CHILDHOOD PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE AND NEGLECT, PERSONALITY TRAITS AND ADULTHOOD RELATIONSHIP QUALITY

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ABSTRACT

CHILDHOOD PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE AND NEGLECT, PERSONALITY TRAITS AND ADULTHOOD RELATIONSHIP QUALITY

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Childhood psychological abuse, psychological neglect, and physical neglect are increasingly common, pervasive forms of maltreatment, and the effects are often enduring into adulthood. These types of maltreatment may influence personality traits, and similarly, underlying personality traits may influence how a child reacts to their maltreatment. One significant known effect of psychological abuse and psychological and physical neglect is its effect on adulthood interpersonal functioning, specifically within romantic relationships. Thus, the present study explored the relationships between these three forms of childhood maltreatment, personality traits, and adulthood romantic relationship quality.

College students ($N = 149$) from a southeastern regional college completed questionnaires pertaining to childhood maltreatment, personality, and perceived relationship quality. Results indicated that, for the total sample, childhood maltreatment was correlated with certain personality factors as well as specific facets within these factors. Results also indicated negative correlations between childhood maltreatment and relationship quality. Contrary to prior research, results did not indicate significant relationships between most personality factors and relationship quality. Results are suggestive of the different impacts these specific forms of childhood maltreatment may have on both personality and relationship quality.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Childhood psychological abuse (CPA) and neglect are extremely common yet not as broadly researched as sexual and physical abuse, potentially because the constructs are not as easily recognized. Sneddon et al. (2010) found that out of 201 mothers who completed child abuse surveys, 24% reported a history of psychological abuse, 21% reported psychological neglect, and 10% reported physical neglect. CPA is characterized by a pattern of behavior that conveys to the child that they are worthless, flawed, or unloved (Binggeli, Hart, & Brassard, 2001). Neglect is broadly defined as a failure to provide for the child's needs; however, it can be understood as two separate constructs. Physical neglect is characterized by failure to provide for the child's physical needs, as defined by physical health and safety, sensory and tactile stimulation, and social integration. Psychological or emotional neglect is characterized by failure to provide for the child's emotional needs, demonstrated by not expressing concern, not attending to the child and not showing love. Psychological and physical neglect subsequently impact the child's development or functioning (English, Thompson, Graham, Briggs, 2005; Sneddon et al., 2010). Neglect is the most common form of child maltreatment reported to Child Protective Services, and cases of neglect are steadily increasing (English, Thompson, Graham, Briggs, 2005). Similarly, psychological abuse is very common and can be extremely detrimental to the child's wellbeing (Binggeli, Hart, & Brassard, 2001).

Whereas sexual and physical abuse may in some cases be short-lived or one-time experiences, CPA and neglect are often ongoing throughout childhood, and can be displayed in subtle but pervasive forms (Hart & Brassard, 1987). Given the typical endurance of CPA and neglect, it is not surprising that the resulting psychological effects carry over into adulthood. In

fact, the distress linked to psychological abuse and neglect has been found to have many negative affects on adult romantic relationships (Colman & Widom, 2004; Reyome et al., 2009).

Emerging adulthood, typically classified as ages 18-25, is a crucial time for developing and maintaining more intimate and serious relationships (Arnett, 2000). As opposed to adolescent dating relationships, young adulthood relationships are less about recreation and more about exploring emotional and physical intimacy. These relationships involve a deeper level of intimacy, which was not previously explored in adolescence, which helps the person further develop a sense of identity (Arnett, 2000). Emerging adulthood is also a time of changes and great uncertainty, so it is understandable how poor relationship quality or failure of a relationship during this time can cause great distress (Barr, Culatta, & Simons, 2013). Given the significance of intimate relationships in young adulthood, it is important to understand the variables that may affect relationship quality and satisfaction.

CPA and neglect have been correlated with certain personality traits, and personality traits have also been found to be important predictors of relationships in adulthood (Caspi et al., 2005). In 1995, Costa and McCrae developed a revised form of a pre-constructed personality inventory, the Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI-R; Costa & McCrae, 1992), a 240-item questionnaire assessing the five factors of personality and the facets within each factor. Costa and McCrae (1995) have found evidence that much of what is meant by the term "personality" can be summarized by this five-factor model of personality, also known as the "Big Five" (Costa & McCrae, 1995). The five-factor model was constructed based on the theory that individuals can be characterized by patterns of thoughts, feelings and actions (Costa & McCrae, 1995). The five factors include: agreeableness, neuroticism, conscientiousness,

openness to experience, and extraversion, each factor encompassing six facets. The NEO-PI-R sought to assess both the broad domains as well as the specific and descriptive facets of each.

As personalities are heavily influenced by environment, it is understandable that living in a psychologically abusive or neglectful environment will have an impact on a child's personality, yet research examining childhood abuse and its effect on adult personality is lacking, especially concerning the five factor model. Evidence does support that CPA and neglect have an impact on adulthood functioning, including relationship quality and satisfaction (Briere & Rickards, 2007; Colman & Widom, 2004; Kapeleris & Paivio, 2011). Personality variables such as neuroticism, agreeableness and conscientiousness have been linked to relationship quality and satisfaction, but very little has been found to support linkages between relationship quality and extraversion and openness to experience (Holland & Roisman, 2008; Klimstra et al., 2013; Watson et al., 2000). The present study aims to examine the interplay between childhood psychological abuse and neglect, the five-factor personality variables, and young adulthood relationship quality and satisfaction.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Childhood Psychological Abuse and Neglect

Psychological abuse refers to a "repeated pattern or extreme incident(s) that convey the message that the child is worthless, flawed, unloved, endangered, or valuable only in meeting someone else's needs" (Binggeli, Hart, & Brassard, 2001). Research has shown that psychological abuse is quite common across the general population (Baker & Ben-Ami, 2011). Hart and Brassard (1987) believe that psychological maltreatment is the core issue in child maltreatment and poses a serious mental health threat. In contrast to physical and sexual abuse, there has been less research conducted on childhood psychological abuse (also known as emotional abuse) until more recent years (Wright, 2007). In addition to the prevalence and severity of psychological abuse, neglect referrals to Child Protective Services have been continually increasing (English et al., 2005).

The effects of childhood psychological abuse (CPA) have long-lasting and detrimental effects. Poon and Knight (2012) found that adult daughters who recalled childhood emotional abuse reported higher average level of emotional distress, nearly a decade later. English, Thompson, Graham and Briggs (2005) note that much research has suggested that childhood neglect has a long-lasting impact on physical and emotional well-being into adulthood. Evidence also shows that childhood neglect predicted poorer executive functioning at age 41 years, whereas physical and sexual abuse alone did not (Nikulina & Spatz, 2013). Similarly, English et al. (2005) note that neglecting a child's physical needs in terms of appropriate diet have been linked to impaired cognitive development. The authors also note that caregiver psychological neglect, in other words, not giving the child a stable and nurturing relationship, subsequently negatively impacts self-concept and affect regulation. This lack of social and care-giving

stimulation also hampers cognitive development. More specifically, the authors note that this attachment with a primary caregiver allows children to learn to soothe themselves and regulate their arousal, and failure to experience this positive relationship can lead to internalizing and externalizing problems. This early on, poor caregiver attachment is associated with an array of problems in later peer relationships (English et al., 2005).

Measuring Psychological Abuse and Neglect

There are many instruments developed to measure history of childhood abuse with subsets including psychological abuse and neglect. Some of these include the Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (CTQ), Psychological Maltreatment Scale (PMS), and the Multidimensional Neglect Behavioral Scale (MNBS). Bernstein and Fink developed the CTQ in 2003, constructing a 28-item self-report measure developed to assess the five types of abuse and neglect, using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from never true to very often true. The PMS was developed in 1990 by Briere and Runtz, and examines specifically psychological maltreatment, such as acts of spurning, terrorizing, isolating, exploiting, and denying emotional responsiveness. Straus developed the 40-item MNBS in 2006 with aims to assess neglect by a parent/caregiver, measuring 4 types of neglect: physical emotional, supervisory and cognitive, on an 8-point frequency scale.

Personality and the Five-Factor Model

Traditionally, temperament traits are seen to be biologically based predispositions present in early childhood that remain stable across the lifespan, while personality is said to be acquired over time through experience rather than an innate disposition; however, more recent research demonstrates that this distinction between temperament and personality might not be necessary, and that personality subsumes temperament (Grist & McCord, 2010). This rationale stems from

research showing that the Five Factor Model of Personality has been applied to children of the pre-school age group, and have even been described in children as young as 2 (Grist & McCord, 2010). The temperament traits are well characterized by personality characteristics; for example, Surgency is well represented by the personality factor of Extraversion, Negative Affect is well represented by the personality trait of Neuroticism, and Effortful Control is represented by the personality trait of Conscientiousness. These data suggest that most of individual differences in people of all ages can be described with the Five Factor Theory, which will be discussed below. Although personality characteristics are more recently being represented as innate dispositions, changes in these traits may occur through exposure to environment (Depauw, Mervielde, & Van Leeuwen, 2009). An individual could be born with an even-keeled, calm or optimistic disposition, but after undergoing certain environmental stressors like abuse or neglect, this innate disposition is susceptible to change.

Costa and McCrae (1996) began looking for the broadest and most pervasive items that recurred in personality measures. Extraversion (E) and neuroticism (N) had already been identified as the "Big Two" by Wiggins (Wiggins, 1968), and Costa and McCrae had already proposed that openness to experience (O) should also qualify as a major dimension of personality. The authors believed that agreeableness (A) and conscientiousness (C) were important factors that should be included as well (Costa & McCrae, 1995). Neuroticism is characterized by psychological distress, unrealistic ideas, and maladaptive coping responses. Extraversion, being the opposite of introversion, is characterized by high activity level and capacity for joy and interpersonal interaction. Openness to experience is characterized by being open-minded in exploring the unfamiliar. The Agreeableness domain measures the quality of interpersonal orientation along a continuum, those scoring high in agreeableness being

compassionate and understanding, and those scoring low being antagonistic and argumentative. Lastly, the conscientiousness domain contrasts those who are dependable and fastidious with those who are lackadaisical and sloppy. Those scoring high in conscientiousness are organized, persistent, and motivated.

Based on these ideas, the authors constructed the NEO-PI-R model, a hierarchical, top-down approach, concluding that these five domains were multifaceted approaches to specific cognitive, affective and behavioral tendencies. Each domain encompasses six facets to designate the lower level traits related to their domains. The authors believed six facets per domain were necessary to make that many distinctions, whereas any more than six would be considered overload. Many alternative measures of personality have been proposed over the past several decades, many of which can be interpreted in terms of the FFM (Costa & McCrae, 1995). The authors believe that although certain tools could be interpreted in terms of the FFM, these scales prior to the NEO-PI-R did not represent a systematic approach to the assessment of both the general and specific levels of the FFM. The authors found that renowned personality measurement tools such as the California Psychological Inventory and the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory omitted important aspects of personality, such as the traits agreeableness and conscientiousness. Costa and McCrae constructed the NEO-PI-R.

Costa and McCrae (1995) found significant correlations between the NEO-PI-R and other previous FFM measurement tools, such as those afforded by Wiggins (1990) and Goldberg (1990). Costa and McCrae's 240-item NEO-PI-R (1995) spawned several other measurement tools used to assess the five factors of personality. Goldberg (1999) later constructed a 300-item inventory, the IPIP-NEO-300, measuring similar constructs to those in the NEO-PI-R, but one

disadvantage of this questionnaire was that it is even longer than the NEO-PI-R. One advantage to Goldberg's measure is that it is a free open source of measurement.

In 2011, Johnson constructed a more usable 120-item version of Goldberg's IPIP-NEO. Johnson found that although shorter, public-domain measurements of the five factors existed, his 120-item measure demonstrated psychometrically acceptable scales similar to the 30 facets of the NEO-PI-R (Johnson, 2011). In constructing the IPIP-NEO-120, Johnson removed items with the lowest item-total correlations for each of the 10-item facet scales until 4 items remained. Coefficient alphas of at least .70 were maintained for each scale, except Dutifulness (a facet of Conscientiousness), which was .69. Johnson then narrowed down questions that appeared redundant, such as "dislike changes" and "don't like the idea of change" to one item. He then made sure that the correlations for each of the 30 facet scales were acceptable for both males and females. Coefficient alphas for the domain scales for the IPIP NEO 120 ranged from .81 through .88, and a mean alpha coefficient for the facet scales of .68, indicating that this instrument is reliable enough for research purposes (Johnson, 2011).

Measuring Personality

As discussed above, several assessment tools have been developed to measure the five factors of personality and the individual facets that make up the domains. Costa and McCrae's NEO-PI-R (1995) led to the development of Goldberg's IPIP-NEO-300 (1999), which led to the development of Johnson's shortened version, the IPIP-NEO-120 (2011). Currently, the M5-120 is a version of Johnson's IPIP-NEO-120.

Personality and childhood psychological abuse and neglect. Although evidence does support that personality is an innate disposition, traits are still susceptible to change due to early environmental exposure (Depauw, Mervielde, & Van Leeuwen, 2009; Grist & McCord, 2010).

With this knowledge, it is not surprising that experiencing CPA or neglect as a child can affect personality. Oshri, Rogosch, and Cicchetti (2013) view child maltreatment as a powerful environmental stressor that potentiates compromised personality development, leading to heightened psychopathology in adolescence. Consistent research over the last few decades has found associations between childhood maltreatment and adult personality disorders (PDs) (Hengartner, Muller, Rodgers, Rosslers & Ajdacic-Gross, 2012). The authors note that childhood abuse has a detrimental effect on psychological adjustment and is linked to maladaptive coping skills, and personality pathology is associated with problematic coping skills. The authors found that all forms of childhood abuse were positively associated with dysfunctional coping, and dysfunctional coping was significantly related to all personality disorder dimensions. Cohen et al. (2013) found evidence that CPA (specifically emotional abuse and neglect) is linked to Cluster C (i.e., an example of personality disorder), and Cluster A (another example of a disordered personality). Individuals who fall into these clusters can be described as having anxiety, low self-esteem, socially isolated, and avoiders of intimacy (Cohen et al., 2013). Results from another study (Zang, Chow, Wang, Dai & Xiao, 2012) indicated strong correlations between Cluster B personality disorders and all types of childhood abuse, Cluster B includes Antisocial and Borderline personality disorders (2012).

Although much research has found strong correlations between childhood abuse and the development of personality disorders, less research has examined links between abuse and the Five-Factor Model specifically. Rogosch and Cicchetti (2004) conducted a longitudinal study examining 6-year-old children who had been abused or neglected, and found that in comparison to their non-maltreated counterparts, the maltreated six year olds were much lower in conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness to experience, and much higher in neuroticism.

At age 9, these children maintained these personality domains. A Japanese study from 2013 examining the five factors of abused and neglected children found strikingly similar results. The authors found that maltreated elementary age children were significantly lower in agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience (Ogata, 2013). Though the authors found important links between abuse and the five factors, these studies did not examine the children into adulthood.

Relationship Quality

Evidence shows that relationship quality from adolescence throughout adulthood has a significant impact on psychological well-being. Kenny, Dooley, and Fitzgerald (2013) note that positive qualities in romantic relationships increase social competence in young people, while poor quality in these relationships is associated with depressive symptoms. The authors found that in an adolescent sample, high satisfaction in all types of interpersonal relationships was predictive of low levels of emotional distress.

Barr, Culatta, and Simons (2013) found that social support has a significant influence in mood disorders, and romantic partners are key figures and hence key social support systems. The researchers also note that higher marital quality is associated with lower blood pressure, lower stress, less depression and higher satisfaction with life in general. Interestingly, the authors found that simply being in a relationship was irrelevant in predicting physical and emotional health, as they found that single individuals are healthier than those in low-quality marriages. In comparison to those in low quality relationships, those in high quality relationships were found to have less depressive symptoms and better physical health. Furthermore, the authors found that those who had experienced waves of low-quality relationships report worse health, especially

alcohol related problems, in comparison to those who only recently transitioned into a poor quality relationship (Barr, Culatta & Simons, 2013).

Similarly, Rosand, Slinning, Eberhard-Gran, Roysamb, and Tambs (2012) found partner relationship dissatisfaction is strongly associated with emotional distress in both men and women, and satisfaction and good quality of a relationship strongly moderates adverse effects of emotional strain. Whisman (2007) examined particular DSM diagnoses categories and relationship distress, and found that in married couples relationship distress was significantly associated with generalized anxiety disorder, social anxiety disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder. A longitudinal study from 2006 found that baseline marital quality predicts the onset of a new anxiety disorder at a 2-year follow-up, which suggests that marital distress may be causally related to anxiety disorders (Overbeek et al, 2006). Whisman and Uebelacker (2006) noted that in some cases, marital dissatisfaction predicts depressive symptoms, while the depressive symptoms have also been found to predict marital dissatisfaction. The authors concluded that the associations between relationship satisfaction and depression are bi-directional.

Quality and satisfaction of intimate relationships is important in helping individuals develop a positive sense of identity, particularly in young adulthood, when individuals are experiencing stress due to transition and increased uncertainty (Arnett, 2000; Barr, Culatta, & Simons 2013). Whitton and Kuryluk (2012) recognized that research has been conducted examining the impact of quality of relationships in older adults and married couples on psychological wellbeing; however, research is scarce examining this relationship in young people, particularly emerging adults (as classified as 18-25; Arnett, 2000). The authors also recognized that not all individuals experiencing relationship issues have psychological issues

(such as depressive symptoms) and not all those with psychological issues have poor relationship quality, and they sought to examine in which types of romantic relationships lower satisfaction is most strongly associated with depressive symptoms. The authors found that depressive symptoms were negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction, demonstrating that emotional wellbeing is associated with relationship quality in emerging adult couples as well. Furthermore, they found several characteristics moderated the effect of relationship satisfaction and depressive symptoms, such as interdependence, length of the relationship and investment. The authors found that for women, the negative association between relationship satisfaction and depressive symptoms was strong at all levels of interdependence and commitment. On the other hand, the negative association between satisfaction and depressive symptoms for men was strongest at above average levels of interdependence, commitment, and relationship length. Overall, the study supported the evidence showing that intimate relationship quality is important for emotional wellbeing in emerging adults, particularly in women (Whitton & Kuryluk, 2012). Evidence clearly supports the important role relationship quality and satisfaction has on overall well-being.

Relationship Quality and Personality Traits

Personality is an important predictor of relationships in adulthood (Caspi et al., 2005). Studies have found strong correlations between certain personality traits and relationship quality. Being that neuroticism is a measure of overall negative emotionality, it is not surprising that those low in the neuroticism trait have better relationship quality (Holland & Roisman, 2008). Partners of more neurotic individuals have been found to behave more negatively during discussions, and women and men's own neuroticism predicts negative perceptions of their partner's behaviors (McNulty, 2008). In fact, a meta-analysis found neuroticism to be the

strongest personality correlate of couple satisfaction (Heller, Watson, & Ilies, 2004). Daspe, Sabourin, Peloquin, Lussier, and Wright (2013) noted that neuroticism has been found to not only predict an individual's own dyadic adjustment but also his or her partner's dyadic adjustment. The authors believe that the negative association between neuroticism and sexual satisfaction might help explain how the trait is negatively associated with relationship quality. Contrary to much research that has found a negative linear relationship between neuroticism and dyadic adjustment, the authors found a curvilinear association between neuroticism and relationship satisfaction, meaning both very low levels as well as high levels of neuroticism were associated with lower dyadic adjustment. This could potentially be because those extremely low in neuroticism are too unmotivated to confront problems and have diminished attention towards the relationship, as well as the individual does not experience negative emotions and thus has lowered understanding and empathy towards their partner.

Research on the openness to experience and relationship satisfaction and adjustment has been mixed. Daspe et al. (2013) found that openness to experience is positively associated with dyadic adjustment, which replicated the results of several other studies that found significant positive relationships between marital satisfaction and the openness domain (Botwin et al, 2006; Bouchard et al, 1999). The authors suggest that individuals high in openness are more attentive and curious toward their partners, possibly facilitating communication. These individuals could also be more tolerant and respectful of differences in their partner's attitudes and behaviors (Daspe et al., 2013). However, other research has shown no significant relationships between openness and marital satisfaction (Heller et al., 2004). It is certainly possible that those high in openness are more willing to question their relationship and are more inclined to be open to alternatives to their current partner (Daspe et al., 2013). The authors also found a positive

association between the agreeableness domain and relationship adjustment, which is consistent with the literature (Daspe et al., 2013; Holland & Roisman, 2008; Klimstra et al., 2013). These authors note that neuroticism and agreeableness are the domains most strongly associated with marital satisfaction. Given that agreeableness measures overall compassion and trust in thoughts, feelings, and actions, those who are high in agreeableness are less likely to engage in affairs or arguments that might be detrimental to the relationship.

The evidence on extraversion and relationship satisfaction and stability are also mixed. Jenkins, Wright and Hudiburgh (2012) found positive correlations between interpersonal competency and extraversion, openness, and agreeableness. From an intimate relationship perspective, however, results are not as clear. Watson (2000) notes that while some studies have found extraversion to be associated with greater marital dissatisfaction, others have not found significant correlations. The author found that extraversion was linked to satisfaction in married couples, but not in dating couples (Watson et al., 2000). A meta-analytic review found that extraversion was linked to greater marital satisfaction but increased marital instability (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). Holland and Roisman (2008) found that for engaged couples, extraversion was linked to higher quality of relationship, but there were no significant correlations between extraversion and quality for dating couples.

Holland and Roisman (2008) found conscientiousness to be the most significant predictor of relationship quality in dating, engaged, and married couples. Klimstra et al. (2013) found both agreeableness and conscientiousness to be most positively associated with a stronger sense of interpersonal identity within intimate relationships. Those high in conscientiousness are self-efficient, orderly, achievement striving, self-disciplined, and cautious. It is not surprising that

these persistent, motivated and dependable individuals have increased self-awareness and more positive experiences in relationships.

Overall, the literature consistently supports that those low in neuroticism and high in agreeableness and conscientiousness exhibit more relationship satisfaction and interpersonal competence (see Holland & Roisman, 2008; Klimstra et al., 2013; Watson et al., 2000) yet the majority of this research is focused on married couples, while research on young adult relationships is scarce.

Childhood psychological abuse, neglect, and relationship quality. CPA and neglect have similarly been found to have an effect on adulthood intimate relationships. Hart and Brassard (1987) found that a history of psychological abuse accounted for more variance in predicting quality of current interpersonal relationships than did physical and sexual abuse. A survey by Paradis and Boucher (2012) found that those reporting emotional abuse and neglect as children were more likely to report significant problems in their adult romantic relationships, as shown by emotional distance and difficulty asserting themselves and their needs. Reyome et al. (2009) found that a history of psychological abuse has been linked to lower quality of marriage, more conflict in marriage, and more co-dependency. Evidence also shows that adults who had been abused or neglected were less likely to be currently in a committed romantic relationship, more likely to have been unfaithful in a relationship, less likely to perceive their partner as supportive and caring (women only), and were more at risk for overall relationship dysfunction and intimacy related difficulties (Colman & Widom, 2004). Briere and Rickards (2007) note that psychological abuse is strongly associated with interpersonal conflicts, abandonment concerns, and capacity for intimacy in adult love relationships. Kapeleris and Paivio (2011) note that the capacity to regulate emotion develops during secure and attentive relationships with caregivers

as children. The authors also note that poor emotion regulation and high negative emotion lead to poor social competence. Psychological abuse and neglect leads to a poor self-esteem, as the abused or neglected individuals believe themselves to be flawed, unlovable, and vulnerable to abandonment and rejection. This results in long lasting, negative expectations concerning relationships, especially intimate relationships (Pearlman & Courtois, 2005). Dalton, Greenman, Classen, and Johnson (2013) note that adults who have experienced abuse or neglect develop a biased perception of people as being harsh or demanding, in turn leading to an elevated need for comfort and reassurance. The authors believe that this kind of insecurity and need for comfort hinders emotional ties to significant others. With this, maltreated children develop a negative attribution bias, and psychological abuse and neglect sets the stage for a painful cycle of interpersonal difficulties and insecurities. Similarly, Kapeleris and Paivio (2011) note that emotional neglect, characterized by failure to provide basic psychological and emotional needs, has been linked to a failure to feel safe in intimate relationships (also considered to be insecure attachment), and found strong associations between childhood psychological abuse and neglect and insecure attachment styles. These insecure attachment styles stemming from CPA and neglect are characterized by high interpersonal distrust, and have been found to predict poor adulthood relationship quality, thus adults who have experienced psychological abuse and neglect are less likely to be involved in a healthy romantic relationship (Givertz, Woszidlo, Segrin & Knutson, 2013; Kapeleris & Paivio, 2011). Kapeleris and Paivio (2011) believe that when a child has experienced repeated psychological abuse or neglect, these ideas that they are unloved and unworthy become the child's sense of identity. The authors describe how the lack of responsiveness that constitutes emotional neglect leads to a lack of self-identity into adulthood, leaving the adult having trouble identifying emotions, values, needs and expectations from

others. This history of emotional neglect, which the authors believe to be the same as emotional abuse, can also lead to an unwillingness to get into an adult relationship as it risks needing care and warmth from another. This avoidance contributes to the cycle of the individual being lonely and isolated (Kapeleris & Paivio, 2011).

Measurements of relationship quality. There are many instruments that adequately assess relationship quality and satisfaction, including the Interpersonal Relationship Scale (IRS), the Network of Relationships Inventory (NRI), and the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS). The IRS is a 52-item questionnaire developed by Guerney in 1977. The scale assesses overall quality of current relationship and trust and intimacy in particular. The IRS scale has six subscales of trust, self-disclosure, genuineness, empathy, comfort, and communication. Furman and Burhmester developed the NRI in 2009. The 36-item scale measures levels of relationship satisfaction, including intimacy and affection factors. The DAS was constructed in 1976 by G.B. Spanier to measure relationship quality. The 32-item questionnaire includes 4 subscales: dyadic consensus, dyadic satisfaction, dyadic cohesion, and affectional expression.

Statement of the Problem

Young adulthood is a crucial time for developing significant relationships (Arnett, 2000). Relationships become deeper and more intimate during this period, and these relationships help the young adult develop a sense of identity (Arnett, 2000). Given this knowledge, poor quality, satisfaction or failure of a relationship can have a significant, negative impact on an individual. Many variables can affect the quality and satisfaction of a relationship, not excluding childhood psychological abuse and neglect as well as personality traits. In fact, research has found that individuals who experienced childhood psychological abuse and physical and psychological neglect were six times more likely to experience difficulties forming and maintain intimate

relationships as adults. Personality traits have also been found to predict relationship quality, as neuroticism has been negatively associated with relationship quality, while conscientiousness, agreeableness, and sometimes extraversion, are positively associated (Holland & Roisman, 2008; Klimstra et al., 2013; Watson et al., 2000). Research linking adulthood personality traits directly to childhood psychological abuse and neglect is less common, although some research has found that CPA and neglect are associated with adulthood neuroticism and introversion (Cohen et al., 2013). Previous research has focused on childhood physical and sexual abuse more so than psychological abuse and neglect, yet given that psychological abuse and neglect are becoming increasingly prevalent, more recent research is recognizing the importance of examining these constructs (Baker & Ben-Ami, 2011; Wright, 2007). The present study aims to examine the relationships between childhood psychological abuse and neglect, adulthood relationship quality and satisfaction, and the Five-Factor Model of personality.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1:

Childhood psychological abuse, psychological neglect and physical neglect will be negatively associated with relationship quality.

Hypothesis 2:

Neuroticism will be negatively associated with relationship quality.

Hypothesis 3:

Agreeableness and Conscientiousness will be positively associated with relationship quality.

Hypothesis 4:

Childhood maltreatment and personality factors will simultaneously predict the most variability in relationship quality.

CHAPTER THREE: METHOD

Participants

Participants consisted of 149 undergraduate students from a southeastern regional university. The ages of the participants ranged from 18-22 years old, yet the majority of the participants were 18 years old. In terms of racial and ethnic demographics, the sample was primarily Caucasian. The sample was 37% male and 63% female.

Measures

Childhood Psychological Abuse and Neglect

The Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (CTQ) is a 28-item self-report measure developed to measure five types of childhood abuse or neglect: sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, physical neglect, and emotional neglect. The scale also consists of three validity items assessing minimization and denial. For this study, only the emotional abuse (used interchangeably with psychological abuse), physical neglect and emotional neglect scales will be analyzed. This scale uses a 5-point Likert scale ranging from never true (score of 1) to very often true (score of 5). Each scale has a minimum score of 5 with a maximum score of 25. This 28-item measure was developed based on data from seven samples, including male and female college students (Bernstein & Fink, 1998). The CTQ has been widely used and has been found to have strong convergent validity, discriminant validity, and criterion validity, as well as good sensitivity for all forms of maltreatment (Bernstein et al., 1997, 2003). Paivio and Cramer (2004) examined reliability for the CTQ among a Canadian college sample and found strong internal consistency, with alpha coefficients ranging from .76 to .97. The lowest alpha coefficient of .76 was for the physical neglect subscale, while emotional abuse yielded an alpha of .86 and emotional neglect a .97. Total scale reliability yielded a .96. Previous studies using a community

sample also found the CTQ demonstrated strong internal consistency (Scher, Stein, Asmundson, McCreary & Forde, 2001). One advantage of the CTQ is that it uses continuous rather than dichotomous scores for each type of maltreatment. These continuous scores can be translated into severity levels (None/Minimal, Low/Moderate, Moderate/Severe, Severe/Extreme) (Perry, DiLillo, & Peugh, 2007). Sample items from the CTQ can be found in Appendix C.

Personality

The *M5-120* will be used to assess personality traits across five domains and facets of the five-factor model of personality. The *M5-120* consists of 120 items derived from the International Personality Item Pool developed by John A. Johnson (2011). Items were drawn from the much larger set compromising the International Personality Item Pool (Goldberg et al., 2006). The 120 items on the M5-120 are divided proportionally with 24 questions for each of the five domains, and four questions pertaining to each of the underlying facets. Responses are based on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from Very Inaccurate to Very Accurate (McCord, 2010). The M5-120 has demonstrated strong reliability across all five domains, as well as moderate to strong correlations with other established measures of the five-factor personality domains and facets, with coefficient alphas ranging from .81 to .88 for the domains, and a mean alpha coefficient of .68 for the facet scales (Johnson, 2011). For the present study, Cronbach's alpha ranged from .80 to .85 for the domains, suggesting adequate internal consistency in this specific college student sample. The M5-120 can be found in Appendix A.

Relationship Quality

The *Dyadic Adjustment Scale* (DAS) was used to assess relationship quality and satisfaction. The DAS consists of 32 items about a romantic relationship, with a 6-point Likert type scale, ranging from "Always Agree" (1) to "Always Disagree" (6). Participants in a current relationship were asked to answer questions based on their current relationship. Participants not in a current relationship were asked to respond based on a past relationship. The DAS was selected for this study because it is the most widely used inventory of relationship satisfaction in social sciences (South, Krueger, Iacono, 2009). Graham, Liu, and Jeziorski (2006) conducted a reliability generalization meta-analysis to examine the internal consistency of the DAS across 91 studies and 128 samples. The authors found that three out of the four DAS subscales produced acceptable internal consistency, excluding the Affectional Expression subscale. The authors believe the reliability estimates of Affective Expression were highly influenced by sample characteristics. Daspe et al. (2013) examined a sample of treatment seeking couples and yielded an alpha coefficient of .90 for their DAS global score. Carey, Spector, Lantinga and Krauss (1993) examined the reliability of the DAS across a sample of middle-aged men and women. The authors found alpha coefficients ranging from .70 (for the Affectional Expression subscale) to .95 (for the Total Score), demonstrating that the DAS and its four subscales are internally consistent, with the Affectional Expression subscale being least reliable (as shown in the previous meta-analysis). The authors found subjects' age, education, number of children, or relationship duration did not influence this measurement's stability. For the present study, Cronbach's alpha for the DAS was .90, suggesting strong internal consistency in this specific college student sample. The DAS can be found in Appendix B.

Procedures

All participants were given the consent form before participating in this study (see Appendix D). Students received extra credit or research requirement credit for participating in the study, and all participants received a debriefing form that provided them with the contact information for the experimenter. The participants were given a packet of protocols, which were presented in a randomized order to diminish questionnaire bias.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 21. Descriptives, means and standard deviations were calculated for all study variables. Childhood maltreatment scale scores of the total sample (as measured by the CTQ) had a mean of 7.2, SD=3.0, and fell into the minimal range. The minimum score for all CTQ scales are a 5 while the maximum score is a 25. In the total sample, childhood emotional abuse (CEA) had an individual mean of 7.87, SD=3.73. Childhood emotional neglect (CEN) had an individual mean of 7.79, SD=3.5. Lastly, Childhood physical neglect (CPN) had an individual mean of 5.95, SD=1.76. Overall, 68% of the sample endorsed some level of CEA, 65% endorsed some level CEN, and 33% endorsed some level of CPN. These results are lower with less variability than prior studies examining clinical inpatient populations (Cohen et al., 2013). Overall domain and individual facet scores were obtained for the five personality factors. Among the five domains, scores were as follows: Neuroticism (*M* = 2.97, SD=. 555), Extraversion (*M* = 3.54, SD= .49), Openness to Experience (*M* = 3.21, SD= .504), Agreeableness (*M* = 3.79, SD=.445), and Conscientiousness (*M* = 3.7, SD= .502). Dyadic Adjustment scale scores were composited to create a total Dyadic Adjustment score of 116, SD=16.06. The top achievable score of the DAS is 151; however, this is unlikely to represent an extremely healthy or ideal partnership. Total scores below 97 can be used to describe dissatisfied couples (Hawkins, n.d.). Therefore our results demonstrate that on average our respondents are well adjusted and satisfied in their relationships overall. These results are slightly higher than previous studies that have utilized the DAS for older, married couples; however, they are consistent with scores obtained from a study utilizing the DAS with dating couples of average 20 years old (Holland & Roisman, 2008; Daspe et al., 2013).

Correlations

Pearson correlations were conducted in order to examine bivariate relationships among all variables in the present study for the overall sample (Table 1 through Table 9). Correlations were similar between the three childhood maltreatment scales and the Agreeableness domain. Childhood emotional abuse (CEA), used interchangeably with psychological abuse, childhood emotional neglect (CEN), used interchangeably with psychological neglect, and childhood physical neglect (CPN) showed significant negative correlations with Agreeableness. CEA and CEN were both positively correlated with Neuroticism. CEA showed a positive correlation with Openness to Experience. CEN was the only maltreatment scale that showed a negative correlation with Extraversion.

Table 1:

Correlations Between Childhood Maltreatment Scales and Five Personality Domains

	Agreeableness	**Conscientious**	**Neuroticism**	**Openness**	**Extraversion**
CEA	-.177*	-.135	.273**	.242**	-.161
CEN	-.253**	-.163*	.297**	.142	-.297**
CPN	-.246**	-.123	.155	.124	-.118

*p<.05, **p<.01

CEA, CEN and CPN showed significant negative correlations with the Dyadic Consensus scale, the degree of which respondent shows agreement with partner. CEA, CEN and CPN showed significant negative correlations with Affectional Expression, the degree to which respondent agrees with partner regarding expression of care. Both neglect scales showed significant negative correlations with Total Dyadic Adjustment.

Table 2:

Correlations Between Childhood Maltreatment Scales and Dyadic Adjustment Scales

	DCs	AE	DCh	Dsa	Total Dyadic
CEA	-.219**	-.103	.008	-.062	-.143
CEN	-.322**	-.157	.018	-.110	-.218**
CPN	-.281**	-.207*	.067	-.145	-.208*

*p<.05, **p<.01

Dyadic Consensus, Affectional Expression, Dyadic Cohesion, and Total Dyadic scales showed significant positive correlations with Extraversion. Dyadic Satisfaction, the degree to which respondent feels satisfied with their partner, was the only scale that showed no association with Extraversion. Dyadic Consensus showed a significant positive correlation with Conscientiousness.

Table 3:

Correlations Between Dyadic Adjustment Scales and the Five Personality Domains

	E	A	C	N	O
DCs	.192*	.137	.164*	-.122	.088
AE	.229**	.050	.093	-.132	.080
DCh	.208*	-.056	.060	-.162	.054
Dsa	.054	.086	.130	-.059	-.025
Total Dyadic	.184*	.098	.158	-.132	.052

*p<.05, **p<.01

Further significant results were found when analyzing the correlations between the individual facet levels of personality domains and childhood maltreatment scales of the present study. Each of the five personality domains consists of six facets.

CEA and CEN showed particularly strong negative correlations with Extraversion's Cheerfulness scale. CEN showed a significant negative relationship with Extraversion's Friendliness and Gregariousness scales.

Table 4:

Correlations Between Childhood Maltreatment Scales and Extraversion Facets

	E1	**E2**	**E3**	**E4**	**E5**	**E6**
CEA	-.131	-.162*	-.046	-.001	.033	-.346**
CEN	-.300**	-.217**	-.124	-.008	-.048	-.503**
CPN	-.206*	-.110	-.081	-.004	.105	-.188*

E1: Friendliness; E2: Gregariousness; E3: Assertiveness; E4: Activity Level; E5: Excitement Seeking; E6: Cheerfulness
*p<.05, **p<.01

CEA and CEN showed significant correlations with Agreebleness' Trust and Cooperation facets.

Table 5:

Correlations Between Childhood Maltreatment Scales and Agreebleness Facets

	A1	**A2**	**A3**	**A4**	**A5**	**A6**
CEA	-.235**	-.137	.049	-.305	.012	.028
CEN	-.368**	-.189*	-.165*	-.214**	.071	-.078
CPN	-.199*	-.178*	-.102	-.196	-.090	-.123

A1: Trust; A2: Morality; A3: Altruism; A4: Cooperation; A5: Modesty; A6: Sympathy
*p<.05, **p<.01

CEN showed a significant negative correlation with Conscientiousness' Self-efficacy and Self-discipline facets. CPN showed significant negative correlations with Conscientiousness' Orderliness facet.

Table 6:

Correlations Between Childhood Maltreatment Scales and Conscientiousness Facets

	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6
CEA	-.117	-.043	-.065	-.044	-.209	-.133
CEN	-.227**	.001	-.126	-.119	-.239**	-.074
CPN	-.071	-.175**	-.066	-.012	.055	-.098

C1: Self-efficacy; C2: Orderliness; C3: Dutifulness; C4: Achievement Striving; C5: Self-discipline; C6: Cautiousness
*p<.05, **p<.01

CEA showed significant correlations with Neuroticism's Anger, Depression and Vulnerability scales. CEN was significantly correlated with Vulnerability, and also showed a positive correlation with Depression.

Table 7:

Correlations Between Childhood Maltreatment Scales and Neuroticism Facets

	N1	N2	N3	N4	N5	N6
CEA	.140	.202*	.335**	.046	.071	.232*
CEN	.145	.097	.436**	.148	.086	.229*
CPN	.101	.105	.126	.046	.138	.098

N1: Anxiety; N2: Anger; N3: Depression; N4:Self-consciousness; N5: Immoderation; N6: Vulnerability
*p<.05, **p<.01

CEA was the sole maltreatment scale analyzed that showed significant correlations with Openness to Experience facets. CEA showed a positive relationship to Openness' Imagination, Artistic Interests, and Intellect facets.

Table 8:

Correlations Between Childhood Maltreatment Scales and Openness Facets

	O1	**O2**	**O3**	**O4**	**O5**	**O6**
CEA	..209*	.230*	.163*	-.057	.190*	.161
CEN	.12	.146	-.006	.009	.098	.157
CPN	.136	.091	.016	-.001	.090	.130

O1: Imagination; O2: Artistic Interests; O3: Emotionaility; O4: Adventurousness; O5: Intellect; O6: Liberalism
*p<.05, **p<.01

Results show that Affectional Expression was positively correlated with Extraversion's Friendliness and Gregariousness facets. Dyadic cohesion was positively correlated with Assertiveness and Excitement-seeking. Dyadic consensus was positively correlated with Friendliness and Cheerfulness.

Table 9:

Correlations Between Dyadic Adjustment Scales and Extraversion Facets

	E1	**E2**	**E3**	**E4**	**E5**	**E6**
DCs	.183*	.152	.064	.040	.137	.184*
AE	.236**	.178**	.112	.042	.168	.153
DCh	.118	.142	.172*	.053	.177*	.145
Dsa	.067	-.034	.097	.033	.057	.002
Total Dyadic	.168*	.108	.121	.049	.145	.137

E1: Friendliness; E2: Gregariousness; E3: Assertiveness; E4: Activity Level; E5: Excitement Seeking; E6: Cheerfulness
*p<.05, **p<.01

Our results did not demonstrate significant correlations between relationship quality scales and all other individual personality facets of Neuroticism, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience.

Multiple Regression Analyses

Multiple regression equations were examined to assess the ability of all independent variables to predict adulthood relationship quality (as measured by the DAS). Specifically, multiple regression equations were analyzed to determine if childhood maltreatment contributes unique variance to romantic relationship quality. Additionally, regression equations were examined to determine if personality traits contribute unique variance to relationship quality.

For the regression equation, the three types of childhood maltreatment and five factors of personality were entered as predictor variables in a standard multiple regression. The overall model was non-significant with the entry of the various types of maltreatment and personality factors as variables, $p < .230$. The total variance in relationship quality explained by the model as a whole was 8.9%.

Overall, results provide partial support for hypotheses. Results confirmed bi-variate associations between childhood maltreatment and some aspects of adulthood relationship quality and satisfaction, particularly in regards to the degree to which respondent agrees with their partner. Our findings suggest that both physical and psychological neglect have slightly more of an impact on adulthood relationship quality and satisfaction than psychological abuse. Personality traits at the individual and facet level demonstrated only mild correlations with current relationship quality and satisfaction; however, results indicate that Agreeableness, Neuroticism, Openness and Extraversion are associated with different types of childhood maltreatment. Analyses of individual facet levels of the personality domains provided more detailed information in understanding the relationship between childhood maltreatment and personality. Additional multiple regression and mediation analyses demonstrated non-significant results and failed to provide additional information regarding our independent variables' ability

to predict relationship quality. Conclusions, implications, limitations and suggestions for future directions will be discussed.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Cases of childhood psychological abuse, psychological neglect and physical neglect are both extremely common and steadily increasing (Binggeli et al., 2001; English et al., 2005). Given the prevalence and pervasiveness of these types of maltreatment, it is important to consider the potential enduring effects. Previous research has demonstrated that psychological abuse and neglect has the potential to negatively impact later romantic relationships (Colman & Widom, 2004; Reyome et al, 2009). Young adulthood is typically a time of great uncertainty, during which the development and maintenance of romantic relationships is important in contributing to the individual's sense of identity (Arnett, 2000). Additionally, personality traits have been associated with childhood abuse and neglect, and have also been found to impact the quality and satisfaction of romantic relationships (Holland & Roisman, G. I., 2008). Therefore it is important to expand our knowledge about the impact of these forms of childhood maltreatment on adulthood romantic relationships, and to explore how personality traits may also impact the relationship between these variables.

Childhood Maltreatment and Personality

As seen in Table 1, there is a significant negative relationship between adulthood Agreeableness and all three types of childhood maltreatment, which is consistent with the literature (Rogosch & Cicchetti, 2004). Out of the three types of abuse, however, the two forms of neglect demonstrated the strongest negative relationship with Agreeableness. When examining individual facet levels of Agreeableness, four out of the six facets showed significant relationships with psychological neglect, particularly Trust and Cooperation. These results are not surprising, as previous research has shown that individuals who have experienced psychological neglect have been characterized as having low self-esteem and being socially isolated. In a psychologically neglectful environment, that child's home is likely a cold, unloving place, as experienced by the caregiver persistently failing to make the child feel loved and appreciated. This type of environment clearly has a lasting effect on that child's ability to trust that others care about their wellbeing; similarly, psychological neglect may also affect that child's desire to cooperate with others, likely because they view others as self-serving and uncaring. Similarly, in the case of physical neglect, the caregiver failing to bathe, feed and provide tactile stimulation for the child has an enduring effect on the child's ability to trust that others want to help, care, or provide for that child.

Our non-significant correlations between Conscientiousness and all types of maltreatment are surprising given past literature (Ogata, 2013; Rogosch & Cicchetti, 2004). Childhood psychological neglect demonstrated the strongest negative association with Conscientiousness. As seen in Table 6, the individual facets of Conscientiousness of Self-efficacy and Self-discipline show the strongest negative correlation with psychological neglect. These results are

not surprising; as the child has grown to believe that they are worthless and unlovable, and likely figures they are not worth the trouble of taking care of nor restraining themselves.

As seen in Table 1, childhood psychological abuse and neglect showed strong positive associations with Neuroticism; however, physical neglect did not. Correlations in Table 7 demonstrate that psychological abuse and neglect have the most significant effect on Depression out of all Neuroticism facets. These results show that a child given the impression they are flawed or unlovable, either through the caregiver's outward negative expression or their lack of positive expression, has more of an impact on subsequent depressed emotionality than physical neglect. One explanation for this finding is that those children who solely experience physical neglect are likely coming from families of low SES who are unable to appropriately care for their child's physical needs; however, these caregivers likely often still show love and appreciation, which has a positive impact on that child's emotions. Another explanation is that a child growing up in a physically neglectful environment likely grows up knowing nothing else, so they are potentially unaware that they are not being taken care of in the way that they should be.

As seen in Table 1, our study found a significant positive relationship between psychological abuse and Openness to Experience. This is surprising as it contradicts prior research, which found negative associations between abuse and Openness (Rogosch & Cichetti, 2004; Ogata, 2013). As seen in Table 8, the Openness facets of Imagination and Artistic Interests, specifically, demonstrate strong associations with psychological abuse. One explanation for this finding is that perhaps those children around caregivers that are consistently making them feel badly about themselves turn to art and imagination as a type of outlet or escape from their hostile environment. Another explanation is that art may be a mechanism of

expression, when a child does not feel they are able to express themselves to family members without being berated.

Our results shown in Table 1 demonstrate that psychological neglect is the only type of abuse significantly associated with Extraversion; however, Table 4 shows more results in regards to Extraversion facets and all types of abuse. Psychological neglect is negatively associated with Friendliness, Gregariousness, and most strongly, Cheerfulness. All types of maltreatment (but particularly psychological abuse and neglect) show strong negative associations with Cheerfulness. These results are not surprising, given that a child growing up in any of these unpleasant environments is not likely to be one in particularly good spirits nor exhibiting merriness. Out of the three types of maltreatment, these results demonstrate that a child feeling uncared for or like a burden (as characterized by psychological neglect) is the most detrimental in regards to that child's ability to express (and likely experience) joy. One explanation for this is that although psychological abuse is often ongoing, perhaps those caregivers or family members who exhibit hostility towards the child also have moments in which they show love or concern. It is also possible that those who have experienced psychological abuse have at least one family member that shows the child love and support. On the other hand, a child in a psychologically neglectful environment likely never experiences any moments of positivity and consistently feels like they are unwanted, which has a more detrimental effect on that child's ability to be cheerful. These results are consistent with psychological neglect having the highest correlation with the Depressed facet of Neuroticism.

Childhood Maltreatment and Relationship Quality

As seen in Table 2, all three types of maltreatment show significant negative correlations with Dyadic Consensus, one of the four scales of the Dyadic Adjustment Scale. Dyadic Consensus is simply the degree to which the respondent agrees with their partner over various matters. Some examples of items that make up this scale are asking how often the respondent and their partner agree on "aims, goals, or things believed important; making major decisions; friends; and leisure time and activities." One explanation for this reverts back to our finding of correlations between all three types of childhood maltreatment and the Agreeableness domain. In comparison to the neglect scales, childhood psychological abuse had the lowest significant correlation with Agreeableness, yet still showed a relationship, which mirrors our correlations between Dyadic Consensus and the abuse scales seen in Table 2. As briefly mentioned above, it is likely that neglect, particularly psychological, has more of an impact on the individual's ability to believe and accept that others are trustworthy and have genuinely good intentions; thus decreasing the individual's ability to trust and cooperate with their partner in regards to various matters.

Also seen in Table 2 are the significant negative correlations between Total Dyadic Adjustment scores and both childhood neglect scales. Again, psychological abuse might be ongoing yet sporadic and from varying family members, however, neglect may be better characterized by that child's daily experience of existing in an environment that consistently fails to meet their needs, either emotionally or physically. This view helps to explain our finding of the negative relationship between Total Dyadic Adjustment and both types of neglect; in that childhood neglect, as a more consistent, everyday experience, may be more detrimental in the long run in regards to later romantic relationships.

Personality Traits and Relationship Quality

Our study found an overall lack of association between personality traits and relationship quality, which is not congruent with other literature (Caspi et al., 2005; Heller et al., 2004; Holland & Roisman, 2008). Neuroticism, in particular, has previously been found to be a strong predictor of both the individual's own dyadic adjustment but also their partners, and Neuroticism has been found to be the strongest personality correlate of couple satisfaction (Heller et al., 2004). As seen in Table 3, Neuroticism was only weakly correlated with all Dyadic Adjustment scales. One possible explanation for these results could be that certain levels of neuroticism are detrimental to relationship quality, while others are not. Daspe, Sabourin, Peloquin, Lussier and Wright (2013) noted an inverted U shape relationship between Neuroticism and dyadic adjustment. In other words, too little Neuroticism, characterized by a partner being too lackadaisical and unmotivated in their relationship, can be just as detrimental to the relationship quality as being overly neurotic. Findings from this study suggest that understanding Neuroticism's impact on relationship quality is not so black and white, and that a moderate amount of Neuroticism may not have a negative impact on dyadic adjustment. Another possible explanation for our results is our participants aiming to report their relationships in a more positive light. It is difficult to determine what may be negatively impacting or associated with poor relationship quality, with participants consistently rating their relationships so positively.

Our results did show moderately significant correlations between Extraversion and the Dyadic scales of Affectional Expression (AE) and Dyadic Cohesion (DCh). As seen in Table 9, AE was positively associated with Extraversion's Friendliness and Gregariousness. Examples of items on the AE scale include being too tired for sex and not showing love (reverse scored). These results are not surprising, in that those who are more friendly and outgoing are likely to be

more inclined to show love and have a stronger desire to engage sexually, in contrast to those who are more reserved. Also seen in Table 9 is the positive association between DCh and Extraversion's Assertiveness and Excitement-seeking. Examples of items on the DCh scale include questions asking how often the respondent and their mate have a stimulating exchange of ideas, laugh together, or calmly discuss something. It is of no surprise that one who is more assertive than not and has a tendency to seek excitement also experiences stimulating exchanges and laughs with their partner. Additionally, those higher on these Extraversion facets are more likely to discuss issues when they arise rather than retreating and withdrawing. Although prior research has found mixed results in regards to Extraversion and relationship quality, our findings suggest that extraverted individuals may experience their romantic relationship more positively (Holland & Roisman, 2008; Karney & Bradbury, 1995; Watson et al., 2000). Overall, our results showing a lack of association between Agreeableness, Neuroticism and Conscientiousness and relationship quality were unexpected given prior research (Caspi et al., 2005; Heller et al., 2004; Holland & Roisman, 2008).

Implications

The findings of the present study have several implications. First, findings suggest that early environmental stressors could impact an individual's long-term personality characteristics. Agreeableness showed strong negative associations with all types of childhood maltreatment. Specifically, an individual who has experienced abuse or neglect develops a more skeptical personality and is less prone to trusting and cooperating with others. Interestingly, our results show that childhood experiences may not have as much of an effect on adulthood Conscientiousness as previous literature suggests (Heller et al., 2004; Caspi et al., 2005; Holland & Roisman, 2008). Psychological abuse and neglect have a positive impact on Neuroticism,

particularly in regards to depression; however, our results show that physical neglect may not have an impact on neuroticism. These findings suggest that although those in a physically neglectful environment may have learned to be more skeptical or wary of situations, these individuals are not more prone to later depression, in contrast to those who have experienced psychological abuse or neglect. Our findings also suggest that those who have experienced childhood psychological neglect are more inclined to be introverted, less cheerful and less friendly individuals. Though our results do not show a strong relationship between psychological abuse and physical neglect and the Extraversion domain, all types of abuse show strong negative correlations with Extraversion's Cheerfulness facet. Lastly, our results demonstrating a positive association between psychological abuse and Openness are not congruent with previous literature (Caspi et al., 2005; Holland & Roisman, 2008). These findings interestingly suggest that psychological abuse may have slightly positive impacts on the individual, specifically in regards to their ability to use their imagination and engage in more artistic interests.

Our findings are congruent with our hypotheses that childhood maltreatment would be negatively associated with relationship quality; however, correlations with Dyadic Adjustment and childhood maltreatment scales were weaker than expected. Specifically, participants' level of dyadic consensus, in other words, their ability to agree with their partner on various matters, was the most negatively impacted by childhood maltreatment. Overall, these findings suggest that childhood psychological neglect may be the most detrimental form of maltreatment in regards to adulthood romantic relationship quality.

The present study did not find significant associations between Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism and relationship quality, which are not congruent with past literature (Caspi et al., 2005; Holland & Roisman, 2008). Our findings do suggest that most

facets of Extraversion are positively related to perceived relationship quality, which lends further information to the mixed literature on this topic.

Resiliency

Although the present study did find evidence of childhood maltreatment affecting personality characteristics and adulthood relationship quality, our results are not as significant as we expected. One possible explanation for this is the idea of resiliency. Many children experience some form of abuse or neglect, but there are many factors that determine how impactful these aversive experiences may be on an individual. How a child reacts to their aversive experiences can depend on individual characteristics, including neurological and cognitive components, having a positive relationship with at least one caring family member during childhood, and having later opportunities and socioeconomic resources. Evidence shows that internal resources such as increased cognitive skills and intellectual capacity can help foster competence and resiliency. Children who are innately more stress reactive and easily upset are more likely to be negatively affected by aversive experiences like abuse or neglect. Situational factors following aversive experiences are also important. For example, having good job opportunities and the ability to leave the stressful environment, as well as experiencing positive and supportive relationships are conducive to resiliency. These situational factors are especially important in regards to competence during the developmental window of adolescence and young adulthood. Young adulthood is a time when brain development is fostering better decision-making, and considerations of the future become more relevant. Also during this time, most cultures emphasize experiences and growth outside of the family, which is important as childhood abuse or neglect often occurs within the family environment. In summary, development and context unite to provide the best platform for resiliency. On the other hand,

those with less opportunities, from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds, less cognitive skills, a lower stress tolerance, less support from adult peers, and an overall lesser motivation to succeed, are likely to be most negatively impacted by aversive childhood experiences (Masten, 2014).

Most participants from our study have likely been exposed to more of the positive factors listed above than the negative, as they are all enrolled in a higher-education program. Whether or not their parents are supporting their college experience, these students clearly have the opportunity to leave their home environment, which may still involve or remind them of some form of abuse or neglect. Additionally, these student participants are surrounded by positive adult influences at the university and are receiving education, which is fostering cognitive and intellectual growth.

Limitations and Future Directions

The results of this study should be considered in the context of its limitations. For one, the sample was largely Caucasian as well as the majority of the participants were between 18-19 years old. Although 18-19 years old constitutes a portion of the emerging adulthood period, this study would have been more representative of the emerging adulthood period had the participants consisted of a wider range of ages between 18-25. Additionally, all measures used were self-reports. Although participants were asked to respond honestly and told that their data was anonymous, there is a chance that individuals answered in a way that made them look desirable in regards to relationship quality and personality traits. Further, the childhood maltreatment questionnaire was a retrospective self-report, which could result in under-reporting and is subject to recall bias. Given that our sample was primarily college students in their first two years, this limits the generalizability of our results to community and clinical samples. Lastly, the present study was correlational in nature; meaning one cannot assume causality from the findings; however, important conclusions can still be made.

Future studies examining childhood maltreatment and adulthood relationship quality would benefit from including more than one questionnaire per each construct. Using clinical interviews in addition to the self-report measures would help the researcher gain more in-depth knowledge of the participants' past traumas and current relationship. Further, a longitudinal study would likely gain more accurate information in regards to relationship quality among clinical and non-clinical samples to assess the relationship quality overtime, rather than just at that moment. Lastly, another variable that may play a role in the impact of child maltreatment is parental attachment (Lowell, Renk, & Adgate, 2014). It would be beneficial to determine the

influence of this variable on adulthood relationships in individuals who have experienced psychological abuse and neglect.

Conclusion

The current study supports the prior literature that childhood maltreatment is negatively correlated with adulthood relationship quality and specific personality traits (Briere & Rickards, 2007; Colman & Widom, 2004; Ogata, 2013; Reyome et al., 2009Rogosch & Cichetti, 2004). Psychological abuse shows significant positive associations with Neuroticism and Openness to Experience, and shows a moderate negative association with Agreeableness. Psychological neglect showed significant associations with Agreeableness, Conscientiousness and Neuroticism. Psychological neglect was also the only maltreatment scale that showed a significant negative association with Extraversion. Our overall sample mean of physical neglect was the lowest in comparison to the other maltreatment scales; and this scale showed a significant correlation solely with Agreeableness. In regards to relationship quality, all maltreatment scales showed significant negative correlations with Dyadic Consensus; however, our results suggest that of these three types of maltreatment, childhood psychological neglect specifically may be the most detrimental in regards to overall adulthood relationship quality, with psychological abuse following. Similarly, our results suggest that personality traits are the most impacted by childhood psychological neglect. These findings may encourage researchers and clinicians to consider the significant impact of psychological neglect specifically on an individual. Our results showing a lack of association between personality domains such as Agreeableness and Conscientiousness and relationship quality were unexpected. Additionally, our results show that Extraversion traits are moderately associated with relationship quality, which contributes to the

mixed findings on this subject. These results may encourage future researchers to further evaluate personality traits' effects on relationships.

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APPENDIX A

M5-120 Questionnaire

David M. McCord, Ph.D., Western Carolina University

This is a personality questionnaire, which should take about 15 minutes. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions; you simply respond with the choice that describes you best.

If you feel that you cannot see the questions appropriately because of sight difficulties, cannot use a pencil well because of hand-motor problems, or know of any other physical, emotional, or environmental issues which would affect your performance on this test, please notify the testing administrator now.

If you feel extremely nervous about this testing process and feel that your nervousness will affect your performance, please notify the testing administrator so that they can answer any questions about this process and alleviate any fears. Please recognize that a degree of nervousness is normal for most testing.

The *M5 Questionnaire* is used primarily for research purposes, though in certain cases individual results may be shared with the test-taker through a professional consultation. In general, results are treated anonymously and are combined with other data in order to develop norms, establish psychometric properties of these scales and items, and to study various theoretical and practical issues within the field of personality psychology.

By proceeding with the process and responding to these questionnaire items, you are expressing your understanding of these terms and your consent for your data to be used for research purposes. You are also agreeing to release and forever discharge *Western Carolina University* and *David M. McCord, Ph.D.,* from any and all claims of any kind or nature whatsoever arising from the assessment process.

Without spending too much time dwelling on any one item, just give the first reaction that comes to mind.

In order to score this test accurately, it is very important that you answer *every* item, without skipping any. You may change an answer if you wish.

It is ultimately in your best interest to respond as honestly as possible. Mark the response that best shows how you really feel or see yourself, not responses that you think might be desirable or ideal.

Turn the page over now

M5-120 Questionnaire						Page 2
		Inaccurate	Moderately Inaccurate	Neither	Moderately Accurate	Accurate
1	Worry about things.	O	O	O	O	O
2	Make friends easily.	O	O	O	O	O
3	Have a vivid imagination.	O	O	O	O	O
4	Trust others.	O	O	O	O	O
5	Complete tasks successfully.	O	O	O	O	O
6	Get angry easily.	O	O	O	O	O
7	Love large parties.	O	O	O	O	O
8	Believe in the importance of art.	O	O	O	O	O
9	Use others for my own ends.	O	O	O	O	O
10	Like to tidy up.	O	O	O	O	O
11	Often feel blue.	O	O	O	O	O
12	Take charge.	O	O	O	O	O
13	Experience my emotions intensely.	O	O	O	O	O
14	Love to help others.	O	O	O	O	O
15	Keep my promises.	O	O	O	O	O
16	Find it difficult to approach others.	O	O	O	O	O
17	Am always busy.	O	O	O	O	O
18	Prefer variety to routine.	O	O	O	O	O
19	Love a good fight.	O	O	O	O	O
20	Work hard.	O	O	O	O	O
21	Go on binges.	O	O	O	O	O
22	Love excitement.	O	O	O	O	O
23	Love to read challenging material.	O	O	O	O	O
24	Believe that I am better than others.	O	O	O	O	O
25	Am always prepared.	O	O	O	O	O
26	Panic easily.	O	O	O	O	O
27	Radiate joy.	O	O	O	O	O
28	Tend to vote for liberal political candidates.	O	O	O	O	O
29	Sympathize with the homeless.	O	O	O	O	O
30	Jump into things without thinking.	O	O	O	O	O
31	Fear for the worst.	O	O	O	O	O
32	Feel comfortable around other people.	O	O	O	O	O
33	Enjoy wild flights of fantasy.	O	O	O	O	O
34	Believe that others have good intentions.	O	O	O	O	O
35	Excel in what I do.	O	O	O	O	O
36	Get irritated easily.	O	O	O	O	O
37	Talk to a lot of different people at parties.	O	O	O	O	O
38	See beauty in things that others might not notice.	O	O	O	O	O
39	Cheat to get ahead.	O	O	O	O	O
40	Often forget to put things back in their proper place.	O	O	O	O	O
		Inaccurate	Moderately Inaccurate	Neither	Moderately Accurate	Accurate

M5-120 Questionnaire						Page 3
		Innacurate	Moderately Innacurate	Neither	Moderately Accurate	Accurate
41	Dislike myself.	O	O	O	O	O
42	Try to lead others.	O	O	O	O	O
43	Feel others' emotions.	O	O	O	O	O
44	Am concerned about others.	O	O	O	O	O
45	Tell the truth.	O	O	O	O	O
46	Am afraid to draw attention to myself.	O	O	O	O	O
47	Am always on the go.	O	O	O	O	O
48	Prefer to stick with things that I know.	O	O	O	O	O
49	Yell at people.	O	O	O	O	O
50	Do more than what's expected of me.	O	O	O	O	O
51	Rarely overindulge.	O	O	O	O	O
52	Seek adventure.	O	O	O	O	O
53	Avoid philosophical discussions.	O	O	O	O	O
54	Think highly of myself.	O	O	O	O	O
55	Carry out my plans.	O	O	O	O	O
56	Become overwhelmed by events.	O	O	O	O	O
57	Have a lot of fun.	O	O	O	O	O
58	Believe that there is no absolute right or wrong.	O	O	O	O	O
59	Feel sympathy for those who are worse off than myself.	O	O	O	O	O
60	Make rash decisions.	O	O	O	O	O
61	Am afraid of many things.	O	O	O	O	O
62	Avoid contacts with others.	O	O	O	O	O
63	Love to daydream.	O	O	O	O	O
64	Trust what people say.	O	O	O	O	O
65	Handle tasks smoothly.	O	O	O	O	O
66	Lose my temper.	O	O	O	O	O
67	Prefer to be alone.	O	O	O	O	O
68	Do not like poetry.	O	O	O	O	O
69	Take advantage of others.	O	O	O	O	O
70	Leave a mess in my room.	O	O	O	O	O
71	Am often down in the dumps.	O	O	O	O	O
72	Take control of things.	O	O	O	O	O
73	Rarely notice my emotional reactions.	O	O	O	O	O
74	Am indifferent to the feelings of others.	O	O	O	O	O
75	Break rules.	O	O	O	O	O
76	Only feel comfortable with friends.	O	O	O	O	O
77	Do a lot in my spare time.	O	O	O	O	O
78	Dislike changes.	O	O	O	O	O
79	Insult people.	O	O	O	O	O
80	Do just enough work to get by.	O	O	O	O	O
		Innacurate	Moderately Innacurate	Neither	Moderately Accurate	Accurate

M5-120 Questionnaire						Page 4
		Innacurate	Moderately Innacurate	Neither	Moderately Accurate	Accurate
81	Easily resist temptations.	O	O	O	O	O
82	Enjoy being reckless.	O	O	O	O	O
83	Have difficulty understanding abstract ideas.	O	O	O	O	O
84	Have a high opinion of myself.	O	O	O	O	O
85	Waste my time.	O	O	O	O	O
86	Feel that I'm unable to deal with things.	O	O	O	O	O
87	Love life.	O	O	O	O	O
88	Tend to vote for conservative political candidates.	O	O	O	O	O
89	Am not interested in other people's problems.	O	O	O	O	O
90	Rush into things.	O	O	O	O	O
91	Get stressed out easily.	O	O	O	O	O
92	Keep others at a distance.	O	O	O	O	O
93	Like to get lost in thought.	O	O	O	O	O
94	Distrust people.	O	O	O	O	O
95	Know how to get things done.	O	O	O	O	O
96	Am not easily annoyed.	O	O	O	O	O
97	Avoid crowds.	O	O	O	O	O
98	Do not enjoy going to art museums.	O	O	O	O	O
99	Obstruct others' plans.	O	O	O	O	O
100	Leave my belongings around.	O	O	O	O	O
101	Feel comfortable with myself.	O	O	O	O	O
102	Wait for others to lead the way.	O	O	O	O	O
103	Don't understand people who get emotional.	O	O	O	O	O
104	Take no time for others.	O	O	O	O	O
105	Break my promises.	O	O	O	O	O
106	Am not bothered by difficult social situations.	O	O	O	O	O
107	Like to take it easy.	O	O	O	O	O
108	Am attached to conventional ways.	O	O	O	O	O
109	Get back at others.	O	O	O	O	O
110	Put little time and effort into my work.	O	O	O	O	O
111	Am able to control my cravings.	O	O	O	O	O
112	Act wild and crazy.	O	O	O	O	O
113	Am not interested in theoretical discussions.	O	O	O	O	O
114	Boast about my virtues.	O	O	O	O	O
115	Have difficulty starting tasks.	O	O	O	O	O
116	Remain calm under pressure.	O	O	O	O	O
117	Look at the bright side of life.	O	O	O	O	O
118	Believe that we should be tough on crime.	O	O	O	O	O
119	Try not to think about the needy.	O	O	O	O	O
120	Act without thinking.	O	O	O	O	O
		Innacurate	Moderately Innacurate	Neither	Moderately Accurate	Accurate

APPENDIX B

DYADIC ADJUSTMENT SCALE

Most persons have disagreements in their relationships. Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list.

	Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Occa-sionally Disagree	Fre-quently Disagree	Almost Always Disagree	Always Disagree
1. Handling family finances	O	O	O_	O	O	O
2. Matters of recreation	O	O	O_	O	O	O
3. Religious matters	O	O	O	O	O	O
4. Demonstrations of affection	O	O	O	O	O	O
5. Friends	O	O	O	O	O	O
6. Sex relations	O	O	O	O	O	O
7. Conventionality (correct or proper behavior)	O	O	O	O	O	O
8. Philosophy of life	O	O	O	O	O	O
9. Ways of dealing with parents or in-laws	O	O	O	O	O	O
10. Aims, goals, and things believed important	O	O	O	O	O	O
11. Amount of time spent together	O	O	O	O	O	O
12. Making major decisions	O	O	O	O	O	O
13. Household tasks	O	O	O	O	O	O
14. Leisure time interests and activities	O	O	O	O	O	O
15. Career decisions	O	O	O	O	O	O

	All the time	Most of the time	More often than not	Occa-sionally	Rarely	Never
16. How often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separation, or terminating your relationship?	O	O	O	O	O	O
17. How often do you or your mate leave the house after a fight?	O	O	O	O	O	O
18. In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?	O	O	O	O	O	O
19. Do you confide in your mate?	O	O	O	O	O	O
20. Do you ever regret that you married? (*or lived together*)	O	O	O	O	O	O
21. How often do you and your partner quarrel?	O	O	O	O	O	O
22. How often do you and your mate "get on each other's nerves?"	O	O	O	O	O	O

	Every Day	Almost Every Day	Occa-sionally	Rarely	Never
23. Do you kiss your mate?	O	O	O	O	O

	All of them	Most of them	Some of them	Very few of them	None of them
24. Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together?	O	O	O	O	O

How often would you say the following events occur between you and your mate?

	Never	Less than once a month	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Once a day	More often
25. Have a stimulating exchange of ideas	O	O	O	O	O	O
26. Laugh together	O	O	O	O	O	O
27. Calmly discuss something	O	O	O	O	O	O
28. Work together on a project	O	O	O	O	O	O

These are some things about which couples sometimes agree and sometime disagree. Indicate if either item below caused differences of opinions or were problems in your relationship during the past few weeks. (Check yes or no)

	Yes	No	
29.	O	O	Being too tired for sex.
30.	O	O	Not showing love.

31. The circles on the following line represent different degrees of happiness in your relationship. The middle point, "happy," represents the degree of happiness of most relationships. Please fill in the circle which best describes the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship.

O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Extremely Unhappy	Fairly Unhappy	A Little Unhappy	Happy	Very Happy	Extremely Happy	Perfect

32. Which of the following statements best describes how you feel about the future of your relationship?

O I want desperately for my relationship to succeed, and *would go to almost any length* to see that it does.

O I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and *will do all I can* to see that it does.

O I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and *will do my fair share* to see that it does.

O It would be nice if my relationship succeeded, but *I can't do much more than I am doing now* to help it succeed.

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

O My relationship can never succeed, and *there is no more that I can do* to keep the relationship going.

APPENDIX C

Childhood Trauma Questionnaire (CTQ)

Participants will rate questions from never true to very often true on a 5-point Likert scale. Questionnaire consists of 28 items. Some examples are as follows:

"When I was growing up…"

1) "I didn't have enough to eat."
2) "My parents were too drunk to take care of me."
3) "I felt loved."
4) "I believe I was emotionally abused."
5) "People in my family called me things like 'stupid,' 'lazy,' or 'ugly.'"

APPENDIX D

Informed Consent Form

My name is Annabel Franz. I am a Clinical Psychology graduate student at Western Carolina University.

I am conducting research to better understand the relationship between childhood experiences, personality traits, and adulthood relationship quality and satisfaction. We are interested in how these variables associate with one another and if a experiences in childhood or certain personality traits can predict relationship quality and satisfaction.

Your involvement in this project involves answering a series of general questions about your childhood history, your personality characteristics, and your relationship quality and satisfaction, either with a past or current romantic relationship. This will take about 1 hour. Your participation is voluntary. You may withdraw at any time or decline to answer any question you choose. Your responses will be held strictly confidential. There are no foreseeable risks to you for participating in this study.

If you have any questions, please discuss them with me at this time. However, if you would like to discuss this research at another time, you should contact me at 828-295-2315. If you have any questions or concerns about your treatment as a participant in this study, you can reach the Chair of the Western Carolina University Institutional Review Board through WCU's Office of Research Administration at 828-227-7212.

Please complete the portion of the consent form below:

I do ☐ or do not ☐ give my permission to the investigator to directly quote from my responses in their research.

Date: _____

Name: _____
print

Name: _____
signature