possible that being ambivalent about expressing anger and withholding angry expressions may not have such negative consequences for the relationship. Although the ability to constructively express anger to delineate healthy boundaries is critical for personal adaptation (Johnson & Greenberg, 1994), expressing anger excessively is indicative of relationship distress and dissolution (Gottman & Levenson, 1995).

Difficulty identifying emotions

Two hypotheses are proposed as to why difficulty identifying emotions was significantly associated with lower relationship satisfaction. First, because these individuals may have difficulty identifying their own emotions they may not adequately use their emotions as information in the relationship. Second, these individuals may be likely to have difficulty identifying their partner's emotions.

Individuals who have difficulty identifying emotions have trouble using their emotions as information about their internal and external worlds because they cannot give a name to the emotions (Bagby, Parker, & Taylor, 1994). This could be quite problematic in relationships. For example, if an individual misidentifies sadness for hostility whilst interacting with their partner, then such an interaction is likely to be confusing. It is possible then that these confusing interactions lead to misunderstandings about intentions for both partners and lower relationship satisfaction. Noller (1991) found that couples that misunderstood each other's

intentions and misidentified each other's emotions experienced lower relationship satisfaction.

Another possible explanation may be that individuals who have difficulty identifying emotions may take the emotion (whether it is accurate or inaccurate) literally as information about a precipitating event rather than understanding it as their emotional response to the event. Therefore, they might tend to misattribute their negative emotions (e.g. irritation, frustration) to their partner and blame this feeling state on their partner as opposed to understanding their feeling state in terms of their personal interpretations.

In addition, several findings that support the first hypothesis relate to emotion clarity. Gohm and Clore (2000) found that accurate emotion identification and emotion clarity were highly correlated. Emotion clarity is considered to be the ability to understand and reason about emotions (Fitness, 2001). It is not surprising that identification and emotion clarity overlap, given that accurate identification of emotions may help inform one's understanding and reasoning about emotions. Fitness (2001) found that individuals who reported higher emotion clarity also tended to report greater marital happiness, regardless of age or sex. Fitness (2001) suggests that the ability to identify, understand the causes, features, and outcomes of emotions contributes significantly to perceptions of marital satisfaction.

Moreover, people often draw on their feelings to make decisions (Planalp & Fitness, 1998). Individuals who have difficulty identifying their feelings may feel the frustration of 'not knowing' in the face of relationship issues and decision making, and often cannot adequately use emotions as information. For example, if an individual labels anxiety incorrectly they may not know that they worried about the prospect of a future negative event. Therefore, they may not be able to make decisions to take action to correct the problem.

The second hypothesis proposes that individuals who have difficulty identifying their feelings also have difficulty identifying, understanding and reading other people's emotions (Bagby, Parker, & Taylor, 1994). The ability to know how another person feels without being told directly is an essential and expected social skill in interpersonal relationships. Individuals who have difficulty identifying emotions and reading their partner's emotions may sometimes feel like this task is a guessing game.

Noller (1991) found that individuals who have difficulty identifying emotions may also have difficulty responding empathetically toward their partner. The evidence suggests that non-distressed spouses are more empathetically aware of each other's affective states than were distressed spouses (Noller, 1991).

The possible link between AIE and difficulty identifying emotions

In both studies, difficulty identifying emotions was significantly related to participant relationship satisfaction over and above social desirability. However, when controlling for AIE, difficulty identifying emotions was significant in only one of the studies.

The present findings regarding difficulty identifying emotions and relationship satisfaction are largely consistent with past relationship literature. Although difficulty identifying emotions was not a significant predictor over and above AIE in one study, it was a significant correlate over and above social desirability across both studies. This finding is ambiguous and perhaps may be explained in terms of the correlation between AIE and difficulty identifying emotions.

In support of the possibility that some of the variance in difficulty identifying emotions may be captured in AIE, King (1998) found that conflicted individuals have problems reading the needs of others, and gauging the emotional reactions of those around them. Ambivalent individuals tended to be conflicted not only about their own emotions, but also about their partner's emotions. Highly ambivalent individuals also reported being less skilled at reading the emotions of others (King, 1998). These two present studies suggest that difficulty identifying emotions is still an important predictor of relationship satisfaction, even though it may not uniquely predict relationship satisfaction when controlling for AIE.

It seems to make sense that AIE and identifying emotions would be reciprocally related. By identifying feelings accurately and overcoming barriers to adaptive emotion expression, an individual may be more likely to make their emotions known to their partner. Thus, they may be more likely to receive effective feedback from their partner as to the accuracy of their emotional interpretations that may lead to more accurate perception in the future. Alternatively, if an ambivalent individual does not express their emotions, they may continue to assume that their partner shares their own emotional experience or they may feel confused by what it is that they are feeling (King, 1998).

Other aspects of emotional competence

Past research has consistently found an association between aggression and relationship unhappiness and dissolution (Gottman & Levenson, 1995). However, this study's results seem to be somewhat ambiguous with regard to the relationship between the ability to manage aggression and relationship satisfaction. The hypothesis that there would be a consistent relationship between aggression control and relationship satisfaction was not found. There was a significant correlation between aggression control and relationship satisfaction in study 1. However, after controlling for social desirability this association was no longer significant

across both studies. A possible reason for this finding is that individuals who do not control their aggression may select a partner who is likely to tolerate their aggression. Future research is required to investigate this possibility.

There were no consistent significant correlations between the other emotional competencies and relationship satisfaction. Of all the emotional competencies examined, AIE and difficulty identifying emotions were the strongest and most consistent correlates of relationship satisfaction. Therefore, these two correlates seem to be the most promising for future research.

Sex differences

Past research has found sex differences with regard to accurate identification of emotions, adaptive expression of emotions, management of emotions and relationship satisfaction (Levenson, Cartensen & Gottman, 1993; Ruzzene & Noller, 1991). King (1993) found sex differences with regard to emotional ambivalence and relationship satisfaction. In contrast, this study did not find any sex differences with regard to the emotional competencies and relationship satisfaction. Admittedly speculative, one possible explanation might be that there is not enough variance in sex roles because this was a university sample. Perhaps a broader sampling of participants would uncover sex differences.

Practical Implications

The current findings have implications for possible interventions. If future research establishes that there is a causal link between AIE and difficulty identifying emotions and relationship satisfaction, then an intervention could explore whether relationship satisfaction improves if these correlates are targeted.

Individuals may require psycho-education regarding the benefits and costs of expressing emotions in close relationships. Additionally, it may be worth highlighting the possibility that if in past relationships they had been punished for expressing intimacy emotions then they may have formed an expectation that they will be punished again. This expectation may be interfering with current relationships. Furthermore, an intervention that targets AIE may help to promote emotional engagement, intimacy emotions and satisfaction.

More specifically, barriers (functional and dysfunctional) regarding emotional expression pertinent to the individual require careful consideration. It would be valuable to raise awareness regarding these, and to highlight the unhelpful role these barriers may be playing with regard to relationship satisfaction (and partner's satisfaction if relevant). This awareness can provide further information about their attributions, fears, and interpersonal needs.

Limitations and future directions.

This study has several strengths. Firstly, the sample size was large. Secondly, the strongest and most consistent predictors of participant relationship satisfaction were identified through replication in two studies in two different years. Thirdly, both partners' satisfaction ratings are represented in this research. Finally, social desirability was controlled for.

There were however several limitations. This study was correlational in nature. Therefore, causality between the predictor variables and relationship satisfaction cannot be assumed. Another limitation relates to the study's reliance on self-report inventories. Limitations of self-report inventories include issues regarding social desirability, faking good and a general tendency to respond positively to test items. In particular, one potential limitation in past research of this nature is that social desirability may have inflated the

observed relationships between emotional competence and relationship satisfaction. In an effort to account for this potential limitation, this study controlled for social desirability.

Another limitation is that self-report measures of emotional competence require some level of insight (Ciarrochi et al., 2000). Perhaps future research in this area may aim to combine results from performance measures and self-report measures of emotional competence from both the participant's and the partner's perspective.

There was also a selection bias in recruitment procedure; all participants were university students. Therefore, these results require replication before they can be generalised to other populations.

Future research is required to investigate the specific barriers preventing expression of intimacy emotions. Perhaps the use of open questions around why people might not express different types of intimacy emotions would be useful. It is also possible that perceived barriers differ depending on populations.

Another important area of future research relates to emotional ambivalence and attachment theory. Attachment theory has postulated that relationships with parents influence expectations about intimate relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Morgan and Shaver (1999) found that unlike secure individuals, ambivalent individuals expect that they will be unable to obtain deep commitment and intense intimacy. Compared to secure individuals, ambivalent individuals were not as intimate in their self-disclosure, felt uncomfortable self-disclosing and were not as successful at eliciting personal disclosures from others (Keelen, Dion & Dion, 1998). Furthermore, ambivalent individuals desire intimacy but also fear it (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Therefore, it seems that this attachment style seems similar in some ways to emotional ambivalence. Future research may help to clarify whether AIE and an ambivalent attachment

style are connected. More specifically, can emotional ambivalence be related to and understood in terms of attachment style?

Moreover, future investigation of AIE and difficulty identifying emotions in a clinical population is warranted. Future studies conducted longitudinally are also needed. Longitudinal research could establish whether AIE precedes relationship problems, or whether AIE comes after the occurrence of relationship problems or both (reciprocal causation; Finkel, 1995). This kind of research would get us closer to understanding the causal role of AIE in relationship satisfaction.

In conclusion, research such as that conducted herein and future research may help to create insight and guidance in an area where there are clear links to emotional, social and psychological well-being.

References

- Babcock, J. C., Waltz, J., Jacobson, N. S., & Gottman, J. M. (1993). Power and violence: The relation between communication patterns, power discrepancies, and domestic violence. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 61, 40–50.
- Bagby, M.R., Taylor, G.J., & Parker, J. D. (1994). The twenty-item Toronto Alexithymia Scale-II. Convergent, discriminant, and concurrent validity. Journal of Psychosomatic Research, 38, 33-40.
- Bagby, M.R., Taylor, G.J., & Atkinson, L. (1988). Alexithymia: a comparative study of three self-report measures. Journal of Psychosomatic Research, 32, 107-116.
- Bagby, M.R., Taylor, G.J., & Parker, J.D. (1988). Construct validity of the Toronto Alexithymia Scale. Psychotherapy Psychosomatic Journal, 50, 29-34.
- Bagby, M.R., Taylor, G.J., & Ryan, D.P. Toronto Alexithymia Scale: relationship with personality and psychopathology measures. Psychotherapy Psychosomatic Research, 45, 207 –215.
- Beach, S., & Fincham, F. (1994). Toward an integrated model of negative affectivity in marriage. In S. Johnson & L. Greenberg (Eds), The heart of the matter: Perspectives on emotion in marital therapy. (pp. 227-255). New York: Brunner/Mazel.
- Belsky, J., & Pensky, E. (1988). Marital change across the transition to parenthood. Marriage and Family Review, 12, 133–156.
- Berscheid, E. (1983). Emotion. In H. Kelley (Ed), Close Relationships. (pp. 111-168). New York: W.H. Freeman and Company.

- Burman, B., Margolin, G., & John, R. S. (1993). America's angriest home videos: Behavioral contingencies observed in home reenactments of marital conflict. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 61, 28–39.
- Butler, E.A., Egloff, B. Wilhelm, F.H., Smith, N.C., Erickson, E.A., & Gross, J.J. (2003). The social consequences of expressive suppression. Emotion, 2, (1) 48-67.
- Campbell, T. L. (1986). Family's impact on health: A critical review. Family Systems Medicine, 4, 135–328.
- Carstensen, L.L., Gottman, J.M., & Levenson, R.W. (1995). Emotional behaviour in long-term marriage. Psychology and Aging, 10, (1) 140–149
- Chang, E. C., & D’Zurilla, T.J. (1996). Relations between problem orientation and optimism, pessimism, and trait affectivity: A construct validation study. Behaviour Research and Therapy, 34 (2), 185-194.
- Ciarrochi, J. V., Chan, A. Y. C., & Caputi, P. (2000). A critical evaluation of the emotional intelligence construct. Personality & Individual Differences, 28(3), 539-561.
- Ciarrochi, J., Scott, G., Deane, F. P., & Heaven, P. C. L. (2003). Relations between social and emotional competence and psychological health: A construct validation study. Personality & Individual Differences, 35 (8), 1947-1963.
- Clark, M., Fitness, J., & Brissette, I. (2001). Understanding people’s perceptions of relationship is crucial to understand their emotional lives. In G.J.O. Fletcher & M.

- Clark (Eds.), Handbook of social psychology. Vol: 2 Interpersonal processes (pp. 253-278). Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers.
- Collins, N.L, & Miller, L.C. (1994). Self-Disclosure and Liking: A meta-analytic review. Psychological Bulletin, 116 (3), 457-475.
- Crowne, D., & Marlow, D. (1960). A new scale of social desirability independent of psychopathology. Journal of Consulting Psychology, 24, (4), 349-354.
- Duck, S. (Ed). (1988). Handbook of personal relationships. New York: Wiley.
- D’Zurilla, T.J., Chang, E.C., Nottingham, E.J., & Faccini, L. (1998). Social problem-solving deficits and hopelessness, depression, and suicidal risk in college students and psychiatric inpatients. Journal of Clinical Psychology, 54 (8), 1091-1107.
- D’Zurilla, T.J., & Nezu, A.M. (1990). Development and Preliminary Evaluation of the Social Problem-Solving Inventory. Psychological Assessment, 2 (2), 156-163.
- Elliott, T.R., Godshall, F., Shrout, J.R., & Witty, T.E. (1990). Problem-solving appraisal, self-reported study habits, and performance of academically at-risk college students. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 37 (2), 203-207.
- Elliott, T.R., & Marmarosh, C.L. (1994). Problem-solving appraisal, health complaints, and health-related expectancies. Journal of Counseling & Development, 72 (5), 531-537.
- Emmons, R.A., & Colby, P.M. (1995). Emotional conflict and well-being: Relation to perceived availability, daily utilization, and observer reports of social support. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 68, (5), 947–959.

Feeney, J.A., Noller, P., & Peterson, C. (1994). Personal relationships across the lifespan. New York: Brunner/Mazel.

Filsinger, E., & Thoma, S. (1988). Behavioural antecedents of relationship stability and adjustment: A five-year longitudinal study. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 50, 785-795.

Fincham, F.D., Bradbury, T.N., & Scott, C.K. (1995). Cognition in Marriage. New York: Random House.

Finchman, F.D. & Bradbury, T.N. (1987). Affect and cognition in close relationships: Toward an integrative Model. Cognition and Emotion, 1, (1), 59-87.

Finkel, S. E. (1995). Causal Analysis with Panel Data. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage University Press.

Fitness, J. (2001). EI and intimate relationships. In J. Ciarrochi, J. Forgas, & J. Mayer (Eds), Emotional Intelligence in Everyday Life: A Scientific Inquiry. (pp. 98-112). PA: Taylor & Francis.

Fitness, J. & Fletcher, G. J. O. (1993). Love, hate, anger, and jealousy in close relationships: A Prototype and Cognitive Appraisal Analysis. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 65, (5), 942-958.

Fitness, J. & Stongman, K. (1996). In G.J.O. Fletcher, & F.D. Fincham (Eds), Cognition in close relationships. (pp 150-174). Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum & Associates.

- Flury, J. & Ickes, W. (2001). Emotional intelligence and empathic accuracy. In J. Ciarrochi, J. Forgas, & J. Mayer (Eds), Emotional Intelligence in Everyday Life: A Scientific Inquiry. (pp. 113-133). PA: Taylor & Francis.
- Forgas, J.P. (1996) Cognition and Affect. In G.J.O. Fletcher, & F.D. Fincham (Eds), Cognition in close relationships. (pp. 150-174). Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum & Associates.
- Forgas, J. P (2001). Applying EI to everyday life. In J. Ciarrochi, J. Forgas, & J. Mayer (Eds), Emotional Intelligence in Everyday Life: A Scientific Inquiry. (pp. 98-112). PA: Taylor & Francis.
- Frauenknecht, M & Black, D.R. (1995). Social Problem-Solving Inventory for adolescents (SPSI-A): Development and preliminary psychometric evaluation. Journal of Personality Assessment, 64, 522-539.
- Gaelick, L., Bodenhausen, G.V., & Wyer R.S. (1985). Emotional communication in close relationships. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 49, (5), 1246-1265.
- Gohm, C.L., & Clore, G.L. (2000). Individual differences in emotional experience: Mapping available scales to processes. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin. 26, (6), 679-697.
- Gottman, J, M., Krokoff, L J. (1989). Marital interaction and satisfaction: A longitudinal view. Journal of Consulting & Clinical Psychology. 57, 47-52.
- Gottman, J.M. (1993). A theory of marital dissolution and stability. Journal of Family Psychology, 7, 57-75.

- Gottman, J.M. (1994). In S. Johnson & L. Greenberg (Eds), The heart of the matter: Perspectives on emotion in marital therapy. (pp. 227-255). New York: Brunner/Mazel.
- Gottman, J.M., Coan, J., Carr, R., Ruckstuhl, L., & Beuhman, K.T. (2000). Predicting marital stability and divorce in newlywed couples. Journal of Family Psychology, *14*, 42-82.
- Grigg, F., Fletcher, G., & Fitness, J. (1989). Spontaneous attributions in happy and unhappy dating relationships. Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, *6*, 61-68.
- Hafstrom, J. L., & Schram, V. R. (1984). Chronic illness in couples: Selected characteristics, including wife's satisfaction with and perception of marital relationships. Family Relations, *33*, 195–203.
- Hatfield, E. (1984). The dangers of intimacy. In V.J. Derlega (Ed.) Communication, intimacy, and close relationships. New York: Academic Press, (pp. 207-220). NJ: Academic Press.
- House, J. S., Landis, K. R., & Umberson, D. (1988). Social relationships and health. Science, *241*, 540–545.
- Jacobson, N. S., Holtzworth-Munroe, A., & Schmalings, K. B. (1989). Marital therapy and spouse involvement in the treatment of depression, agoraphobia, and alcoholism. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, *57*, 5–10.
- Jacobson, N. S., Gottman, J. M., Waltz, J., Rushe, R., Babcock, J., & Holtzworth-Munroe, A. (1994). Affect, verbal content, and psychophysiology in the arguments of couples with a violent husband. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, *62*, 982–988.

- Johnson, S.M., & Greenberg, L.L (1994). Emotion in intimate relationships: Theory and implications for therapy. In S. Johnson & L. Greenberg (Eds), The heart of the matter: Perspectives on emotion in marital therapy. (pp. 227-255). New York: Brunner/Mazel.
- Karney, B. R. & Bradbury, T.N. (1995). The longitudinal course of marital quality and stability: A review of theory, method, and research. Psychological Bulletin, 118, (1), 3–34.
- Keelen, J.P.R., Dion, K.K., & Dion, K.L. (1998). Attachment style and relationship satisfaction: Test of a self-disclosure explanation. Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science, 30, 24-35.
- Kelly, E.L., & Conley, J.J. (1987). Personality and compatibility: A prospective analysis of marital stability and marital satisfaction. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 52, 27-40.
- Kelter, D., & Haidt, J (2001). Social functions of emotions. In T.J. Mayne & G.A. Bonanno (Eds.), Emotions: Current issues and future directions. Emotions and social behaviour (pp. 192-213). New York: Guildford.
- Kennedy-Moore, E., & Watson, J.C. (1999). Expressing Emotions: Myths, realities and therapeutic strategies. The Guildford press: NY.
- King, L.A. (1998). Ambivalence over emotional expression and reading emotions in situations and faces. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 74, (3), 753-762.
- King, L. A (1993). Emotional expression, conflict over expression, and marital satisfaction. Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 10, 601-607.

- King, L. A., Emmons, R. A., & Woodley, S. (1992). The structure of inhibition. Journal of Research in Personality, 26, 85–102.
- King, L. A., & Emmons, R. A. (1990). Conflict over emotional expression: Psychological and physical correlates. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 58, 864–877.
- Knudson, R.M., Sommers, A.A., & Golding, S.L. (1980). Interpersonal perception and mode of resolution in marital conflict. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 38, 751-763.
- Kurdek, L. A. (1991). Marital instability and changes in marital quality of newlywed couples: A test of the contextual model. Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 8, 27–48.
- Laurenceau, J., Barrett, L.F., & Pietromonaco, P.R. (1998). Intimacy as an interpersonal process: The importance of self-disclosure and partner disclosure, and perceived partner responsiveness in interpersonal exchanges. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 74, 1238-1251.
- Levenson, R. W., & Gottman, J. M. (1992). Marital processes predictive of later dissolution: Behaviour, physiology, and health. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 63, (3), 221-233.
- Levenson, R. W., & Gottman, J. M. (1995). Physiological and affective predictors of change in relationship satisfaction. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 49, 85–94.
- Levenson, R. W., Carstensen, L. L., & Gottman, J.M (1993). Long-term marriage: Age, gender, and satisfaction, Psychology and Aging, 8, (2), 301-313.

- Levitz-Jones, E.M., & Orlofsky, J.L. (1985). Separation-Individuation and intimacy capacity in college women. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 49, (1), 156-169.
- O'Leary, K.D., Barling, J., Arias, I., Rosenbaum, A., Malone, J., & Tyree, A. (1998). Prevalence and Stability of Physical Aggression Between Spouses: A Longitudinal Analysis. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 57, (2), 263–268
- Margolin, G., & Wampold, B.E (1981). Sequential analysis of conflict and accord in distressed and nondistressed marital partners. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 49, 554-567.
- Maslow, A.H. (1970). Motivation and personality, 2nd ed. New York: Harper & Row.
- Mayer, J.D., & Geher, G. (1996). Emotional Intelligence and the identification of emotion. Intelligence, 22, 89-113.
- Mayer, J., Salovey, P., & Caruso, D. (1999). Competing models of emotional intelligence. In R.J. Sternberg (Ed.). Handbook of Human Intelligence. New York: Cambridge, in press.
- Mehta, P., & Clark, M. (1999). Toward understanding emotions in intimate relationships. In A. Weber & J. Harvey (Eds.), Perspectives on Close Relationships (pp.88-130). New York: Random House.
- Mongrain, M., & Vetteese, L.C. (2003). Conflict over emotional expression: Implications for interpersonal communication. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 29, (4). 545-555.

- Morgan, H.J., & Shaver, P.R. (1999). Attachment processes and commitment to romantic relationships. In J.M. Adams & W.H. Jones (Eds.), Handbook of interpersonal commitment and relationship stability (pp. 109-124). NJ: Plenum Press.
- Noller, P., & Ruzzene, M. (1991). Communication in marriage: The influence of affect and cognition. In G.J.O. Fletcher & F. Fincham (Eds), Cognition in close relationships (pp. 203-233). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Paulhus, D.L, & Reid, D.B. (1991). Enhancement and denial in socially desirable responding. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 60, 307-317.
- Reis, H.T., & Shaver, P. (1988). Intimacy as an interpersonal process. In S. Duck (ed), Handbook of personal relationships: Theory, Research and Interventions. (pp. 367-389). John Wiley & Sons, NJ.
- Roger, D. & Najarian, B. (1989). The construction and validation of a new scale for measuring emotion control. Personality & Individual Differences, 9, 721-726.
- Saarni, C. (1999). The development of emotional competence. New York: The Guildford Press.
- Salovey, P., & Mayer, J.D. (1990). Emotional intelligence. Imagination, Cognition, and Personality, 9, 185-211.
- Sarason, I.G., and Sarason, B.R., (Eds) (1984). Social support: Theory, research and applications. Netherlands: Martinus Nijhof.

Simpson, J.A., Ickes, W., & Blackstone, T. (1995). When the head protects the heart: Empathic accuracy in dating relationships. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 69, (4), 629-641.

Sprecher, S., Metts, S., Burleson, B., Hatfield, E., & Thompson, A. (1995). Domains of expressive interaction in intimate relationships: Associations with satisfaction and commitment. Family Relations, 44, (2), 203-211.

Appendix A Participant information form

Appendix B Participant consent form

Appendix C Partner information form

Appendix D Partner consent form

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG
INFORMATION FORM

The Relationship between Emotional Competence and Intimate Relationship Satisfaction.

Cindy Nour and Dr Joseph Ciarrochi

This research project is being conducted by Miss Cindy Nour as part of her Doctor of Psychology (Clinical) degree, supervised by Dr Joseph Ciarrochi in the department of psychology at the University of Wollongong.

You are invited to participate in an anonymous survey about emotional competence and your close relationship satisfaction. This research aims to understand more about the expression of emotions and close relationship satisfaction. You will be asked to give your opinion on a series of statements. This survey will take about 20-25 minutes to complete. When you have completed the survey, place both the consent form and the completed questionnaire in the envelope provided. This will ensure your anonymity and confidentiality.

Your participation in this research is voluntary and you are free to refuse to participate and to withdraw from the research at any time. Your refusal to participate or withdrawal from this research will not in any way affect your grades or relationship with the department or the university.

Please do not place any identifying information on the relationship questionnaire. You will notice a code in the upper right hand corner of the questionnaire. This code will allow us to match your response to your partner's response. **However, your responses will remain completely confidential.** Your data will be stored in such a way that we will not be able to identify the names of you or your partner.

If you would like to discuss this research further please contact Dr. Joseph Ciarrochi on (02) 4221 3111. If you have any enquires regarding the conduct of the research please contact the Secretary of the University of Wollongong Human Research Ethics Committee on (02) 4221 3111.

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

INFORMATION FORM

The Relationship between Emotional Competence and Intimate Relationship Satisfaction.

Cindy Nour and Dr Joseph Ciarrochi

This research project is conducted by Miss Cindy Nour as a part of her Doctorate of Psychology degree, supervised by Joseph Ciarrochi in the department of psychology at the University of Wollongong.

Your partner has already completed a completely anonymous survey. S(he) has also completed the enclosed 6-item relationship questionnaire. We would like to ask you to also complete 6 short questions.

If you agree to participate, please sign the consent form, answer the 6 items questions, place both forms in the self-addressed envelope, and place it in a mailbox.

Please do not place any identifying information on the relationship questionnaire. You will notice a code in the upper right hand corner of the questionnaire. This code will allow us to match your response to your partner's response. **However, your responses will remain completely confidential.** Your data will be stored in such a way that we will not be able to identify the names of you or your partner.

Your participation in this research is voluntary and you are free to refuse to participate and withdraw from the research at any time. Your refusal to participate or withdrawal from this research will not in any way affect your grades or relationship with the department or the university.

If you would like to discuss this research further please contact Dr. Joseph Ciarrochi on [redacted] If you have any enquires regarding the conduct of the research please contact the Secretary of the University of Wollongong Human Research Ethics Committee on [redacted]

CONSENT FORM

Cindy Nour and Dr Joseph Ciarrochi

If you would like to discuss this research further please contact Dr. Joseph Ciarrochi on [redacted] If you have any enquires regarding the conduct of the research please contact the Secretary of the University of Wollongong Human Research Ethics Committee on [redacted]

I,(Participant's name) consent to participate in research conducted by Cindy Nour and Dr Joseph Ciarrochi as it has been described to me in the information sheet. I understand that the data collected will be used for a article publication and conference presentations and I will consent for the data to be used in this manner.

Signed

Date _____

...../...../.....

Appendix E Demographic questions

Please provide the following information: Todays Date:_____

1. Your date of birth: _____Day_____Mth_____Yr

2. Your Sex: 1. Female 2. Male

3. Are you currently in a relationship? Yes No
If yes , please answer questions 3a to 3e:

3a. Please check one of the following

- ☐ Married
- ☐ Defacto relationship
- ☐ Dating
- ☐ Other

3b. How long have you been in this relationship? _____

3c. What is your partner's sex: 1. Female 2. Male

3d. What is your partner's age: _____

3e. What is the highest level of education your partner has completed? (see below)_____

- a. Up to and including School Certificate or equivalent
- b. Higher School Certificate or equivalent
- c. Trade/Tafe course
- d. University (undergraduate)
- e. University (postgraduate)
- f. Other (please specify)

4. Do you have children? Yes No

4a. If Yes, how many children do you have? _____

5. Have you ever been divorced? Yes No

Appendix F The Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS-20)

Using the scale provided as a guide, write the number that best describes how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements in the blank space under “**Agreement Rating**”. Give only one answer for each statement. Please respond to all statements :

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Neither Disagree Nor Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree	
1	2	3	4	5	
Agreement					Rating
1. I am often confused about what emotion I am feeling.....					_____
2. It is difficult for me to find the right words for my feelings.....					_____
3. I have physical sensations that even doctors don't understand.....					_____
4. I am able to describe my feelings easily.....					_____
5. I prefer to analyze problems rather than just describe them.....					_____
6. When I am upset, I don't know if I am sad, frightened, or angry.....					_____
7. I am often puzzled by sensations in my body.....					_____
8. I prefer to just let things happen rather than to understand why they turned out that way.....					_____
9. I have feelings that I can't quite identify.....					_____
10. Being in touch with emotions is essential.....					_____
11. I find it hard to describe how I feel about people.....					_____
12. People tell me to describe my feelings more.....					_____
13. I don't know what's going on inside me.....					_____
14. I often don't know why I am angry.....					_____
15. I prefer talking to people about their daily activities rather than their feelings.					_____
16. I prefer to watch "light" entertainment shows rather than psychological dramas					_____
17. It is difficult for me to reveal my innermost feelings, even to close friends.					_____
18. I can feel close to someone, even in moments of silence.....					_____
19. I find examination of my feelings useful in solving my personal problems.					_____
20. Looking for hidden meanings in movies or plays distracts from their enjoyment.					_____

Appendix G Emotional Control Questionnaire (ECQ)

Please indicate how you feel about each item by circling either “True” or ‘False’. If you feel that an item is neither entirely true nor false, please choose the alternative that is most like you. If you haven’t been in the situation described, please say how you feel you would behave in that situation. Please answer all questions:

1) When someone upsets me, I try to hide my feelings.	True	False
2) If someone pushed me, I would push back.	True	False
3) I remember things that upset me or make me angry for a long time afterwards.	True	False
4) I seldom feel irritable.	True	False
5) I often take chances crossing the road.	True	False
6) People find it difficult to tell whether I’m excited about something or not.	True	False
7) I often do or say things I later regret.	True	False
8) I find it difficult to comfort people who have been upset.	True	False
9) I generally don’t bear a grudge- when something is over, it’s over, and I don’t think about it again.	True	False
10) No-one gets one over on me – I don’t take things lying down.	True	False
11) When something upsets me I prefer to talk to someone about it than to bottle it up.	True	False
12) I’ve been involved in many fights or arguments.	True	False
13) I get ‘ worked up’ just thinking about things that have upset me in the past.	True	False
14) I’m not easily distracted.	True	False
15) If I’m badly served in a shop or restaurant I don’t usually make a fuss.	True	False
16) If I receive bad news in front of other’s I usually hide how I feel.	True	False
17) I frequently change my mind about things.	True	False
18) If a passing car splashes me, I shout at the driver.	True	False
19) If someone were to hit me, I would hit back.	True	False
20) I seldom show how I feel about things.	True	False

21) I often say things without thinking whether I might upset others.	True	False
22) I often find myself thinking over and over about things that have made me angry.	True	False
23) If I'm pleasantly surprised, I show immediately how pleased I am.	True	False
24) I tend to snap at people.	True	False
25) If I get angry or upset I usually say how I feel.	True	False
26) If someone says something stupid, I tell them so.	True	False
27) If I see someone pushing into a queue ahead of me I usually just ignore it.	True	False
28) I can usually settle things quickly and be friendly again after an argument.	True	False
29) My interests tend to change quickly.	True	False
30) I don't feel embarrassed about expressing my feelings.	True	False
31) If I see or hear about an accident, I find myself thinking about something similar happening to me or to people close to me.	True	False
32) I think about ways of getting back at people who have made me angry long after the event has happened.	True	False
33) I'd rather concede an issue than get into an argument.	True	False
34) I never forget people making me angry or upset, even about small things.	True	False
35) I seldom "put my foot in it".	True	False
36) I lose my temper quickly.	True	False
37) I think people show their feeling too easily.	True	False
38) I find it hard to get thoughts about things that have upset me out of my mind.	True	False
39) Almost everything I do is carefully thought out.	True	False
40) I don't think I could ever 'turn the other cheek'.	True	False
41) I often daydream about situations where I'm getting my own back at people.	True	False

42) I find long journeys boring – all I want is to get there as quickly as possible.	True	False
43) Expressing my feelings makes me feel very vulnerable and anxious.	True	False
44) If a friend borrows something and returns it dirty or damaged, I usually just keep quiet about it.	True	False
45) I can't stand having to wait for anything.	True	False
46) If I see something that frightens or upsets me, the image of it stays in my mind for a long time afterwards.	True	False
47) I hate being stuck behind a slow driver.	True	False
48) If someone insults me I try to remain as calm as possible.	True	False
49) Thinking about upsetting things just seems to keep them going, so I try to put them out of my mind.	True	False
50) I usually manage to remain outwardly calm, even though I may be churned up inside.	True	False
51) If I lose out on something, I get over it quickly.	True	False
52) I can't help showing how I feel, even when it isn't appropriate to do so.	True	False
53) If I have to confront someone, I try not to think too much about it beforehand.	True	False
54) I like planning ahead rather than just seeing how things turn out.	True	False
55) I sometimes just come out with things that embarrass people I'm with.	True	False
56) Sometimes I just can't control my feelings.	True	False

Appendix H Social problem solving inventory (SPSI-a) – Problem Orientation subscale.

Below are statements that reflect how you respond to problems and how you think and feel about yourself afterward. You should think about serious problems that are related to your family, health, friends, school, and sports. You should also try to think about a serious problem that you had to solve recently as you reply to these statements.

Read each statement carefully. Think about how you usually think, feel, and behave when you face these types of problems. Using the scale provided, enter the number which best describes how true each statement is of you.

0	1	2	3	4
Not at All	Slightly	Moderately	Very Extremely	True of Me

Enter 0 if the statement is “not at all true” of you.

Enter 4 if the statement is “extremely true” of you.

- 1. When I can’t solve a problem quickly and easily, I think I am stupid.
- 2. I often doubt that there is a good way to solve problems I have.
- 3. When faced with a hard problem, I believe that, if I try, I will be able to solve it on my own.
- 4. I feel afraid when I have an important problem to solve.
- 5. Complex problems make me very angry or upset.
- 6. I often become sad and do not feel like doing anything when I have a problem to solve.
- 7. I put off solving a problem for as long as I can.
- 8. I avoid dealing with problems in my life.
- 9. I put off solving problems until it is too late to do anything about them.

Appendix I Ambivalence over Emotional Expression (AEQ)

Please answer the following questions in terms of the extent to which these statements apply to you. When answering these questions think about your interactions with your partner.

Please indicate “1” if the statement **never** applies to you, and “5” if it **always** applies to you.

	Never	A little	Sometimes	Often	Always
1. It is hard to find the right words to indicate to my partner what I am really feeling.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I try to control my jealousy concerning my boyfriend/ girlfriend even though I want to let them know I'm hurting.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I want to express my emotions honestly but I am afraid that it may cause me embarrassment or hurt.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I make an effort to control my temper at all times even though I'd like to act on these feelings at times.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I often cannot bring myself to express what I am really feeling.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I try to avoid sulking even when I feel like it.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I'd like to talk about my problems with others, but at times I just can't.	1	2	3	4	5
8. When I am really proud of something I accomplish I want to tell my someone, but I fear I will be thought of as conceited.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I want to tell my someone when I love them, but it is difficult to find the right words.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I try not to worry others even though sometimes they should know the truth.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I would like to express my disappointment when things don't go as well as planned, but I don't want to appear vulnerable.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Often I'd like to show others how I feel, but something seems to be holding me back.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I try to hide my negative feelings around others, even though I am not being fair to those close to me.	1	2	3	4	5

14. I strive to keep a smile on my face in order to convince others I am happier than I really am.	1	2	3	4	5
	Never	A little	Sometimes	Often	Always
15. When someone bothers me, I try to appear indifferent even though I'd like to tell them how I feel.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Often I find that I am not able to tell others how much they really mean to me.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I feel guilty after I have expressed anger to someone.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I try to refrain from getting angry at my parents even though I want to at times	1	2	3	4	5
19. I try to show people that I love them, although at times I am afraid that it may make me appear weak or too sensitive.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I try to apologize when I have done something wrong but I worry that I will be perceived as incompetent.	1	2	3	4	5
21. I would like to express my affection more physically but I am afraid others will get the wrong impression.	1	2	3	4	5
22. I think about acting when I am angry but I try not to.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I can recall a time when I wish that I had told someone how much I really cared about them.	1	2	3	4	5
24. I would like to be more spontaneous in my emotional reactions but I just can't seem to do it.	1	2	3	4	5
25. I try to suppress my anger, but I would like other people to know how I feel.	1	2	3	4	5
26. I worry that if I express negative emotions such as fear and anger, other people will not approve of me.	1	2	3	4	5
27. I try to keep my deepest fears and feelings hidden, but at times I'd like to open up to others	1	2	3	4	5
28. After I express anger at someone, it bothers me for a long time.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix J Relationship Quality Questionnaire (RQQ)

Please answer the following questions about your relationship by putting a circle around the number that best describes your opinion.

	Not at all	Very little	Not very much	Moderately	Quite a lot	Very much	Extremely
1. How much do you love your partner?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. How happy are you in your relationship?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. How serious are the problems in your relationship?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Overall, how satisfied are you with your relationship?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

6. Which of the following statements best describes how you feel about the future of your relationship? Please mark the statement with a tick.

(√)

a. I want desperately for my relationship to succeed and would go to almost any lengths to see that it does.

b. I want very much for my relationship to succeed and would try very hard to see that it does.

c. I am very keen for my relationship to succeed and will do my fair share to see that it does.

d. It would be nice if my relationship succeeded, but I cannot do any more than I am doing now to make it succeed.

e. It would be nice if my relationship succeeded, but I refuse to do any more than I am doing now to keep it going.

f. My relationship is unlikely to succeed, and there is no more I can do to keep it going.

g. My relationship can never succeed and I do not wish to keep it going.

Appendix K Marlow-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (MCSDS)

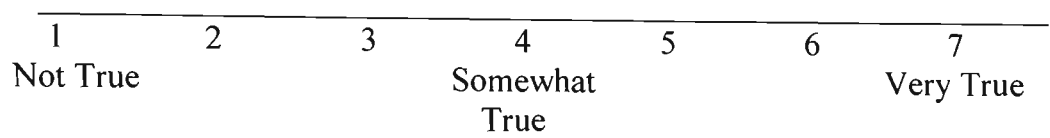
Listed below are a number of statements concerning personal attitudes and traits. Read each item and decide whether the statement is true or false as it pertains to you.

- T 1. Before I vote, I thoroughly investigate the qualifications of all of the candidates.
- T 2. I never hesitate to go out of my way to help someone in trouble.
- T 3. It is sometimes hard for me to get on with my work if I am not encouraged.
- T 4. I have never intensely disliked anyone.
- T 5. On occasion, I have had doubts about my ability to succeed in life.
- T 6. I sometimes feel resentful when I don't get my own way.
- T 7. I am always careful about my manner of dress.
- T 8. My table manners at home are as good as when I eat out in a restaurant.
- T 9. If I could get into a movie without paying and be sure I was not seen, I would probably do it.
- T 10. On a few occasions, I have given up doing something because I thought too little of my ability.
- T 11. I like to gossip at times.
- T 12. There have been times when I felt like rebelling against people in authority even though I knew they were right.
- T 13. No matter who I'm talking to, I'm always a good listener.
- T 14. I can remember "playing sick" to get out of something.
- T 15. There have been occasions when I took advantage of someone.
- T 16. I'm always willing to admit it when I make a mistake.
- T 17. I always try to practice what I preach.
- T 18. I don't find it particularly difficult to get on with loud mouthed, obnoxious people.
- T 19. I sometimes try to get even rather than forgive and forget.
- T 20. When I don't know something, I don't mind admitting it.
- T 21. I am always courteous; even to people who are disagreeable.
- T 22. At times I have really insisted on having things done my own way.
- T 23. There have been occasions when I felt like smashing things.
- T 24. I would never think of letting someone else be punished for my wrongdoings.

- T 25. I never resent being asked to return a favor.
- T 26. I have never been irked when people express ideas very different from my own.
- T 27. I never make a long trip without checking the safety of my car.
- T 28. There have been times when I was quite jealous of the good fortune of others.
- T 29. I have almost never felt the urge to tell someone off.
- T 30. I am sometimes irritated by people who ask favours of me.
- T 31. I have never felt that I was punished without cause.
- T 32. I sometimes think when people have a misfortune, they only got what they deserved.
- T 33. I have never deliberately said something that hurts someone's feelings.

Appendix L The Social Desirable Responding Questionnaire (SDQ)

Using the scale below as a guide, enter the corresponding number to indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement.



- 1. My first impressions of people usually turn out to be right
- 2. It would be hard for me to break any of my bad habits
- 3. I don't care to know what other people really think of me
- 4. I have not always been honest with myself
- 5. I always know why I like things
- 6. When my emotions are aroused, it biases my thinking
- 7. Once I've made up my mind, other people can seldom change my opinion
- 8. I am not a safe driver when I exceed the speed limit
- 9. I am fully in control of my own fate
- 10. It's hard for me to shut off a disturbing thought
- 11. I never regret my decisions
- 12. I sometimes lose out on things because I can't make up my mind soon enough
- 13. The reason I vote is because my vote can make a difference
- 14. My parents were not always fair when they punished me
- 15. I am a completely rational person
- 16. I rarely appreciate criticism
- 17. I am very confident of my judgments

18. I have sometimes doubted my ability as a lover
19. It's all right with me if some people happen to dislike me
20. I don't always know the reasons why I do the things I do
21. I sometimes tell lies if I have to
22. I never cover up my mistakes
23. There have been occasions when I have taken advantage of someone
24. I never swear
25. I sometimes try to get even rather than forgive and forget
26. I always obey laws, even if I'm unlikely to get caught
27. I have said something bad about a friend behind his or her back
28. When I hear people talking privately, I avoid listening
29. I have received too much change from a salesperson without telling him or her
30. I always declare everything at customs
31. When I was young I sometimes stole things
32. I have never dropped litter on the street
33. I sometimes drive faster than the speed limit
34. I never read sexy books or magazines
35. I have done things that I don't tell other people about
36. I never take things that don't belong to me
37. I have taken sick-leave from work or school even though I wasn't really sick
38. I have never damaged a library book or store merchandise without reporting it
39. I have some pretty awful habits
40. I don't gossip about other people's business